

May 12th, 2015 Tree Commission Meeting

Present: Gresham Lowe, Colleen Cordes – also three members of the public (A Ward 3 resident who is interested in serving on the Tree Commission and a couple who have a house under contract on Dogwood Avenue who wanted to meet the Commission members and ask how the process worked, as they are already sharing plans with the City Arborist.)

A general discussion took place between the two commissioners present and the couple with a house under contract about how the Tree Commission and the City Arborist are involved in tree protection matters and appeals.

The commissioners welcomed all three visitors and encouraged the Ward 3 resident to apply for the commission, if he desired to do so, but shared with him the information that the Council prefers to fill the remaining current opening on the Commission with a resident who lives in Ward 2,4,5, or 6, as there are no commissioners from those Wards 2,4, or 5 serving at this time and the current opening is because the only one from Ward 6 is resigning.

The commissioners discussed the preliminary recommendations that the Commission has submitted to Erkin Ozberk of the City Planning Office for its plans for open space in the City. Gresham emphasized the opportunity to increase biodiversity and group plantings of trees on the fringes of City parks and on and around parking lots, with Takoma Junction as an example where there is good space for more trees along the street side.

There was discussion about how to expand commission membership to other wards, especially Ward 6 and Ward 4, which do not have as much tree canopy as other areas. The suggestion was made to work with Fred Schultz and Terry Seamens, Council representatives for those Wards, to organize a gathering for residents in those wards to focus on outreach to and input from the residents regarding tree issues. Also, the suggestion was made to schedule our fall event – probably a Tree Walk – in Ward 6, which is understood to have the most urgent need for increased tree cover.

There was discussion of what our priorities should be through September. With only two commissioners present, the issue will be on the agenda in June as well. But Gresham and Colleen agreed that the top short-term priority should be gathering background data on Takoma Park's current tree canopy cover citywide and ward by ward to identify neighborhoods which are most underserved in terms of healthy tree canopy. Urgent need to know where and what our losses and gains have been since 2009 data was gathered and mapped by the University of Vermont. This is needed for the City's open space planning as well as for the Committee on the Environment's and our own ongoing work. Also, with data, the Tree Commission could analyze each of the City parks in terms of tree cover and tree issues.

Other short-term priorities identified were continuing to follow developments at the Takoma Junction, again seeking a meeting with Tim Male, doublechecking that Pepco has no plans to remove or prune trees in Takoma Park through the end of the year, and considering selecting one City park to work with the City Arborist and the City Gardener to offer as a model for tree care and biodiversity planning and care.

Action Items:

1. Ask about Fall Tree Walk in Ward 6 with other commissioners so we can contact Fred about helping us reach out to residents in his ward in this way and helping us identify other ways to do that. (Colleen will bring this issue up at June meeting: Can we schedule a meeting with Fred on this?)
2. Check back with Montgomery County's Planning Office to see when they will have updated GIS info for mapping our tree canopy cover citywide and ward by ward. (Colleen)
3. Identify a map of city wards that can be used with the County's online Tree Canopy Finder app which now uses 2009 data and is currently being updated by the University of Vermont. (Gresham will begin to pursue this.)