

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

July 14, 2015

By Gresham Lowe and Carol Hotton

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

Present: Colleen Cordes, Chair

Carol Hotton

Gresham Lowe

Mel Fosnaught

Meeting convened ~ 6:40 pm

Mel Fosnaught announced that she would be sending a letter of resignation to the City Clerk in the next few days.

1. Discussion about past meeting minutes. November, 2014, minutes still missing. We have Jan, Feb, May and June, 2015 minutes but are missing March and April meetings. **Action Item:** Mel will look for Nov, 2014 minutes; Carol will look for April minutes; Colleen for March. [March minutes subsequently found.]
2. Discussion about apparent change in City Council process for appointing new commissioners. Two applicants to position apparently rejected because they belonged to wards already represented on commission. Necessity of belonging to particular ward not advertised in position opening announcement. Ward diversity considered desirable goal, but not at expense of leaving positions open on commission—danger of split decision. **Action Item:** Carol will try to schedule appointment with Mayor on July 21 in morning (9 am) to gain insight into Council's thinking and express concerns.
3. Gresham referred to an old case on Columbia Ave. involving the Commission's overruling the Arborist's decision to grant a permit to remove a catalpa that was disrupting the homeowner's driveway. Both Gresham and the homeowner were under the impression that an objection from a single neighbor had prevented removal of the tree. However, a hearing was held before the Tree Commission, which decided against the homeowner, so process worked according to ordinance. Homeowner restated desire to Gresham to remove tree because of damage to driveway—Gresham urged her to reapply.
4. Discussion on next tree walk, to be held in Ward 6. Discussion of whether to hold wine and cheese party in association with speaker, but family-friendly educational walk during day decided more appropriate. Mel suggests offering 'swag', such as buttons or stickers for children. Suggest working with Fred Schultz, head of New Hampshire Gardens association and Linette Lander (former tree commissioner and resident). Also include Historic Takoma speaker. Tentative date: 10:30 am – 12:00 noon, Oct 17. **Action Item:** Carol will contact Lorraine Pearsall about including speaker on history of New Hampshire Gardens. **Action Item:** Gresham will contact Todd about what trees will be available for Tree Bulk Buy program, and when.
5. PEPCO updates. Todd not aware of any list of trees to be pruned by PEPCO in 2015. Several trees cut due to damage (Eastern and Piney Branch). Concern: will Excelon honor MOU with City? Utility will still need permission from DPW to prune trees in ROW. Mention of surveying crew along Eastern near Montgomery College –apparently for undergrounding of electrical lines from Piney Branch to New Hampshire. Probably within District. Watch for impingement on Takoma Park trees.
6. Discussion of tree canopy assessment. Gresham copied and enlarged detailed street map of City. Discussion of how to copy ward outlines onto maps. Carol and Mel advised digitization and GIS of data. Still awaiting release of new data from University of Vermont to compare to previous analysis done in 2007 to determine loss/gain of canopy.
7. Discussion of how to move forward on tree-friendly landscape in Takoma Junction redevelopment. Suggestion: bioswale or rain garden on edge of existing woods; suggest plantings along top of hill; create appropriate planting space for street trees along Carroll and Sycamore. Meeting directly with developer to discuss landscaping discussed but rejected as inappropriate by several Commissioners.

8. Ongoing discussion of education and outreach. Discussed monthly column in Takoma Newsletter on tree tips and related matters.
9. Try again to schedule a meeting between Tree Commissioners and Tim Male, city council member who has expressed concerns about the Tree Ordinance.