

To: Takoma Park City Council  
From: Takoma Park Tree Commission  
Date: April 7, 2020  
Subject: Recommendations for Supporting the Takoma Park Tree Canopy

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The Takoma Park Tree Commission met on February 11, 2020 with Public Works Director Daryl Braithwaite and Urban Forest Manager Jan Van Zutphen at the request of the Tree Commission for a budget overview presentation about the current Public Works budget. The emphasis was on how the urban tree program fits into the budget.

The Tree Commission questions how the urban forest staff and more broadly public works will meet the ambitions outlined in the draft tree canopy resolution without additional emphasis on staffing and training in connection with the tree program. Following the presentation by Public Works, the Tree Commission agreed to send recommendations for Council consideration during the next budget cycle. We recognize that the recommendations listed below will require further vetting by Council and are independent of any current budget opportunities or constraints that Council faces during this current budget cycle.

Our recommendations are:

1. Support the modest increase in the annual budget for the tree program as proposed by the City Administration and Public Works, and
2. Ensure that the Council only authorize the tree fund account for tree planting and maintaining planted trees.

Section 12.12.100(E) of the current tree ordinance refers to the account as the tree planting fund, stating: “Where it is not feasible or desirable to replace trees on site, the replacement requirement may be satisfied by planting trees at another location approved by the City Manager within the City or by paying a fee in lieu of planting replacement trees equivalent to the installed market value of the required replacement trees to the City’s tree planting fund.” While the Commission agrees that the definition of tree planting fund could be expanded to include maintenance of planted trees to include watering after planting, deer protection, and pruning, the Tree Commission does not see how any other uses will be consistent with the purpose of the fund. It would be particularly detrimental to City efforts to maintain the urban forest if the funds collected would be used for purposes other than to replace the trees removed.

**If the Council decides to redirect the monies from the tree-planting fund for other than its stated purpose, the residents of Takoma Park deserve to know that the Council has replaced a tree planting fund with a new tax.**

The Tree Commission remains available for further discussion on the issues referenced in this memorandum.