

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

December 7, 2023

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Attendees; Vicki Metcalf, Tim Padalino, Holly Lafferty, Donna Shaunesey, Jeff Aten, Riaan Anthony, Jean Umiker-Sebeok, Susan McKinnon, JD Brown, Rob Mathes, Jeff Pacelli (via Zoom), Makshya Tolbert, Karim Habbab

Approval of April Minutes (*J. Aten*) Approved with minor corrections to attendee list

Staff Report (*S. Gaines*)

- Update RFP for Downtown Tree Replacement Plan – Contractors (Wolf/Josey) has started assessments of trees, will be reporting updates to City Staff – adding planter at CODE Building
- City of Charlottesville awarded Inflation Reduction Act Grant (\$300,000) from USDA.. Still waiting for official acknowledgement and instructions
- Continued work on Invasive Plant Control/Containment Strategy on City Properties. Properties considered for next round of mulching and/or goats include:

Upper Walker Middle School (.5 acres)

John Warner Parkway (2.5 acres)

Meadow Creek Gardens (.85 acres)

Azalea Park West (5.4 acres)

Moore's Creek Farm Park (1.8 acres)

Unity Field / NE Park (.6 acres)

Rivanna River Free Bridge (1.8 acres)

Quarry Park/UVA Foundation (46 acres)

- Jarmena Landscaping has won the tree planting bid RFQ to install 186 trees around the city limits. Focus Parks include Jenkins Park, Belmont Park, Jordan Park, Greenleaf. Focus Neighborhoods include Orangedale, Rockcreek, and University Circle. May start next week.
- ReLeaf Cville will be doing a major planting in the Rose Hill neighborhood (approximately 75 trees) – including Burley Middle School, Charlottesville Housing Redevelopment on Madison St, and Washington Park. Planting will be mid-December, except for oaks and gums.
- Shenandoah Habitats will install 900 - 1000 seedlings at Fry Springs, Forest Hills Park, Azalea Park, Rivanna Trail (Jordan Park -> 5th Street) on December 14. Should only take half a day.
- Invasive Mailer will be displayed on Urban Forestry Website. Will go out in Parks and Recreation mailing next spring.
- Reviewed the Report sent to the Planning Commission for the CIP. Note there was a net loss in 2023 – more trees taken down than were planted due to weather extremes. Only have \$100,000 to plant 2" caliper trees. Discussion of how to frame gains and losses to take credit for the smaller trees planted, while accounting for non-survival. Need research on what spacing and species work best in an urban environment.

Discussion about the fact that most of UVA is in Albemarle County. How much should we ask for tree planting in future CIP's? We will have better data and track record next year. May be an opportunity to have ReLeaf get funding as a nonprofit. Need for additional staff. Rob pointed out that a similar size city has two urban foresters, plus a field crew and Commissioners discussed how we can increase staff devoted to trees. Commissioners gave Steve a cheer for his excellent work.

State of the Forest – requesting presentation on March 4th. Twenty minutes with ten for questions.

Biophilic Cities – JD Brown did a brief presentation on Biophilic Cities. Cities can apply to join this global network working to nurture a nature-focused environment. The Tree Commission could initiate the discussion and working with Albemarle is a possibility. Could involve UVA experts such as environmental psychologists, planners and more. Benefits: access to policymakers and practitioners, confidential discussions of insights and best practices, library of technical research, platform for broad communication, fostering direct relationships through visiting delegations. Point person could be mayor, planners, sustainability staff, etc. Application would set forth current status, future plans, available resources and letters of endorsement. No dues. Could we coordinate with Albemarle? Use Resilient Together? Resilient Rivanna focusing on river corridors.

Tree Commission Meeting Procedures – will circulate a chart for folks to take minutes in rotation. Bylaws specify the date – we can't change the date permanently without approval from Council. Changing it once a year would be acceptable. We need to adopt a policy about electronic participation if we want to allow it. We would also need to solve the technical issues. Chair should have a pre-meeting with Steve to set agenda. Must post by Friday before the meeting. We should discuss this at the January meeting, including electing a Chair and Committee Chairs, plus determine the calendar. May want to use Teams more. Another item for discussion is what information we should make public. If things go to the City Clerk, they will be public and archived.

Education & Advocacy (J Umiker-Sebeok) – no report

Arbor Committee (*M Tolbert*) – no report

Codes and Practices (V. Metcalf) – no report, but brief discussion about the zoning ordinance public hearing. Three Commissioners spoke and we will have to wait to see which of our recommendations were adopted. There will be two more meetings with public comment. Riann encouraged us to speak again