

Minutes of Takoma Park Tree Commission meeting

May 11, 2010

By Carol Hotton and Betsy Strickler

Location: Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Carol Hotton, Nicolien van Schouwen , Betsy Strickler, John Hemphill

Meeting opened at approximately 6:35

(1) The Commission continued our discussion on ways to educate City residents about the Tree Ordinance and the value of street trees:

Betsy advised that she was approached during the Earth Day tree giveaway by a Takoma Park resident and University of Maryland professor, Sky Lesnick, who suggested that University of Maryland horticulture students might be available to assist in the City Arborist's planned survey of City trees on both public and private property. Betsy agreed to forward Mr. Lesnick's name and address to the arborist.

Nicolien mentioned that she had encountered a young film student, Jeff O'Dell, who was very interested in putting together a series of spots on trees for airing on the Takoma cable station. The Commission responded to this favorably and discussed possible subjects, such as how urban forest trees enhance human well-being and the environment, as well as increase property values. Nicolien will pursue this with Jeff, who will put together a script with the aid of Tree Commissioners and the City Arborist, and contact City Cable television employees to determine the logistics of filming and airing spots.

John reported that the following seedlings were given away at the TPSS Co-op's Earth Day celebration: 9 red pines, 6 red maples, 2 laurel oaks, 3 chestnut oaks, 1 southern red oak, 1 bald cypress, 1 sweet gum, and 15 black cherries.

Three further issues were discussed briefly:

(2) Josh Wright, the 1st ward councilmember, has raised questions regarding the process by which street trees were planted. Up to now, the decisions regarding what kinds of trees are planted, and where to plant them, are strictly the arborists. Josh wanted more community involvement in the process. The Commission discussed the issue briefly and agreed to consider the issue at a future meeting with the goal of developing a recommendation to the City Council.

(3) The issue of granting waivers to the tree permit process for residents who want to install solar panels on their roofs was discussed. It was suggested that the City could convene a meeting to open up the issue to community discussion, to gain a 'sense of the community' regarding the issue. This suggestion was met with considerable opposition on the part of certain members of the Commission, who pointed out that it could lead to

complete evisceration of the Tree Ordinance by granting unwarranted blanket exceptions to the permit process. The members agreed that outreach and education concerning the benefits of the tree canopy was necessary, and that the matter should be further discussed at a future meeting with the goal of developing a recommendation to the City Council.

(4) The possibility of developing a tree exchange for raising money was discussed, as was the possibility of harvesting wood from cut trees for sale, either as firewood or as lumber.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:25 p.m.