

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

February 10, 2015

By Carol Hotton

Location: Hydrangea Room, 2nd floor, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Colleen Cordes

Mel Fosnaught

Carol Hotton

Gresham Lowe

Daryl Braithwaite, Director, Public Works

Meeting convened at 6:40 pm.

Mel Fosnaught announced her resignation pending appointment of new commissioners, or at expiration of her term at end of September.

1. Extensive discussion with Daryl on several related topics:

- A. Continuation of discussion of proposed hire for tree education and outreach. Daryl noted the following: “money will be tight”; small pot available for extras. The ultimate costs of purchasing the McLaughlin parcel 3 are unknown, making Council members cautious about additional spending. Council had passed two bills (Safe-Grow and polystyrene ban) without [resources identified for](#) enforcement. [The Departments of Public Works and Housing and Community Development proposed a new city staff position, to be shared by their departments, for a](#) ‘code inspector’ for enforcement, but Council [was reportedly](#) very cool toward that proposal. One of the Commissioners suggested that a better title would be ‘Environmental Educator’. This person could [be responsible for](#) outreach and education to residents and schools on tree issues, [education on the Safe-Grow and polystyrene ban as well as other City environmental issues](#), and [also](#) engage in volunteer coordination. Daryl had discussed [hiring an additional staff person for community outreach and education with City Arborist Todd Bolton, and Todd](#) was positive [toward the proposal](#). Will discuss specifics of what ‘Environmental Educator’ could do (‘deliverables’) in Joint Working Group meeting with Committee on Environment. Daryl emphasized need for enforcement if laws to be more than pieces of paper, especially to include multifamily and commercial properties. Discussion of volunteer corps (‘Forest Stewards’) and involvement of FOOSC in training for tree care and planting.
- B. Role of trees in Georgetown University Energy Prize. Developing Neighborhood Energy Challenge to reduce carbon footprint; Daryl wants to include tree component in this (trees reduce need for energy, sequester carbon). Tree care important aspect of tree component. Tree Commission offered to help in setting this up. Sustainability Manager Gina Mathias preparing web site, which will become active in March. Will discuss in Joint Working Group with COE, incorporate into ‘Sustainable Takoma Park’ Initiative.

C. Discussion of talking points from Council Member Tim Male’s neighborhood list serve on reforming City Tree Ordinance. His emphasis on education complements our goals, but [Commissioners voiced concerns](#) about making it easier to remove trees for [a wider range of reasons](#) or by reducing replacement costs. Daryl made two suggestions for easing burden on residents: 1) City puts aside a fund to help lower-income residents with tree care and tree removal costs, [when trees are hazardous or dead](#). 2) Cost-sharing for a Level 3 assessment of tree health. Todd does only Level 2 assessments. Level 3 assessments typically cost \$200-400. If City can designate contractors who are willing to split cost with City to do Level 3 assessment, this might either alleviate homeowner’s mind or provide evidence that tree does indeed pose hazard. Contractors would NOT be involved in tree removal. Neither of these ideas has been discussed with City Council.

Comment [CH1]: My understanding was that the proposed aid was not limited to hazardous or dead trees. Clarify with Daryl.

D. Colleen reported on discussion with Casey Trees on tree-related resources and outreach activities by other jurisdictions. Suggestions include: 1) Alliance for Community Trees: headquarters 6850 Eastern Ave, Wash DC (<http://actrees.org>), which encourages volunteer efforts in planting and caring for urban trees; 2) Tree Stewards of Alexandria & Arlington; 3) Urban Forestry Roundtable; 4) Casey Trees presentations and activities. Colleen will attend ‘Trees 101’ on Feb 21 to learn how basic forestry is presented to beginners.

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~~D. ; 5) I have something in my notes about Jessica ‘Vogp’??, Furman University, Urban Forestry and Casey Trees. There is a Jessica Sanders from Rutgers with a degree in Urban Forestry associated with Casey Trees — Colleen, could you please clarify this?]~~

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Comment [o2]: Not sure if that’s right.

E. Open space. Erkin Ozberk (City planner) is compiling map of open space, starting with original City space plan. Working with COE – looking for connecting green areas. Lidar analysis of tree canopy will be updated (by outside contractor). [An environmental educator, if hired, could](#) use open space analysis to determine where to plant on private property. Children should be included in this process. [The commission will pursue gaining access to data about current tree canopy, and how it has been changing over time.](#)

F. PEPCO and trees. PEPCO arborists generally contact City Arborist several months before actual tree work. Public Works has not formally established process for notifying homeowners about impending pruning/removals, but plans to. How to notify homeowners about tree work: Todd suggested door hangers; Daryl suggests mailings. Tree Commission requested notification of impending tree removals, as well as a final list of trees removed by PEPCO, in the City. [Daryl agreed to the notification of the Tree commission of the impending tree removals.](#)

G. Daryl noted that City has enrolled in ‘Miss Utility’ program, which requires that any digging activity in City Right of Way be reported to City. City has received ~ 3000 such notifications, providing a wealth of data that can be used to map construction activity in the City.

H. Improving communication with City Arborist. Problems include insufficient advance warning of hearings [and other events or impending issues](#), and failure to let Tree Commission know about potential changes in Tree Ordinance. Possible solutions: 1) Tasking new Construction Manager (Ian Chamberlin), who issues permits, with

impending hearing notifications; 2) Tree Commissioner Chair will contact Arborist about 5 days before monthly meeting to determine whether there were any outstanding issues for discussion; 3) Ken Sigman will inform Tree Commission of any pending legal changes or issues in a timely manner.

- I. Takoma Junction redevelopment. Carol gave brief summary of City Council discussion on Feb 9 on redevelopment. Strong support expressed for including Coop in development process. Strong support for retaining '90%' of existing green space; no one on the Council seemed to entertain retaining 100% of existing green space. Support expressed for 'pocket park' or other public gathering green space. Support also expressed for increasing accessibility to wooded lot, by adding path that would connect Columbia and Carroll Aves. Carol stated that having established path should protect remaining woods by discouraging bushwhacking through wood. However, at least one other commissioner objected to path, citing crime potential, need to create ADA accessible paved path with lighting and handrails. Storm water management important – City Engineer will do an analysis. Planting of rain gardens/bioretenion areas, especially for the wooded slope, would be good. Developers must retain 100% of storm water during construction. Daryl noted that City has done some maintenance on wooded lot, cutting dead trees in last 3 years and putting a fence up. Commission suggested that felled trees be placed perpendicular to slope to terrace it [Secretary's note: this has been done.]
- J. City Council will meet in closed session next Tuesday, Feb 17, so need to create a list of questions about the green space from the TC ASAP. **Action Item:** Carol will send out list of suggested questions to other commissioners for discussion.
- K. Tree Care Workshop. March 28 suggested as date [Secretary's note added Feb 13; tentative date changed to Apr 11 to avoid conflict with GreenFest and Easter.] Subject and scope discussed. Spring theme emphasized: Sensitive time for trees, important to avoid compaction of growing roots. Early April good time for planting. Previous workshop 1 ½ hour lecture– too long. Squeeze lecture down to 50 minutes or less, include hands on component or demonstrations wood, roots, anatomy, etc. Suggest do tree planting tree demo in park. Point out tree care points in walk to and from park. History of trees in Takoma Park suggested as another theme for presentation at Historic Takoma – possibly even a display. Attendees at tree care workshop can be asked to provide info on historic trees.
- L. **Action items:** Gresham will contact Historic Takoma about Workshop date. Mel will bring CD with old workshop presentation, plus other educational materials, to Carol.
- M. Minutes: Colleen will find October minutes and send them to Jessie, Mel needs to write up November minutes. Carol has circulated her notes of the December meeting with PEPCO representatives. Other commissioners will edit and fill in with their own notes. Colleen will write up and circulate January minutes.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 pm.

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