



Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 16, 2022 ❖ 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

NOTICE: This meeting was held pursuant to and in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3708.2 and state and local legislation adopted to allow for continued government operation during the COVID-19 declared emergency. All participating members will be present at this meeting through electronic means. All members of the public may view this electronic meeting via the meeting link listed above and in the City's website calendar.

Attendees

UFC members: Amy Crumpton, David DeCoste, Mike Nichols
UFC City Staff Liaison: Charles Prince
City Council Liaison: Letty Hardi
UFC Student Representative: Dylan Petrillo
City Staff:
Members of the Public: Kathy Philpott Costa
Other guests:

- 1) **Call to Order** - the meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Amy Crumpton.
- 2) **Reading of Virtual Meeting Notice** - was read by Amy Crumpton.
- 3) **Roll Call** - meeting participants identified themselves.
- 4) **Approval of the [January Minutes](#)** - the January 2022 meeting minutes were approved.
- 5) **Public Comments** - there were no public comments.
- 6) **Staff Updates and Informational Items:**
 - a) **[City Council Calendar Update](#):** Charles highlighted the following calendar items:
 - Feb. 22 is the next Council retreat / work session which will be held in-person. Charles will attend and plans to share the UFC's goals and objectives.

- The City's budget process begins in March and goes through April. Charles is discussing potential budget impacts with his manager and there might be a slight reduction to his budget.
 - During the April 18 Work Session, the Council will review the third submission from Boards and Commissions regarding the One City Center project.
 - Letty added that the past two City Council meetings have focused on affordable housing. The City received \$7M in grants from Amazon for subsidized home ownership and City purchased properties which will be rentals. Founders Row II and One City Center are key priorities. The UFC will be submitting formal comments to the Council on One City Center. Letty plans to raise the need for formal guidance for commercial developers, and also for residential development, at the Council's retreat. She noted the City Council retreat is held every two years after a new Council is sworn in.
- b) UFC Staff Update: Charles expects two new staff will start at the end of this month and he has a lead for a crew leader. While it has taken a long time to staff the positions, he is confident in his hires. Charles has been coordinating internally on the administration and management of the Tree Canopy Fund to ensure that the money flow is understood and the funds can be used for Urban Forestry and tree plantings. There is an opportunity to plant trees at Virginia Village. A crew cleared out invasive plants, such as bamboo, and planted some trees along the street and along the back near Bowl America. Amy inquired about the check VPIS provided to pay for the Phase II trees in the Neighborhood Tree Program. Charles noted it still is on his desk and will be cashed soon; this has been part of his discussions internally about management of tree funds.
- c) UFC Candidate Process: Two candidates went through the Appointments Committee interview process last week. Amy is hopeful they will be approved and that they will be able to join the UFC as current members rotate off.
- d) Neighborhood Tree Program (NTP). VPIS approved the budget for 2022 and \$4,500 will be available for Phase II trees (those that are not in the City's Right of Way). The VPIS donation can purchase significantly more trees if volunteers are available to plant them. When the City has to use contractors to plant the trees, we can purchase about half of the number of trees. The average cost of a tree is approximately \$120-\$170 per tree with the Merrifield Garden Center contract pricing the City gets. Amy noted that the increase in tree prices from Spring to Fall of 2021 was striking, approximately \$90 per tree higher in cost. This VPIS program has been important in raising the tree canopy, but the program has suffered in past years due to a lack of staff or volunteer support to manage the program. In the absence of volunteers, VPIS has financially supported this program. There is a desire to expand this program in a way that is not labor intensive. Neighboring jurisdictions have additional ways to get trees to residents. While there likely will be volunteer interest, this program requires city staff time which is extremely limited. Letty suggested the UFC and VPIS aim to restart the program with volunteer management for Fall 2022. Letty also recommended a top down approach rather than bottoms up, based on areas of the City that have been identified where more trees are desired rather than allowing any resident to request a tree in any year.

e) Fellows Property Master Planning: Amy attended a meeting on Feb. 2 that reviewed the second draft of the master plan and comments. Because the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board did not have a Quorum, it was an informational meeting with no votes/action. There were approximately 25 residents who shared their thoughts on what should happen with the Fellows Property. There was general consensus that the property should be managed in a responsible ecological manner. The one remaining sticking point relates to the swath of land where the stormwater runs through. There is a desire for that swath to be replanted, but there are restrictions on what can be planted. Expert input will come in a site analysis when the landscape architect will develop a specific plan. The Advisory Board has been doing a very good job reviewing community comments and focusing on what would be appropriate for this property. Charles added that if trees are planted where there is a stormwater pipe, that will cause challenges if the pipes need to be replaced. Shrubbery would be more effective in that area than trees. A meadow or another natural feature (that is not trees) would be an effective treatment for the swath.

7) Current Business

a) [Tree of the Year](#). Identifying a Tree of the Year is part of our Tree City USA obligations and we have done this for many years. In advance of this meeting, UFC members proposed two trees for consideration for the 2022 Tree of the Year. The Yellowwood was the first nominated and there are 37 on public property throughout the City, according to Treekeeper. The Shingle Oak was the second tree to be nominated. There are none of this tree on public property, as identified in Treekeeper, yet Charles is aware that there are a number of them on private properties in the City. In response to a question, Charles noted that if the tree is available from a nursery and there is a place to plant it on public property, the selected Tree of the Year is planted at the City's Arbor Day event. Also, when they are available, the City gives buds of the Tree of the Year to attendees at the Arbor Day celebration. The Yellowwood is generally available at nurseries while the Shingle Oak currently does not appear to be commonly available at nurseries. The Urban Forestry Commission unanimously selected the Yellowwood as the 2022 Tree of the Year.

b) UFC Annual Report 2021 - Following last month's discussion on this subject, Amy prepared an attachment to the Annual Report which provides facts about the state of our Urban Forest. The information highlights the value of our urban tree canopy which includes 11,924 trees. This is the first time the data was pulled together in one document. In addition to providing it to the City Council, it can be included on the City's website. Letty suggested adding details on the Neighborhood Tree Program, highlighting the number of trees planted, and also that this be updated and reviewed on an annual basis. David asked if the City is in a better position now vs. 10 years ago and whether that data is available. Charles responded that in his unmet needs for budget preparation, he included two items: a fully-funded Urban Forester position (approximately \$90K with benefits) and a refresh of the tree inventory (between \$75-\$100K) which would touch every tree on City property. The rate of change is important data to know as it will help us understand what is happening and to plan. David summarized concerns he had previously presented to the City Council in November 2019, including the impact larger footprint homes have on our Tree Canopy. Amy

added that we can think through ways in which we can encourage citizens to register their trees (e.g., the Specimen Tree Program) and raise awareness of the importance of their trees.

c) Landscaped Open Space/ Greenspace Research - Kathy Philpott Costa (past Chair of the UFC) joined the meeting to share some of her knowledge related to research she had done on this subject. Kathy had reviewed how other local jurisdictions consider greenspace / Landscaped Open Space. The UFC has been trying to get the City to take seriously the 15% Landscaped Open Space that was approved by Council, yet often is not met by developers since many projects are approved through special exception. Kathy noted that we have viewed the 15% as aspirational with 10% as the minimum. Arlington County has a 10% nonnegotiable onsite canopy coverage, which excludes street trees whereas in Falls Church, developers can and do include street trees and that comprises the majority of their canopy coverage. Neighboring jurisdictions also have tree funds, which is something Falls Church should implement. Letty asked if these details are summarized in a matrix format. While they currently are not, an overview could be prepared in this manner. Letty summarized the metrics she historically has cared about most, which include: 1) Tree Canopy; 2) Open Space/Greenspace; 3) publicly accessible vs. private. That aligns with the UFC's views as well. The UFC is concerned about private space (often which is elevated) as it doesn't benefit the general city population. Letty urged that the UFC define metrics and explain them in layman's terms, provide these in a matrix and show what actually has been approved in Falls Church. Amy explained that the presentation of these numbers from Developers is complex and it takes time to review, examine and summarize this in an easy to understand format. The metrics, combined with education for the City Council at the upcoming retreat, can help move this forward in a positive manner and lead into standards for the development approval process. Letty asked if neighboring jurisdictions have established metrics that would work for us. Kathy urged that we replicate Arlington's requirements because of the similarity between our jurisdictions (e.g., density, restricted space) and that they are simple and easy to understand. Concern was expressed that when the UFC submits comments in writing about a planned development, the concerns are not always reflected and considered. Letty asked for an example so she can follow up. Kathy noted that the most recent was with the Founders Row II project when Boards and Commissions were brought in early in the process. Kathy submitted written comments, received acknowledgement from Planning staff, yet the UFC's comments were excluded in the next step of the review process.

d) Stormwater Management and Tree Preservation on Residential Lots - One of the primary issues driving this is pending code changes related to the Chesapeake Bay. A consultant will have to be hired to facilitate this process and Charles noted that these changes currently are in a holding pattern. Amy added that when the UFC reviews site plans, we ask detailed questions about stormwater retention, as this falls under landscaping which is in our purview. The UFC had discussed with the Stormwater Task Force the need for residential development to take into consideration stormwater management. There are some limits on what may be required due to Commonwealth of Virginia laws, yet the City could create

incentives for homeowners/developers to implement stormwater management capabilities. Mike urged that whatever requirements or incentives are put in place for capturing stormwater (e.g., cisterns), they also consider proper use of these stormwater management tools. He gave an example of a neighbor who has cisterns for rainwater storage who installed a pump which is turned on at the start of any major rainfall, thereby emptying the cisterns, which defeats the purpose of having them in the first place.

8) Future Business

- a) Counting Tree Plantings (My Tree Counts)
- b) Green Infrastructure Plan/Standards
- c) Biophilic Cities
- d) UF Management Plan
- e) UFC Standard Maintenance Agreements
- f) TOTY Revision
- g) UF Code Changes
- h) Outreach / Publicity
- i) Memorial or Commemorative Tree Designation Process
- j) Stormwater Task Force Coordination

9) Adjourn - the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

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