

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

November 13, 2018

By Carol Hotton

Location: Hydrangea Room, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Tina Murray, Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; Bruce Levine, John Barnwell, Commissioners; Jan van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager (UFM); Sharon Cohen, Committee on the Environment liaison with Tree Commission

Meeting convened at 6:50 pm.

1. **Minutes** for Oct 9 meeting approved.

2. **UFM update.**

A. No Cambistat data

B. Two tree appeals to be heard on Nov 20 and Nov 29.

C. UFM has asked PEPCO for information on pruning of distribution lines. Map should be on website.

3. **Tree Ordinance discussion.**

A. City Council timeline: recommendations from Tree Commission by February; tree canopy goal, based on University of Vermont lidar data, decided by April. Timeline not set in stone, but recommendations desirable in time for setting 2019 City budget, especially for funding to office of UFM.

B. City Council wants mechanism to garner public comments on current Tree Ordinance, but Tree Commission will not be involved in this. Ultimate goal of City Council for revision of Tree Ordinance is to determine whether it is meeting tree canopy goal, and if not, how to accomplish that goal.

C. Main aspects of Tree Ordinance to examine:

- budget for tree maintenance

- education & outreach

- age class maintenance

- species diversity

These goals can perhaps be folded into Arborist report requirement in Chap 12.12.140 of City Municipal Code.

D. How to budget for tree maintenance. Incorporate cost of maintenance into replacement fee? Increase budget for in-house watering of newly planted trees. Concern expressed that City trees are planted but frequently fail because of lack of maintenance. UFM noted that newly planted trees are watered on a regular basis by City staff and contractors.

E. Definition of hazardous tree discussed. Defined in current ordinance as tree that is 'defective, diseased or dead, and posing an unreasonable risk of failure or fracture with the potential to cause injury to people or damage to property.' Question revolves around definition of 'unreasonable.' How granular should the analysis of the Ordinance by the Commission be?

- F. Current Ordinance rewards preservation rather than planting of trees – how should this be rectified? Should trees with a poor rating (less than 5 years life expectancy) be allowed a waiver? How would this affect tree replacement?

4. **Joint meeting with Committee on the Environment**

- A. Review of key goals of City Council on Tree Ordinance:
 - review ordinance
 - develop tree canopy goal
 - develop plan for education and outreach
- B. Outline for managing joint actions for tree canopy goal
 - November: data preparation
 - December: mapping
 - January, 2019: develop metrics
 - February: reporting;
 - February 16 & 23: joint review of data by TC & COE
- C. Considerations:
 - ward by ward breakdown – past analysis shows very uneven forest cover from ward to ward
 - structure and age of forest
 - ecosystem services – use iTrees
 - map land cover to determine areas for potential planting
- D. Goal to send joint letter of recommendation on tree canopy goal to City Council (or separate).
- E. Public workshop (= listening meeting) to be put on by Public Works (Jan and Daryl) on process of Tree Ordinance, separate from report on tree canopy
- F. Brief recap of previous attempt at developing City tree canopy goal: Paul Chrostowski, previously on the Committee, worked with City and Tree Commission to develop a tree canopy goal as part of a requirement for eligibility for Sustainable Maryland. City obtained 2014 canopy analysis done by State of Maryland and compared it to 2009 analysis. Tree Commission worked with Montgomery Planning Board to create ward-by-ward analysis of 2009 and 2014 measurements of tree canopy. Comparison judged problematic because of disparities in data collection between two analyses. After much discussion, 72% goal determined as compromise; however City never adopted goal.
- G. Joint Commission on Tree Canopy created, to consist of COE members Jeff Brokaw, Kopal Jha and Sharon Cohen, as well as Tree Commissioners. Ex COE members Lauren Marshal and Paul Chrostowski who were members of previous Joint Commission will be invited to join.
- H. John Barnwell and Jeff Brokaw be point persons for Joint Commission and will create a Doodle poll to determine meetings.

Joint meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Continued Tree Commission discussion on Tree Ordinance review

Tree Commissioners need to agree on philosophical underpinnings of ordinance before going into details of what to change in it. We are more likely to get Council buy-in if TC presents Council members with options for changes. Discussion of Bruce's experience at

tree workshop offered by Sustainable Maryland. Workshop content potentially helpful in revision of Tree ordinance, especially surveys for residents developed by other jurisdictions, if City Council wants to move forward with this and wants our input.

Action Items: Bruce will forward draft goals for tree ordinance and other materials from Sustainable Maryland workshop.

Paul Chrostowski and Lauren Marshall will be invited to participate in joint Committee on Tree Canopy (Carol and Tina)

Carol will send ward-by-ward analysis to Urban Forest Manager