

Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission

February 12, 2019

By Carol Hotton

Location: Hydrangea Room, Takoma Park Community Center

Present: Tina Murray, Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; Bruce Levine, John Barnwell, Nancy Cohen, Commissioners; Jan van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager

Meeting convened at 6:50 pm.

1. **Minutes** for Jan 8, 2019, approved.
2. **Joint COE/Tree Commission Committee on Tree Canopy** – report from John Barnwell
 - A. Vision statement by Jeff Brokaw discussed – Sharon Cohen & Jeff Brokaw will continue to expand on community stewardship.
 - a. How to get community to embrace stewardship? Perhaps negotiate community rate for tree contractors?
 - b. Tree ordinance, especially fees, regarded by some COE members as punitive.
 - c. Difficulty of removing trees before they become hazardous—Sharon’s experience.
 - d. How to encourage tree care, which entails expense? How to encourage increased planting in Wards 4 and 6, which involves costs?
 - e. Tree canopy assessment; Tree canopy assessment; City staff will take the lead in setting a tree canopy goal but it will be a joint effort with various stakeholders.
 - f. Tree walks will contribute to tree stewardship concept – Jan will plan one for May.
 - g. Next meeting of Joint Committee will take place after Vision statement completed.
 - h. Discussion of explanatory preface to Tree Ordinance: e.g., outline necessary steps for Tree Protection Plan: When needed, components, process for use
 - i. Workshop for contractors postponed until after Ordinance revision completed
3. **Town Hall** update. Joint meeting with District 20 representatives and City Council on sustainability.
 - A. State level: clean energy jobs bill focusing on solar and wind energy.
 - B. County level: County council considering a bill to require solar panels on new house construction. Impact on trees not considered.
 - C. City: update by Gina Mathias on sustainability efforts –exploring next strategic plan to require modification of commercial and apartment buildings.
 - D. Several states have enacted climate action plans, but not one includes tree planting.
 - E. No discussion at any level of green infrastructure.
 - F. Tree Commission to consider drafting letter to state and county representatives to advocate/educate on trees.
4. **Urban Forest Manager report.**
 - a. Tree canopy assessment – asked University of Vermont for canopy assessment report about two weeks before Mar 23 meeting on tree canopy.

- 1) Plans for implementing tree canopy goal; possible sources for data from similar plans by Cumberland and Frederick, MD
 - 2) Compare past and current data—important to exclude non-City property, such as state highway rights of way (410, Sligo Creek Parkway, etc.)
 - 3) Analysis will differentiate between large canopy trees and smaller canopy trees, and includes information on space for potential tree planting.
- b. General outreach:
- 1) Jan drafted ‘tree safety 101’ article for next month’s newsletter.
 - 2) Arbor Day tree seedling handout set for Apr 6, 10-2 in front of library.
 - 3) Tree canopy assessment seminar will be held on Mar 23.
 - 4) Bulk Buy program for spring: Princeton elm, swamp white oak, black gum, bald-cypress, river birch, sycamore, American linden
- c. Tree Ordinance on-line survey: 310 respondents. Mayor wanted results before making decision on how to drive public conversation about Tree Ordinance
- d. Jan provided comments on two state bills on forest conservation.
- 1) State House Bill # 120 decrees no net loss of forest (remain at 40%); defines forest as certain number of trees of certain diameter
 - 2) State House Bill # 272: ‘fee in lieu’ replacement fee to use only as last resort; mandates replacement plan for trees removed.
- e. Hearing on Feb 28.
5. **Tree Ordinance Review** – discussion on process.
- a. How to get our recommendations to City Council in timely fashion, as they want to begin discussion in May. The three councilmembers spearheading process (Cindy Dyballa, Kacy Kostiuk and Peter Kovar) have set no clear deadline for feedback from Commission.
 - b. How to clarify language in ordinance – add bullet points?
 - c. TC will invite Ken Sigman to March 12 meeting to advise on legal questions pertaining to Ordinance revision.
 - d. Nancy Cohen, as new commissioner, indicated that she could not understand many aspects of Tree Ordinance – will circulate what she considered opaque parts of Tree Ordinance.
6. **Action Items:**
- John will circulate update Tree Canopy document
 - Tina will invite Ken to attend next meeting
 - All: will provide Ken with questions about legal matters in advance of March meeting
 - All: will review Ordinance and circulate suggested revisions where necessary

Meeting adjourned 8:45 pm