

Tree Commission Meeting Minutes
City of Takoma Park
January 12, 2021

The meeting convened remotely at 6:30 PM on January 12, 2021

Attendees: Commissioners Carol Hotton, Chair (Ward 3), Nancy Cohen, Secretary (Ward 1), Bart Sheard (Ward 3), James Woodworth (Ward 2), and Marty Frye (Urban Forest Manager)

The Minutes from the December 8, 2020 meeting were approved (4-0) as revised on a motion by Carol Hotton, seconded by Bart Sheard.

Urban Forest Manager Report – Marty Frye:

Permitting has slowed allowing the Urban Forest Manager to focus on the following:

- a. Developing an updated Tree Species list that focuses on native species (native to Maryland and Eastern United States).
- b. Revising the tree protection plan permitting process including an instruction packet.
- c. Digitizing permitting application forms, creating a messaging platform and contact information portals as well as a PDF upload that will permit applicants to submit plan drawings with an accompanying narrative.
- d. Tree planting initiatives with emphasis on addressing the inequities in Wards 4 and 6 and tracking public spaces for tree planting.
- e. Improving the current tree planting programs on private property through the bulk buy program; enhancing outreach efforts; reviewing standards for planting including deer protection efforts and watering and; developing options for the Arbor Day tree hand-out including the possibility of distributing trees at the Farmers' Market.

Further Steps to Convince the City Council to Appoint a 5th Commissioner: It appears that the Council is reluctant to appoint a 5th member. Commissioners were urged to contact their Councilmember to encourage a reconsideration of this position.

General Comments:

1. Concern was raised that new homeowners in Takoma Park are unaware of the Tree Ordinance and their responsibilities when engaged in construction around their homes. Possibly remedy is to compile a 'welcome packet' for new homeowners (lists of which are available from public records) that provide relevant information on a regular basis, perhaps every 3-6 months.
2. Concern expressed by Commission members that trees less than 20" should not be treated as less valuable when evaluating criteria for removal in Section 12.12.080.
3. Ms. Cohen shared a list of concerns she shared with her Ward 1 Councilmember about the Code of Conduct form required to be signed by all volunteer City Commissioners and committee members, especially whether the form represented a contract and what kind of due process was available for those accused of misconduct. The question was conveyed to the Mayor who forwarded it to the City Manager. Currently, there is no formal process for handling Code of Conduct issues. Ms. Cohen agreed to submit her specific list of concerns to the Mayor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45pm

Nancy Cohen
Secretary