

Tree Commission Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2022
7:30-9:00PM

Meeting Facilitator: Lester
Meeting Notes: Brad

Agenda:

1. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (MaryLee) - 5 minutes
 - a. Minutes approved.
2. Guest - Carole Barth - Manager, Tree Conservation and Conservation Landscaping Programs, PG Department of the Environment (MaryLee intro) - 20 minutes
 - a. County has lost over 11 sq. mi of tree canopy. Predominantly the impact of development.
 - b. They are tracking tree canopy by watershed.
 - c. County wide canopy was 51% in 2018.
 - d. The sub-watersheds that Mt. Rainier is part of is only 26% and 28% canopy cover.
 - e. Each mature tree we lose means we lose 50-100 gal. of SWM storage per rain event and over 50 lbs of CO2 capture per year.
 - f. Trying to get to a point of net no-loss of tree canopy.
 - g. Looking to get bigger trees planted to get bigger impact.
 - h. Raincheck rebate gets up to \$150/tree and up to \$4K for any combo of approved practices to private property owners. Expanding qualifying practices to be more wholistic. Meadows, bay scaping, runoff gardens, progressing to landscape restoration/reforestation.
 - i. All of the practices are also methodologies that require ongoing involvement.
 - j. The last practice is urban soil restoration – in general we're trying to leave things where it is, but there is a lot of stuff that isn't soil in the urban landscape. Using an air spade, low impact excavation allows introduction of vertical composting.
 - k. All of these practices are going to be implements through the Master Gardner program. Creating a "Climate-Wise" yard stick for conforming properties.
 - l. Luke commented that the city has initiated the native plant network for property owners in the city and would like to touch base with Carol on how to connect

these programs, as well as the state-wide approach in collaboration with Sierra Club.

- m. Tree Commission will make effort to pass on this information to residents regarding programs/rebates, etc.
 - n. Marylee requested the data and statistics form Carrol.
3. Tree Inventory software and next steps (Lester) - 10 minutes
- a. Have been discussing the AUTI system, that uses a modern data base with GPS capability to locate specific trees.
 - b. Marylee requested clarification on the cloud system.
 - i. Lester indicated that only 1 iPad can be used in the field at any given time, but then the data can be made available/stored on a computer or in the cloud.
 - c. Marylee commented that this tool will allow us to avoid mistakes on tree maintenance/removal and is in full support of the system.
 - d. Motion made and seconded to move forward with this system. No questions or objections after motion. TC accepts proceeding with this system.
4. FY 2023 Budget Proposal finalization (Marylee) - 5 minutes
- a. As part of our funding request, we called out tree maintenance and tree purchases. In 2022 the tree maintenance line was restored to \$60K, and the line proposed for 2023 is \$80K. There have been a lot more requests for tree pruning and maintenance, hence the increase. This line would also absorb the cost of the tree inventory system because it's part of tree maintenance. Our proposal includes metal protection fencing for trees – 5-6' in height.
 - b. Question to the TC is “do we have enough information to support the budget for \$80K? Lester, Jackie, Barry all agrees – inflation and aging tree population will all make it cost more.
 - c. For tree purchases, we got bumped up to \$5K. \$2,500 will be the normal amount after this year.
 - d. Marylee will finalize and send to Council and City Staff in next few days.
5. Spring resident planting (Barry) - 10 minutes
- a. We have \$5K to spend, but only 6 residents who have agreed to install and maintain their trees. We're ok with the modest response because of all the incoming trees.

- b. Marylee asked what the deadline for interest is – Barry indicated the deadline is the 30th of March.
 - c. Larger trees are contingent on availability.
6. Tree Commission feedback/recommendations on exceptional tree protection plan - 20 minutes (pending receipt of the plan from the city arborist in advance of meeting)
- a. Review and finalize
 - i. We have not received the revised tree protection plan as of 7:30 PM today.
 - ii. To recap, at the council meeting ~2 weeks ago, TC was asked to provide feedback and recommendation on the plan, but we can't really do that until we have a revised plan.
 - iii. Marylee indicated she'd like to move the labyrinth as far away from the hemlock, have a specific distance to cite, install it during dormant season, excavation limited to 12", protection zone extended to edge of excavation, digging should be by hand tools, arborist should be on site during protection set up and hand-digging, city should have periodic inspections, and special language should be put in the contract if it is bid out to ensure this.
 - iv. Lester would like to see the consideration of the critical root zone, which he understands to be 30', and that no heavy equipment should be located in that space and no or limited excavation within the CRZ.
 - v. Marylee questioned if moving the labyrinth will allow it to retain it's intent and be out of the critical root zone.
 - vi. We are agreed that we would limit heavy equipment (or none – hand digging only), and that we move the labyrinth as far away from tree as possible. It's not our role to propose alternate designs or construction options, just our recommendation to protect the tree.
 - vii. Lester agreed – we're there to advise on the protection of the tree.
 - b. Public comment
 - i. Mark Grisar felt that the lack of roots in the park, and the fact that you can go into the arc of the critical root zone. Moving design elements is not something you can do "willy-nilly". Also mentioned that the work of the spring will impact the site to, including the large oak. Also, feels that

doing this piece-meal is creating a bigger problem. He objects to the tree commission's approach of relocating a major design element.

- ii. Jon Patee is concerned that there are roots being excavated in general and has seen a root he estimated as big around as his hands put together. He has also not received several of the reports/documents that he has requested. Concerned that we would continue to play around with the life of the hemlock.
- iii. Jimmy Tarlau has heard a possible consensus and will be discussing it at the next council meeting.
- iv. Jacob stated he was surprised that the exploration only went to 12" instead of the requested 18". Feels it reflects poorly on the arborists supervising the operation, and that we're no closer to having the information we needed to make an informed decision. In absence of this, he would encourage the neighbors to act out of caution, that the interest in a new labyrinth don't outweigh our interests in the one exceptional tree in our city.
- v. Art Silverman – understands the historic nature of the spring and the ecological uniqueness of the tree. And while the labyrinth would be nice, there's been no case made for it. He feels there are other alternatives that don't require the labyrinth – the burden should be on the proposal, and no one has made a case for the labyrinth.
- vi. Steve McKinley Ward – if there is going to be excavating do it in dormant, minimize depth, hand tools, iron clad specs in the contract, and above all, moving any excavation that takes place as far away from the base of the tree as possible. Every foot gained away from the base of the tree is valuable. A no-dig option is the best, but if you want to proceed with a different design is just placing the labyrinth out in stones.

7. Red oak exceptional tree nomination discussion (Brad) - 10 minutes

- a. Bruce & Debbie Hutton at 4006 35th – year ago
- b. 16'
- c. Maintenance is a critical issue – let's look at Takoma and other communities on how they handle them comprehensively (Marylee).
- d. Barry – topic for deeper discussion.

- e. Larry – agrees, we need to get into a deeper discussion. Our experience with the Spring Park project has brought to light.
 - f. Jackie asked if Hyattsville or Takoma had similar designations. She would be happy to reach out and contact some people.
 - g. Marylee indicated Marty Frye in Takoma has been responsive in the past, and in DC Steve McKinley Ward.
 - h. Steven McKinley-Ward commented in chat: “The benefits of trees—the environmental services—do not just accrue to the homeowner. They accrue to the neighborhood. That is the logic, seems to me, of public support for some special private property trees: The benefits radiate outwards: Shade, cooling services beyond the immediate homeowner.”
8. New email address (Marylee) - 5 minutes
- a. We are moving to a new TC address, starting on 4/1/2022, and retiring the existing address in May (we’ll have a month of getting emails at 2 accounts and then eliminating the old. We’ll do a notice to everyone and start putting it in all our email
9. Message Articles (Jackie) - 5 minutes
- a. Will use Lester’s article for April
- 10.
- a. 33rd & Perry
 - b. 3108 & 3110 Perry
11. Next meeting date
- a. Next date is June 6

ACTION ITEMS (ADD UPDATE IN ORANGE TO SAVE TIME)

1. Marylee will confirm the address of Newton tree for pruning with low branches and share with Rocio. **DONE This tree needs to be pruned still but wait until dormant**
2. Review the YouTube video Lester provided to better understand the AUTI program functionality. Follow up with questions and consider incorporating the request into our FY23 budget request.
3. Rocio will send notification letters to residents getting street trees from levee county replacement planting.
4. **New street trees need to be added to the inventory.**

5. Marylee will write an article on 2021 accomplishments for the Message. **DONE**
6. Rocio: Send to the TC the revised list of tree species that the city has been providing with Tree Permits. TC to review and comment to ensure native canopy trees are being used.
7. Lester and Valerie: Coordinate reviewing tree inventory software.
8. Jackie will reach out to Horace Henry to ask for recommendations on tree inventory systems.
9. Rocio will work with Public Works on household notifications, much like was done with sidewalk work, for new trees in tree boxes - NEED UPDATE ON LEVEE PLANTING
10. Brad will finalize Exceptional Tree Nomination and then will send it to our city clerk to get it on the next city council meeting agenda. **PENDING**
11. TC: Revise our tree removal assessment form as indicated above. **DONE**
12. Brad & Zachary: Come up with a proposal to reach out to tree companies to ensure they are educated on our tree ordinance requirements. We should also investigate other models of putting responsibility on the tree care provider for violating the ordinance. **Zachary can share examples of other municipalities that specifically place liability on tree companies. But starting with outreach might be the best first step.**