

## Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

May 13, 2014

By Carol Hotton

Location: Rose Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Linette Lander, Chair

Colleen Cordes, Vice-Chair

Carol Hotton, Secretary

Herb White, Commissioner

The meeting convened at 6:39 pm.

Due to the many hearings since November, 2013, few business meetings have been held. On months when a hearing takes place, the possibility of moving either the hearing or the business meeting from the regularly scheduled second Tuesday of the month was discussed. It was pointed out that Tree Commission meetings are open to the public and are advertised in advance in the Takoma Park Newsletter and on listserves, so consensus was to avoid holding meetings at a different time, unless advance notice can be given.

1. Tree Commission bylaws were formally adopted by all (Mel Fosnaught was not present but had approved the bylaws at the last meeting).
2. Minutes of April 8, 2014, were approved.
3. Redesign of the Tree Commission website was discussed. Suggested changes include:
  - a. Place function of Commission as laid out in 2.16.040 (“The Tree Commission, with the assistance of the Arborist, shall propose rules, regulations, procedures and actions to be taken by the City to preserve and protect the urban forest...”) prominently at top of webpage.
  - b. Add hot link to Title 12 [Secretary’s note: actually, there is a hot link to Title 12 on TC page, but it could be placed more prominently.]
  - c. Add hot links to pending permits  
**Action Item:** Carol will ask City Clerk (or Webmaster) about making changes on web page, and Daryl about posting permits on web page (or on arborist’s page with appropriate hotlinks to TC page).
4. Recommendations for smaller trees. We discussed suggestion by the Takoma Park Horticulture Club and the Committee on the Environment that more species of smaller statured trees and shrubs suitable for sites under wires be included for 2015 Arbor Day tree giveaway. Providing more flexibility for planting in constrained spaces and wildlife value were noted as justifications. Side point: It was suggested that the native mulberry, *Morus rubra*, should be taken off list of trees that can be removed without replacement (although

implementation of this might be problematic as *M. rubra* and *M. alba* (the introduced white mulberry) are difficult to distinguish and may hybridize).  
[Secretary's note: The nursery that supplies the trees for the Arbor Day giveaway is: John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery, 3424 Gallagher Rd, Preston, MD]  
**Action Item:** Linette will draft a proposed buying plan for 2015 Arbor Day recommending species exhibiting greater diversity in size, habit and wildlife value.

5. Joint Committee on the Environment/Tree Commission Task Force. Brief discussion of meeting with Committee on the Environment and agreement to set up joint task force with Committee on the Environment on tree issues, especially canopy expansion. (Background note: COTE is in process of applying for 'Sustainable Maryland' certification for Takoma Park; one aspect of that is to set a goal for percent area devoted to urban tree canopy). We will request that Herb Wright be added to the list of people on the 'Joint Takoma Tree Work Group', and will await report from Paul Chrostowski, the head of the task force.  
[Secretary's note added in August: Herb White has resigned from the Commission so previous point is no longer relevant.]
6. Tree Walks. Tentative schedule for neighborhood tree tours was proposed. We will try to have at least two (ideally three) walks a year, rotating wards for each walk. After three (or two) years, we will start again with the original ward. Previous walks in Ward 6 and Ward 3. Next walk proposed for 10:30 am, July 12, in Colleen's neighborhood (Ward 1). Maximize publicity: send notices to list serves, place notice in Takoma Park newsletter and Takoma Park eblast, place flyers around town. Include refreshments! **Action Item:** Carol will send Colleen previous email notice of tree walk.
7. Tree Commission roles and responsibilities. Discussion focused on placing more emphasis on Tree Commission's role as set forth in Title 2.16.040 ("Tree Commission, with the assistance of the Arborist, shall propose rules, regulations, procedures and actions to be taken by the City to preserve and protect the urban forest..."). Concern was expressed about lack of communication with Arborist (or other City liaison) hinders ability of Commission to fulfill its statutory function. As an example, greater detail on herbicide usage--what percentage of City budget was devoted to herbicides, what kinds of chemicals were used, how often applied, etc.—was requested but not forthcoming. It was suggested that the Committee on the Environment or Joint Takoma Tree Canopy Group might better handle the herbicide question. Concern was also expressed about maintaining balance between our role as advisors to the City in a non-expert role, and Arborist's role as one who has expertise in tree care. Given limited resources for many potential projects such as vine removal, it was suggested that the Tree Commission should urge the City to hire a Volunteer Coordinator to coordinate such tree related projects among interested residents. **Action Item:** Herb will provide information on County volunteer projects. **Action Item:** Colleen will contact Director of Public Works about outcome of proposed Volunteer Coordinator in 2015 budget.

[Secretary's note added in August: City will not consider a Volunteer Coordinator due to liability concerns.]

Brief discussion of setting rigid time limits for discussion of each agenda item to keep meeting within 90 minutes (alternative is to table items for discussion at next meeting.) It was suggested that we adopt this if meetings habitually run late.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.