

**City of Takoma Park Tree Commission**

**January 9, 2018  
Meeting Agenda**

**6:30 pm**

**Council Conference Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor)**

1. Junction Development Statement of Recommendations
2. Preview of Tree Ordinance Review
3. Annual Report Update
4. Update on Canopy Analysis including timeline
5. Urban Forest Manager Report
6. Open Forum

## Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

January 9, 2018

By Carol Hotton

Location: City Council Chamber, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Tina Murray, Chair; Denny May, Vice-Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; John Barnwell, Bruce Levine, Commissioners; Jan Van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager (UFM); Ben Finder, resident

Meeting convened at 6:45 pm.

1. Minutes for December 12, 2017 meeting approved; remaining minutes from 2017 approved.
2. **Trees and green space in Takoma Junction redevelopment.** Discussion of recommendations to City Council on tree preservation and expansion of green space in process of redeveloping Takoma Junction.
  - A. *Streetscape.* Recommendation: evaluate health of willow oak on street and try to preserve if practical. Continue line of elms along Carroll Ave. Expand trees and green space in redevelopment beyond existing plans.
  - B. *Natural area behind parking lot.* Slope contains a fine stand of trees, although heavily infested with invasive plants. UFM noted insolation (amount of sun) unlikely to be affected by development, but hydrology could be affected by construction. Health of trees at top of slope to be evaluated; if worth saving, require air spading to preserve roots. Forest Conservation Act applies to this parcel, so Natural Resources inventory must be submitted to Montgomery County Parks & Planning by NDC. NDC must also submit tree protection and tree removal permit requests to City, if necessary.
  - C. Tree Commission recommends against developing back slope as park; best left as natural woodland. If necessary, an improved path could replace existing rough path to corner of lot to reduce foot traffic through woodland. Perhaps require tree planting and three years of invasive control.
3. **Arborist Annual Report.** To be deferred until May in order to report on canopy assessment.
4. **Update on Canopy Assessment.** UFM has requested an analysis of City tree canopy from University of Vermont including percent cover and size classes of trees. Cost \$2500-3000; can be accomplished in 2-3 months.
5. **Urban Forest Manager Report.**
  - A. Tree workshop for contractors proposed for 2/24 – UFM will present on Tree Ordinance; Keith Pitchford (independent forestry contractor) to present on tree care. Tree workshop for residents 4/28 – UFM to Tree Ordinance and tree care; U Vt specialist to present on tree canopy assessment. Arbor Day tree giveaway 4/7, 10 am – 2 pm.
  - B. *Appeal Hearing* – 2/1 or 2/8

- C. *Discussion on value of tree inventory.* Can be used to evaluate places to plant, but may not be cost-effective for smaller jurisdictions such as Takoma Park; how to keep up-to-date? Best to focus resources on maintaining existing canopy and replanting.
- D. *Miscellaneous.* Tree pruning primarily reactive, responding to calls from homeowners. How to increase species diversity? Limited palette of street trees available.

6. **Revision of Tree Ordinance.** Comments from Cindy Dyball, Ward 2 Council member, indicate that a review of the Tree Ordinance is a priority for the City Council, so Tree Commission considers it desirable to be prepared to present recommendations to City Council and respond to their suggestions and/or questions. Discussion ensued and following questions raised: Tree ordinance considered by some to be burdensome and unnecessarily bureaucratic. City Council responds to complaints from residents. Fees, especially tree replacement costs, considered burdensome. Ask Jan: how much money in fees collected from tree permits and replacement, and where does that money go? Current ordinance focuses on preservation of mature trees; it should be expanded to include understory trees. It is desirable for Tree Commission to collect input of residents on tree ordinance, but how to create and implement a statistically meaningful survey unclear. Can tree care be incentivized in tree ordinance? Should TC begin consideration of ordinance revision now or defer discussion until tree canopy assessment complete? One suggestion from UFM: possibly extend tree permits for construction projects that require extensive review by the county beyond 6 months—they currently expire after 6 months, which can be problematic for the applicant.

**Action Items:**

- A. All: Consider ways of implementing tree canopy goal.
- B. All: Continue thinking about ways to revise tree ordinance.
- C. Carol: contact Paul Chrostowski of Committee on Environment to ask whether COE is discussing environmental impacts of Junction redevelopment.
- D. Tina: draft letter to City Council on Takoma Junction redevelopment and circulate to other members.