

Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
7:30 - 9:30 p.m. 300 Park Ave, Dogwood Room and Virtual

UFC members: Amy Crumpton (Chair), Stephanie Lamore (Vice Chair) Jennifer Anderson, Tim Roche,
City Council Liaison: Letty Hardi
UFC Student Representative: Katherine Hall
City Staff Liaison: Charles Prince (Arborist)
Members of the Public: none
Other guests: none

1) Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m.

2) Roll Call

3) Approval of the January Minutes: January 2023 UFC Meeting Minutes were approved by voice vote.

4) Public Comments: Denise Kostbar submitted a letter Feb. 2 to members of the City Council expressing concern that construction in the City is killing too many trees. Letty Hardi and Charles Prince responded to her by explaining the tree removal and replacement process during development and the state requirements that limit the City's ability to enforce more strict rules. The Commission agreed on a voice vote that an article or Letter to the Editor of the *Falls Church News Press* updating residents about the state of the City's tree canopy and policies guiding management would be a good public outreach task. Stephanie Lamore volunteered to draft such an article. Amy Crumpton suggested that the answers that Letty and Charles provided to Ms. Kostbar might be turned into helpful FAQs for the UFC webpage.

5) Staff updates and Informational Items:

- a. *City Council Calendar:* Letty explained that the FY 2023 budget should be finalized by the end of March.
- b. *Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Action Plan:* Letty explained that even though the City-owned buildings contribute just 5% of overall carbon emissions in the City, it is good to lead by example and that the City is looking for opportunities to reduce emissions, particularly in buildings and transportation. Amy noted that the Environmental Sustainability Council, tasked with developing the CCMEAP, will not consider the effect of the City's urban forest (about 1% of total emissions). The methodology for the CCMEAP comes from the WMCOG assessment of regional greenhouse gas emissions which does include urban forests in its reports.

- c. *T-Zone Ordinance Amendment (TO22-09)*: The Planning Commission and Planning staff expressed support for the Commission's recommendation that new developments in T-Zone lots strive for a 15% tree canopy coverage. This is in line with the provision in Code of Virginia 15.2-961 on tree preservation and conservation that allows for 15% tree canopy coverage in 20 years on 1 acre lots that have between 10 to 19 residential units. A revised proposal for the T-Zone Ordinance has been sent to City Council to be reread and sent for a second time to the ESC, Planning Commission and Housing Commission for comment. The UFC was not considered a relevant body for this amendment process, so Amy suggests that UFC keep track of the second round and comment again to buttress the 15% tree canopy coverage recommendation.
- d. *Neighborhood Tree Program*: During the pandemic (2021-2022), the NTP used contractors to plant 82 trees, 21 of which were part of Phase II of the program (requested trees planted beyond the ROW on private property). Given staff limitations, Charles is pausing fulfilling tree planting requests from the public for spring 2023. Any requests for trees received will be shifted to the fall 2023. The NTP Steering Committee, in consultation with Charles, also decided to pause the Phase II program. The program no longer has a trained Tree Squad to shadow the City's staff on tree planting and VPIS is concerned that the organization does not have proper liability insurance for volunteers to work on private property. The NTP Steering Committee is committed to reorganizing the Phase II program by providing smaller trees that citizens may plant themselves. Amy mentioned programs in Arlington and Alexandria that might serve as models.

6. Current Business:

- a. *Rules of Procedure*: Charles advised revisiting this item at the Commission's March meeting.
- b. *2022 Annual Report*: Amy will revise the draft and resend it to Committee members for final comments. Commissioners also agreed on voice vote to write a memo requesting that the City reinstate the Assistant Arborist position removed in 2020. This would be a recurring budget request for \$90,000 and will be submitted to the Director of Public Works Zak Bradley and City Manager Wyatt Shields and referenced in the report.
- c. *2023 Tree of the Year*: The Commission agreed unanimously to accept Katherine Hall's recommendation that Black gum, *Nyssa sylvatica*, be named 2023 Tree of the Year. The species was tree of the year in 1993 as well. Amy commended Katherine for her research and presentation.
- d. *2023 UFC Work Plan*: Commissioners voiced support for developing a calendarized work plan as a way to prepare for upcoming business, stay on top of City imposed deadlines and develop UFC deadlines for specific issues that we'd like to see move forward. Stephanie would like to see more items included on budget season deadlines.

7. Future Business

Green Infrastructure Standards
Urban Forestry Management Plan
Urban Forestry Code Changes

8. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m

Urban Forestry Commission Staff liaison for this meeting: Charles Prince,
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