

## TREE COMMISSION June 14th, 2016

**Present:** Carol Hotton, Chair; Denny May, Tina Murray, and Colleen Cordes

**Talisha Searcy, president of the New Hampshire Gardens Association, and three Westmoreland residents: Bill Brown, Jason Peckenpaugh, and Ann-Mari Gemmill.**

### **Discussion on Follow Up for Concerns of Talisha Searcy of Ward 6 about the replanting requirements and the adequacy of the City's website descriptions of Ordinance requirements.**

Commissioners agreed possible future actions include: 1.) City could mail a postcard, wording approved by City Arborist, to all residents, with essential Tree Ordinance information. This would need to be done through the Department of Public Works. Information should include recommendation to be sure contractors are aware of the City's requirements before hiring them. 2.) The Commission, working with the Arborist, and possibly Casey Trees could organize written information and/or workshop for landscapers and other contractors about Tree Ordinance requirements and best practices for work on and around trees. 3.) Correspondence from the City Arborist to homeowners responding to requests for tree removal could be revised to more fully explain how the calculation is made for the number of trees to be planted when such a request is granted. **Action Item: Carol** will look at the official form the Arborist uses for internal purposes and draft language that could be used to explain the calculation for residents. **Carol** will also write a first draft for the proposed postcard. **Carol** has suggestions for revising description on the City website related to Tree Ordinance and she will circulate to all commissioners. **Tina** will draft an email and distribute it to other commissioners addressed to Talisha Searcy that will reiterate the Commission's interest in staying in touch with the New Hampshire Gardens Association and that will include as an attachment the pdf file about Environmental Benefits from Takoma Park's Trees. **Colleen** will resend the pdf file to all commissioners. **Colleen** will find out how the City identified contractors to invite to its workshop about the City's new Safe Grow ordinance, and find out how successful it was. **Colleen** will check back to schedule time for James Gilbert, Montgomery College's Building and General Maintenance Manager, who told her he would like to have Commissioners and the City Arborist meet with his staff about best practices for tree care. **All Commissioners** will review the material now posted about trees on the City's new website, with particular attention to how understandable it is for residents, at a monthly meeting.

### **Update and Discussion of Proposal for City Tree Canopy Goals:**

Discussion about whether the software used by the University of Vermont, for two studies of tree canopy cover in Montgomery County can distinguish between leafy cover of small versus tall trees. There is uncertainty about this pertinent point, in terms of whether tall trees receive a higher score for canopy cover per *cubic* square inch, i.e. three-dimensional representation. If the software only registers only per square inch (two-dimensional coverage), the results would overestimate the actual tree canopy per square inch of area measured. Suggestions were made for proposal for new City goals to include more resources for maintaining trees, and doing an inventory of actual species and sizes of trees in particular test areas. It was agreed that the Commission supports the County continuing to periodically commission comparable studies of tree canopy to monitor for changes. **Action Items: Carol** will email Kathleen Nelson and Chris McGovern in the County Planning Office for their suggestions about proposed City tree canopy goals. **Colleen** will resend Paul Chrostowski's most recent related proposal. **Colleen** will call Chris McGovern to clarify the question about how well the software can distinguish between small trees and major urban trees. **Denny** will ask the City Clerk for copies of the Arborist's annual report to the City Council for the last 5 years.

**Tallamy Talk Update:** It was agreed that the title of the talk be proposed to Doug Tallamy as: "Bringing Nature Home to Takoma Park." **Action Item: Denny** will contact Doug about this.

**Natural Takoma Update:** Colleen and Gresham have submitted the next article to the Newsletter, and it is being held to run in the July issue. **Action Item: Colleen** will send the edited version to all commissioners when it is available.

**Update and Discussion on Water and Sewer Project on Little Eastern Avenue:** Carol summarized the Commission's recent meeting with the Mayor, the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Director of Public Works, and representative of City Attorney and also email from the Mayor after the meeting. The Mayor is trying to set up a meeting with the new General Manager of WSSC. The Commission has asked the Mayor and Council to place this matter on a future agenda. Ken Sigman, of the City Attorney's office, said he would research what would be involved if the City were to eventually take over the maintenance of grinder pumps. The County Environmental Impact statement is still in process. The Commission emphasized in the meeting the inadequacy of the environmental impact information available to residents of both Eastern and Westmoreland (whose backyards are downhill from, and border on the easements WSSC is seeking). Also the fact that Westmoreland residents, who are concerned about the loss of trees, from damage during construction, and also about severe new stormwater management issues, if all trees in proposed 20-foot easements are removed. The Mayor and Councilmember Qureshi are trying to get WSSC to schedule a meeting for Westmoreland residents. The Department of Public Works is trying to get the information and cooperation it needs from WSSC to be able to coordinate an on-site assessment of tree impacts with the WSSC arborist. Our DPW is also trying to coordinate an on-site assessment of stormwater issues and other engineering issues by the City Engineer. Both assessments, if conducted, would be sent to the County for the Environmental Impact assessment it has been asked to conduct by the Mayor and other elected officials. **Action Items: Colleen** will check with Ken to see what he is finding out. **Colleen** will call the county's arborist, David Lake, in the Department of Environmental Protection, for an update about the Environmental Impact assessment he has been asked to do. **Carol** will contact Councilmember Qureshi to update him on the meeting, as he was unable to attend. **Carol** will ask the concerned residents of Westmoreland to let the Commission know if a meeting is scheduled for them with WSSC. **Carol** will respond to the City Manager's recent emailed update on the situation with our thanks and a question about whether or not the City has communicated to WSSC a request to temporarily halt its efforts to sign and pay for easements until the City has had a chance to contribute to the County's Environmental Impact evaluation and until that evaluation is available and all parties have had time to process it. (As the Commission has proposed to the City Council.)

**Discussion of Next Tree Walk: Action Item: Carol** will propose potential dates after asking Todd about timing and if he would like to attend it

**(May minutes were approved in online exchanges.)**