

Tree Commission Meeting

February 22, 2024

7:30 – 9:00 PM

Attendees: MaryLee Haughwout, Jackie Sabath, Andy Doyle, Lester Scheuerman, Gabe Popkin, Luke Chesek, Jonathan Carney, Wil Sanders

Facilitator: MaryLee

Minutes: Lester

Prior to the agenda everyone was invited to introduce themselves and their role/interest in attending.

Agenda:

1. The minutes from the December 4, 2023 meeting were approved with no changes after Andy moved their acceptance and Jackie seconded.
2. MaryLee introduced a special guest, Jonathan Carney, The Urban Forester for Casey Trees to provide an update on the Mount Rainier Resilient Tree Planting. Jonathan stated that the Spring plantings will start 3/8/24 as the first round with another round in May. Over 60 trees were requested, which exceeded the number for the grant but he can provide the remainder from another grant they have. A total of 24 households, 1 school and 1 business requested trees, all of which have been notified of the upcoming planting. There are 22 different species to be planted. Most will be this Spring but the species not immediately available will be planted in the Fall. The Right Of Way trees, 17 trees in 17 locations, will be planted in the Fall. In response to questions, he indicated that the trees will be from 6' to 10' tall when planted and are warranted for 2 years. Jonathan also indicated that Casey Trees will be making 'cold calls' to property managers of apartments and will be planting trees in other municipalities up the Rt. 1 corridor.
3. MaryLee introduced another special guest, Wil Sanders, the Coordinator for Joe's GreenWorks Program, to discuss their tree related work and potential collaboration with the Tree Commission. Wil stated their program, based at Joe's Movement Emporium in Mount Rainier, started 5 years ago by

partnering with Anacostia Riverkeepers. They have installed 3 trash traps to prevent trash from entering the Anacostia River. One is located in the canal in Mount Rainier, another is in Capital Heights and the third in College Park. They also obtain grants to plant only native trees and remove invasive species. Their goal is to protect the tree canopy in P.G. County, primarily in the Anacostia watershed area. Wil indicated they can plant from 75-100 trees in Mount Rainier over the next year. MaryLee indicated the importance of coordinating with the Casey tree planting to avoid duplication. In response to Andy's question, Wil stated that their plantings would include watering and maintenance. Wil also stated that they are flexible and can work with other grants the city has to supplement what they can't provide. MaryLee expressed appreciation for Greenwork's initiative, and that the Tree Commission will work to get the message out to residents. Based on our experience with the Casey Tree grant we should get a very good response from residents.

4. Spring Event Planning: April 13th A Garden Crawl at the Nature Center.
Wil indicated Joe's is involved with the planning, and shared a map of the route which will start at the MNCPPC'S Nature Center at 11am with activities and give aways then move to the Food Forest, Joe's, the trash trap on Arundel before moving back to the Nature Center where festivities will include a performer from Joe's and a food truck. The event is still looking for other stops along the way. MaryLee suggested Roger's park which has a number of new tree plantings. Luke suggested the Native Plant network made up of residents who have planted at least 25 native plants and have a sign posted in their front yard. Andy suggested that a sight we recently pruned could be a way of showing correct techniques. Wil stated a planning meeting will be on March 8th and the Tree Commission is invited to participate.
5. Winter Pruning – Gabe
Gabe indicated the Commissioners have made great progress and expects that all city pruning will be done by the end of Winter. He also stated that Steve McKindley-Ward provided a beneficial workshop and informed us that

D.C. prunes trees year around, except for Elms which are only pruned in the Winter. The next group pruning will be on Chillum Rd. on Saturday morning. Jackie raised the question about pruning Crape Myrtles, both Gabe and MaryLee indicated we have been avoiding them due to the presence of CMBS. Luke raised the issue of trees on Rainier Ave. between 33rd and 34th that have needed pruning for some time. He will notify Rocio since this may be more than what the Commissioners can do. Andy raised the question of the follow up process when recommendations are made for professional tree care. There was a consensus that we do need a more effective way to get information to PW and following up on implementation.

6. Urban Forest Code changes – Lester

Lester suggested changing the code to increase the penalty for harming a tree. The penalty of from \$500 - \$1000 for the recent killing of the 16” Red Maple on Newton St. revealed a weakness in the code. He is proposing that anyone damaging or destroying a tree would be responsible for the actual cost to the city and a penalty linked to the diameter or circumference of the tree. MaryLee suggested that this be linked to other changes that are necessary to update the Urban Forest Code. Andy suggested that a subcommittee be established and Luke expressed the belief that the Mayor and City Council will be amenable to recommendations by the Tree Commission. MaryLee suggested we continue to gather information regarding how other Maryland municipalities are dealing with it and resume this in our next meeting.

7. MNCPPC workshop on invasive vine removal – Lester

Lester proposed that we notify Park & Planning that we support a workshop that they will plan and present and will encourage resident participation. No objections were made.

8. Dead Levee Trees on City property – Lester

Lester reported that there are 15 dead Levee Trees in tree boxes that need to be removed. If we are beyond the 2 year timeframe for the County to remove

and replace them he suggested that the Commissioners remove them.

MaryLee will check into the County's responsibility before a decision is made.

9. Communications – Jackie

Jackie reported that March 8th is the deadline for the next Message which will come out in April.

10. Letter of support for Joe's Greenworks grant application – Andy

Andy drafted a letter of support from the Tree Commission for Joe's Greenworks grant application to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

11. Next meeting will be on April 18th.

PREVIOUS ACTION ITEMS (Not reviewed during meeting due to lack of time)