

## **Minutes of the City of Takoma Park Tree Commission**

March 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; Sharon Cohen, liaison, Committee on the Environment, Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa, COE member; Colleen Cordes, Byrne Kelly, Susan Schreiber, residents

Meeting convened at 6:50 pm.

1. **Minutes** for February 12, 2019, approved.
2. **Committee on the Environment (COE) update** from Sharon Cohen.
  - A. Gina Matthias on leave
  - B. LED replacement of street lights about 50% complete
  - C. City Council discussing declaration of climate emergency with input from COE. Trees not included in discussion, despite storm water management being a major concern for City Council. COE advised City to increase staffing for sustainability office.
3. **Tree Canopy Joint Subcommittee** report from John Barnwell.
  - A. Vision statement for tree canopy goal still in preparation. Will be available before March 23 public seminar on tree canopy.
  - B. UFM will take lead in setting ward by ward goals for tree canopy. Both canopy goal and implementation plan necessary.
4. **Urban Forest Manager** report.
  - A. Bulk buy program advertised in March newsletter
  - B. Arbor Day reminder – April 6; rain day to be set if necessary.
  - C. Tree Canopy assessment seminar – March 23: 10 am – 12 noon, presentation of current state of tree canopy based on 2018 LIDAR data; 1 – 3 pm, discussion with Tree Commission & COE on setting of tree canopy goals.
  - D. Positive response from readers of ‘Tree Safety 101’ article by Jan in February newsletter
  - E. Tree walk to be postponed to September; to take place in Ward 4
5. **Discussion with Community Vision** members & residents Colleen Cordes, Byrne Kelly, Susan Schreiber regarding impact of proposed Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) development of Takoma Junction property
  - A. Residents expressed concern over impact of proposed NDC development on trees on wooded slope, especially over removal of trees at steep gradient and its impact on hydrology and erosion of slope.

- B. Residents stated that NDC plan goes against Forest Conservation Act forbidding removal of trees on 25-degree slope. They expressed concern that County Planning Board will accept City Council recommendation, even though NDC plan has changed between City and County reviews.
- C. Residents expressed confusion over City review process for impact of development on trees – it appeared to them that City Manager made final decision on trees, when City is actually creating a process for Tree Commission to review NDC plan as it affects trees.

**6. City process for review of NDC development plan by Tree Commission and UFM**

- A. Pursuant to Art. 2.16.040, (“the Tree Commission shall ... perform any other related duties assigned by the Council by ordinance or resolution.”), the Tree Commission will meet with the UFM and NDC on April 15 to evaluate tree protection plan and make recommendations to City Council. Meeting to be open to public but not open for public comment. All commissioners plan to attend this meeting.
- B. Current timeline: evaluation of plan by Commission is to be submitted to City Council no later than Apr 22 in order to be posted a week in advance of May 1 meeting by City Council to decide on whether to accept NDC development plan.

**7. Continued Discussion of Ordinance Review**

- A. Discussion of 12.12.010, which sets out purpose, principles and goals of Tree Ordinance. A need was expressed to widen emphasis from preservation of existing trees to encouraging new growth and plantings. Suggestions for improvement include incorporating the concept of ‘ecosystem services’ of trees, especially their value in addressing climate crisis through carbon sequestration. Aesthetic value should be de-emphasized.
- B. Discussion over how best to present suggested revisions to City Council. Is presenting a marked up version of the Ordinance more effective than wholesale rewrite?
- C. Discussion of right of appeal to Tree Commission from decisions by City on City property. To be continued at next meeting.
- D. Next scheduled meeting on Apr 9 will focus on Chapter 12.04, General Provisions, along with Bruce’s detailed suggestions for changes. City attorney Ken Sigman will be present to answer questions about legal aspects of proposed changes to Ordinance.

**Action Items:** Bruce volunteered to compile commissioners’ suggestions for next meeting.  
Carol to rewrite Section 12.12.010 (Legislative Findings) for review

Meeting adjourned 8:45 pm