



## Takoma Park City Council Meeting – January 13, 2021 Agenda Item 6

### Work Session

Tree Commission Request to Council to Appoint a Fifth Member to the Commission

### Recommended Council Action

Discuss and decide whether to advertise and consider appointment of a fifth member to the Tree Commission.

### Context with Key Issues

The Tree Commission is a Council-appointed commission established to preserve, protect, and promote the urban forest of Takoma Park and to hear appeals of certain permit decisions of the Urban Forest Manager. The Commission is to be composed of up to five residents. There are currently four serving commissioners and one vacancy. The Tree Commission has requested that the Council appoint a fifth member. The Commission's request follows:

*We are grateful to the City Council for appointing two new members to the Takoma Park Tree Commission so that we can continue our statutory tasks, and we recognize that the Council is undergoing a needed review of City Committees and Commissions. However, we respectfully urge the City Council to appoint a fifth member to the Tree Commission as soon as possible. We are particularly concerned that in the event of a tie in a hearing decision, the issue under question will effectively revert to the City's position. This would leave the appellant(s) frustrated, and it undercuts the function of a hearing, which is to allow appellants who disagree with a City decision to 'have their day in court.' There have been several 3-2 decisions in past hearings, so this concern is not merely theoretical.*

The City Council is undertaking a review of all its boards, commissions, and committees, including structures, appointment processes, and practices to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and to explore innovative ways to address barriers to greater engagement and participation on committees, especially as it relates to racial equity. The desired outcome of the process is to enable inclusive, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

Because the review is ongoing, the Council adopted [Ordinance 2020-28](#) suspending appointments to boards, commissions, and committees except in circumstances where an appointment is necessary for the committee to function or where the appointment increases the diversity of the committee to better reflect the diversity of the community. Any such appointments made during the suspension are to expire on June 30, 2021. The suspension is intended to avoid making routine appointments that do not meet the Council's racial equity goals. Additionally, the suspension is intended to allow the Council to make changes to the size or function of the committees, or even eliminate some altogether, without impacting as many resident volunteers as it would if all committees are fully staffed.

On October 21, 2020, the City Council filled two of three vacancies on the Tree Commission by Resolution 2020-27. At the time, the Council declined to appoint a fifth member. If the Council decides to appoint a fifth member to the Tree Commission per the request, it should also consider whether to make the appointment from the existing pool of applicants or whether to re-advertise the vacancy to seek a more diverse group from which to choose.

### **Council Priority**

Engaged, Responsive & Service-Oriented Government

### **Environmental Considerations**

N/A

### **Fiscal Considerations**

N/A

### **Racial Equity Considerations**

Recruitment and appointment of members to boards, commissions, and committees is one means of achieving the Council's racial equity goals. The Council has determined that the only appointments to be made while conducting the review of boards, commissions and committees are those necessary for the functioning of the committee and those that increase the diversity of the committee to better reflect the Takoma Park community as a whole.

### **Attachments and Links**

Resolution 2020-27 Providing for Appointments to the Tree Commission

[Emergency Ordinance 2020-28](#) Suspending Appointments to Boards, Commissions, and Committees

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 2.16, Boards and Commissions](#)

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 12.12, Urban Forest](#)