

Takoma Park Tree Commission Meeting

April 10, 2018, 6:45 pm

Hydrangea Room

1. Approve minutes from March meeting
2. Arbor Day Debrief
3. Urban Forest Manager Report
Tree Funds/Allocations
4. Ordinance Review Planning

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

April 10, 2018

By Carol Hotton

Location: Hydrangea Room, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Tina Murray, Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; Bruce Levine, Commissioner

Colleen Cordes, George French, Carrie Golitko, John Lewis, residents

Absent: Denny May, Vice Chair; John Barnwell, Commissioner; Jan van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager

Meeting convened at 7:00 pm.

1. Discussion with Colleen Cordes and George French at their request over granting preliminary approval to remove two trees on Montgomery College campus on the basis of ‘significant decline’ without granting a waiver. More generally, the central question focused on the precise criteria for determining ‘significant decline’, whether homeowners should be required to replant on their own property instead of paying into the tree fund for public trees, and whether removing trees ‘in significant decline’ but not considered hazardous was justified in the absence of construction projects. It was suggested that a tree in significant decline would be one with a 1 or 2 rating, i.e., with < 5 years life expectancy, and major dieback and infestation. However, the absence of the Urban Forest Manager made such suggestions speculative, and a second meeting when he was present was requested.
2. John Lewis asked: Have trees been denied removal then later failed and caused damage? And if so, is City liable for damages? Answer to both questions is no.
3. Discussion of tree related budget. Answers from Director of Public Works: Tree application fees are put in general fund revenue. Payments for fee in lieu of planting are recorded in a separate revenue account that is only for tree replanting payments. If more than \$25K is received in a given year, it is carried over for use in the following year. Funds for watering and pruning come from a separate budget item. We still don’t know how much money is received and how much is disbursed in a given year. Commission would like to track that over past 5 years to determine whether tree permit fees and fees in lieu of planting are justified. Will request that information from Public Works Director.
4. Tina noted that US Forest Service urban forest inventory website is now live and can be used for tree inventory, once canopy cover in City has been assessed.
5. Tina noted that NDC proposed for development of Takoma Junction included a number of recommendations from the Tree Commission, including creating a bioretention area in back, avoiding digging into hill, rehabilitating vegetation on back slope. NDC has hired a landscape designer and their latest design proposal included trees to be planted in a small pocket park and gathering space on northwest corner of development.

Action Item: Tina will circulate a URL of Forest Service tree inventory website.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm