

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

June 11, 2019

By Carol Hotton

**Location:** Hydrangea Room, Takoma Park Community Center

**Present:** Tina Murray, Chair; Carol Hotton, Secretary; John Barnwell, Bruce Levine, Commissioners; Sharon Cohen, liaison with Committee on Environment; Ken Sigman, Executive Director, Tree Commission; Jan van Zutphen, Urban Forest Manager, Samantha Joerg, intern, Hilary Stevens, Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa, residents

**Absent:** Nancy Cohen

Meeting convened at 6:50 pm.

1. **Minutes** for May approved.

2. **Report from Sharon Cohen on Committee on the Environment activities**

- A. SJ's term on Committee on Environment is over. Jeff Brokaw will continue as the liaison with Joint Committee on Tree Canopy, Sharon Cohen will continue as the liaison with Tree Commission.
- B. Sharon completed inventory of block on Elm Ave. Using i-naturalist and Bruce Levine for identification.

3. **Urban Forest Manager report**

- A. Spring plantings completed (76 trees added); water bags installed for all trees; many trees planted on Cedar Ave. Contractor who installed trees will water them 4 times this year.
- B. Samantha Joerg (intern with forestry background) will assist in selecting tree plant locations for Erskine St, Glenside Dr, Colby Ave for fall plantings. Also working on improving forestry web page.
- C. Large number of permit applications being filed.
- D. UFM reviewing Montgomery College tree removal and protection applications.
- E. UFM will present information on Tree Ordinance and tree canopy goals at June 19 City Council meeting.
- F. UFM held preconstruction meeting for WSSC sewer replacement project on Eastern Ave (phase 1).

- G. Piney Branch Middle School construction project has started. Approximately 100 oak trees will be planted on the property related to this project.

#### **4. Continued Review of Tree Ordinance: 12.12. Urban Forest**

- A. Presentation of TC recommendations to City Council set for July 22. Consensus is that we have sufficient time to finish our recommendations by then. Ken: legal won't work on specific language until City and TC weighed in. Need for additional time to be determined at July 22 meeting.
- B. How to present recommendations to City Council? Summary of suggestions or edited ordinance?
- C. How to incorporate tree canopy goals into recodification? City, UFM, Public Works will need to take lead on implementation
- D. Discussion on pre-planting credit. TC considered it excessively complex; UFM has had one applicant in 2 ½ years. Some suggested elimination, while others suggested simplifying section and increasing education about option. Tina suggested that bulk buy participants be notified of the option to register trees.
- E. How to encourage more tree planting on private property? City Bulk Buy program trees currently receive only partial tree replacement credit— can this be changed? City might sponsor program like Tree Montgomery (free tree planting and advice on care). Consider adding language encouraging private planting in Ordinance.
- F. Suggestion: No replacement fee if replacement trees planted in situ? City needs to do more follow-up to determine if replacement trees have indeed been planted. Tina suggested that this be applied to only invasive tree removal.
- G. In answer to query from one of the Commissioners, UFM indicated that there was significant additional City owned property that could be planted with trees.
- H. Bruce noted that volunteer seedlings often do better than planted trees—there should be some mechanism to credit those as replacement trees.
- I. Increasing diversity by increasing flexibility of what kind of trees can be planted. For example, allow juveniles of canopy trees, or set 70% canopy trees as replacement, allowing 30% understory trees (for example).
- J. Increase flexibility/reduce difficulty in removing trees in decline. View of resident Hilary Stevens: City should manage urban forest by actively removing trees in decline to maintain health of standing forest. City paper work viewed as punitive.

- K. UFM: Emphasize importance of outreach and education about tree maintenance. What to look for in declining trees. Resources such as U Md Coop Extension Home and Garden Information Center available.
- L. There should be one fee for all permit applications.
- M. Trees and property development: tree impact assessment should be submitted early in design process. This should be clarified in Ordinance. Currently tree assessment often done after design completed, which may be hardship if design needs to be changed. Comment from Hilary Stevens: tree protection plan paperwork and requirements excessive, e.g., to preserve an 8 inch dogwood.
- N. Discussion adding non-binding language to Ordinance that City should follow its own rules.
- O. UFM: hold ‘pre-meeting’ to discuss tree impact from development, analogous to meeting for development in Historic District, to anticipate possible problems and design change requirements.
- P. Commissioners discussed whether to set formula to determine whether/how much tree assessment necessary, e.g.:
  - < 25% impact: no need for assessment plan
  - 25-30%: simple assessment plan
  - > 30%: complex assessmentTree impact assessment and protection plans could be consolidated—would reduce paperwork.
- Q. Require tree protection plan assessment by LTE as in Chap 12.04.110? Problem with that is that doing tree protection plan is specialized skill – niche market for arborists. Assessment very site specific. Perhaps put examples of good tree protection plans on City website. There should be separate application forms for simple and complex protection plans
- R. Hilary suggested that City should hire a staff person to serve as advocates for residents and their trees and help manage assessments and protection.

Meeting adjourned 9:00 pm.

Action Items: Tina will compile suggestions/discussion items into document to be circulated before meeting with City Council.