



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of October 5, 2016

Information to Share

Walk to School Day

We had another successful walk to school day with great participation from students, parents, staff, and other community members. All five local schools participated and there was record turnout. Mayor Kate Stewart, the Safe Routes to School coordinator, Lucy Neher, Police Chief Alan Goldberg, and McGruff joined the celebrations at Takoma Middle, Takoma Elementary, and Piney Branch Elementary School. Many participants remarked that they will walk to school again! A few snapshots from the morning:



Parking Open Houses

Yesterday and again tomorrow, HCD is hosting public open houses with information about the progress made to date on the ongoing parking study with an opportunity for residents to raise questions and provide additional information. Tomorrow's open house will be held from 7:00-9:00 PM at the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. The webpage includes a form for stakeholder feedback, which will be available online for one month. The form is accessible here:

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/project-directory/parking-study/>

You Are Currently in HD!

Beginning tonight, Council meetings and some other CityTV programming will be available in high definition! If you subscribe to RCN or Comcast, you're now able to watch new HD services featuring local news, education, and entertainment programming from your local Montgomery County channels. City TV, Rockville 11, and Montgomery Municipal Cable are sharing the new channels, and these channels form the "Municipal Broadcast Network" or MBN. The high definition (HD) channels are RCN

1057 and Comcast 997. Takoma Park City TV will continue to broadcast 24/7 in standard definition (SD) on channel 13 on RCN and Comcast. To view the schedule or to learn more, visit the [Municipal Broadcast Network](#) page.

Website Updates

Over the next few days, you will notice some new features on the City website, including a language translator that translates webpages into seven different languages and an overlay along the left-hand side of the screen that more effectively calls out blogs, news items and the like.

Tree Removals and PEPCO

Attached is information related to tree removal concerns shared at last week's Council meeting, as well as a spreadsheet with the addresses of trees still to be removed by PEPCO when work resumes on Monday, October 10.

In response to the inquiry by Councilmember Seamens about who gets the revenue from cut trees that could be sold for lumber, the answer is that usually the contractor assumes the cost or revenue from disposing of the wood and those amounts are built into the pricing structure for the work. Occasionally other arrangements are made, particularly when the property owner wishes to keep the wood.

Staff Departures

Media Specialist

We recently learned that Craig Terrell, Media Specialist, has accepted a new out-of-state position. Craig has been a tremendous asset to the City Manager's office and the organization during his tenure here, facilitating the development of a top-notch website for the City and being a key player in our communication efforts, among other things. His last day with the City will be October 7.

City Arborist

Effective last Friday, September 30, City Arborist Todd Bolton resigned from his position. Interpreting and enforcing the City's Tree Ordinance is a challenging job. We are grateful for Todd's dedication and service to the City and wish him the best.

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Tree Removal Concerns Related to PEPCO Work

October 5, 2016

At last Wednesday's Council meeting, some Councilmembers and members of the Tree Commission expressed concern about the extent of recent tree pruning and removal by PEPCO. Some felt that the tree trimming was excessive, which in some cases it was. The City Arborist had already brought the issue to the attention of PEPCO and a problematic crew manager for PEPCO's contractor was replaced.

Some felt that it was inappropriate that some nonhazardous trees were being removed through this process. However, removal of nonhazardous trees that are determined to be in decline and/or structurally unsound, and if left, may fall and take out the power lines or poles has been a practice of PEPCO for some time. This is true for trees on private property and public rights of way or City-owned land. The goal of PEPCO's tree pruning and removal program is to reduce the chances of power outages due to tree conflicts. In addition to removing tree branches and/or entire trees that are growing within the clearance requirements of the power lines, PEPCO also may remove large trees in poor health or structurally unsound that are in proximity to the power lines.

On Friday, September 30, staff compiled information from PEPCO that indicated 28 trees remained for removal from those that had been authorized for PEPCO's contractor to remove as part of their line maintenance program. Because of the concerns that had been raised and the difficulty of confirming the condition of those trees in a short time frame, I requested and obtained a one-week pause in PEPCO tree removal in Takoma Park.

City staff was able to field confirm the information on the trees and found that 25 trees remained. Of those 25 trees, there were four trees that were fairly large and appeared to be in satisfactory condition. Those four are on private property and have either been issued a permit or granted a waiver for removal. Because the City's Arborist, Todd Bolton, resigned effective September 30, Public Works Director Daryl Braithwaite has asked a consulting arborist to take a look at those four trees to assess their condition and determine if they are appropriate candidates for removal.

There are strong reasons to not stop PEPCO's program of tree pruning and removal. First, PEPCO works with the City to a level that is greater than legally required and exceeds the parameters established in the MOU with the City. We appreciate that and want that to continue. For trees requiring a removal permit, PEPCO pays into our Tree Replacement Fund and covers the cost of pruning and removal of the trees. If a private property owner or the City were to remove the trees, the cost could easily exceed \$5,000 per tree. Since most of the trees have been identified to be in decline, dead and/or hazardous, and have had permits or waivers issued, NOT removing the trees could open the City up to some liability as well as possibly incurring the cost for tree removal at a later date.

If changes are desired in the tree removal process related to utilities, it is my recommendation that those changes should go through a revision of the Tree Ordinance. Having changes made as a special case at this time could have unintended consequences.

For the four trees that were previously mentioned, we will have them independently assessed as quickly as possible. If the assessment is not completed by Monday, I will ask PEPCO that those trees not be removed until the assessments are complete.

A list of the 25 trees by address is attached, with highlighting on the four trees we will be looking at more closely. In addition, there are six other trees that were in the process of review last week and were not previously included on the list. Those trees are identified as well.

PEPCO comes through every four years to do maintenance pruning and tree removal. This year, they provided maps and more detailed information on their plans than they have in the past. However, the maps and information could be difficult to understand. In the future, we intend to create a special information page on the City's website that will include as much information as PEPCO provides as well as a listing of addresses where tree removal has been authorized. It is intended that this will provide greater access to the information for the public.

TREES AWAITING PEPSCO REMOVAL

	Address	# of trees	Tree Type	Private/Public	Permit	Waiver	Notes
6605	Allegheny Ave	1	24 " red maple	private		waiver	dead at top, split
6700	Conway Ave	1	6" black locust	municipal		waiver	
6709	Conway Ave	1	12" cherry	municipal		waiver	dead
6713	Conway Ave	5	maple, cherry, locust	municipal		waiver	stump spouts, top dead, Belford Place side
303	Elm Ave	1	22" oak	Private		waiver	root rot from inonatus dryadeus, hazardous, located on Poplar side
313	Elm Ave	1	22" red maple	private	permit		large cavity at the bend of the tree
316	Elm Ave	2	10" red oak, 16 " red oak	private	permit	waiver	16" dead, 10" topped in decline
7303	Glenside	1	8" type of nut	municipal		waiver	
7324	Glenside	1	18" beech	municipal		waiver	entrance to Becca Lilly playground
6501	Kansas Lane	1	16" willow oak	Private	permit		topped previously
1110	Lancaster	1	16" red maple	municipal		waiver	dying
1112	Merwood	1	22" oak	private		waiver	trunk has butt rot and a dead leader
112	Park Ave	2	30" oak	private	permit		RM43 clearance, tree is in decline
7307	Piney Branch Rd	1	12" & 6" American Elm	private	permit		small double trunk elm growing under lines would be topped
7125	Poplar	1	6 ' cherry	municipal		waiver	dead
6702	Prince Georges Ave	1	double stemmed mulberry	private	permit		
6815	Prince Georges Ave	1	30" white oak	Private		waiver	hazardous
6903	Prince Georges Ave	1	28" white oak	Private		waiver	cavity 35 ft up trunk, previously dropped large leader
6918	Prince Georges Ave	1	24" white oak	private		waiver	rotten base on the back side

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In addition to these trees, 6 others were going through the process and have been approved:

7218	Erie Ave	3	3 - 8" red maple	private		waiver	topped by Pepco
7813	Carroll Ave	1	26" Linden	private		waiver	paperwork on hold in office
8214	Flower Ave	2	16" and 22" red maple	private	permit (22")	waiver (16")	paperwork on hold in office

The trees in green highlight will be assessed by an independent arborist