

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

August 6, 2024

5:00 – 7:00pm

In-Person Meeting

Parks and Recreation Office

(Downtown Mall, Adjacent to Parking Garage)

Call to Order and Approval of July Minutes (*M. Tolbert*)

- No amendments
- Minutes approved.

Makshya opening remarks –

- There are changes to agenda to address concerns and frustrations after last meeting.
- Questions should wait until the end of Steve's staff report – time has been added for commission questions after his report
- Each committee head will send out bullet points with there report out. The report-outs will not be used for discussion.
- Items not on agenda will be addressed at the end of the meeting or outside of the meeting if we run out of time.
- We are working on an option for people to attend meetings when they are not able to be there in person.

Staff Report – 5:10-5:35pm (*S. Gaines*)

- The only requirement of the tree commission is the state of the forest report. All of our other actions are bonus!
- Grant Update: The City will likely decide on a contractor to develop Urban Forest Management Plan in August 2024. Tree Commission will be asked to participate in plan content and workshops associated with the volunteer training portion of grant administration.
 - Steve may develop a management plan for each park.
 - Would also like to make a more user friendly dashboard for public information.
 - Will eventually need to table and interact with the public to get a sense of what they hope to get from the parks.

- All operational funds have been replenished; all programs are fully funded using 2025 program funding.
 - Planning to plant 150 trees focusing on right-of-ways and near bridges.
 - New technician is helping plant trees.
- Invasive Plant Control Update:
 - Shenandoah Habitats has completed all ground cover installations.
 - Butterfly Greenway and Azalea Park West likely sites for mulching in fall.
- Wolf/Josey is finishing up Downtown Mall Tree Management Plan. Presented overview/analysis of project to both City staff and Advisory Committee in July 2024.
 - Slides of the presentation are available.
 - 20 year plan for replacing the trees.
- RFQ for 2024 fall planning will be ready for bid mid-late August 2024. Hope to have all plantings completed by December 1.
 - Will include watering for trees planted this year and last.
- Hoping to get the Tree Commission involved with the invasive plant coalition. The tree commission already have a few members participating (Makshya, Susan). Still working to get a name of the organization.
 - Will be focusing on invasive vines for current time.
 - Next meeting on August 22 at Carver – all welcome!
 - Manuel – it would be good to also keep a pulse on what invasive insects are coming to the area.

Staff Report Questions/Comments – 5:35–5:50pm

Committee Reports – 5:50–6:15pm

- Arbor Committee (*D. Shaunesey*) – 10 minutes
 - Notable Tree Tour (Susan): expanding ordinances and relationship building with CATS; trying to understand relationship and possibilities of these two ‘notable tree’ projects.
 - Susan talked with Robin Haynes from CATS about their notable tree program.
 - CATS has a driving tour of some of the notable trees. Makshya, Donna, and Susan participated in tour.
 - Currently, there does not appear to be an incentive to protecting trees in this way.

- There is an ordinance to make a tree a “preservation tree” but that just means it costs \$2500 if they cut it down.
 - There is a conservation ordinance that trees can be nominated for. Arbor Committee is trying to located where a list of these trees are.
 - Makshya - May need to restart list if the list cannot be located.
 - Tree Commission tried to get every city-owned tree as a protected tree, but it was not accepted into new code.
 - Will likely take this subject back up in a future meeting for more discussion.
 - Eric – there are open source softwares for urban forest inventories that would be a good tool for community science.
- Brief community Input update (for Fifeville)
 - Would be good to ask public what trees they think are notable in their neighborhood.
 - Email will be sent out next week with more information. No new updates at this time.
- Codes and Practices (*T. Mills*) – 5 minutes
 - No updates.
 - Betsy – codes committee could look into codes to propose in state of the forest.
 - Steve – The contractor he is hiring will also be organizing this information.
 - Makshya – City Council says we can request a work session with council before our state of the forest presentation.
 - Steve – City has NDS intern that will also be presenting to City Council about codes. The plan is to have her attend next month’s meeting.
- Education & Advocacy (*S. McKinnon*) – 10 minutes
 - Tree Commission Webpage: drafting updates + support needs?
 - Draft for webpage is currently halfway done (text and sections). Susan plans to complete draft before September meeting.
 - Email list (in service of public support, meeting invitations, via TC or via partner organizations)? Ideas?
 - List of people that can write letters of support or attend meetings to advocate for Tree Commission issues.

New/Old Business – 6:15-6:45pm

- Website: Discussion
 - Where will our website live?

- Currently tucked into the Urban Forestry page under Parks and Rec.
- Woody – there is a Facebook page for the Commission last updated in 2019.
- Who will build?
- Who can access/change content?
 - Susan – 2023 State of the Forest is still not on website.
 - Steve – we must have a proposal of exactly what we want to change. Parks and Rec will probably not like it. City would not post comments between tree commission and City Council.
 - Betsy – Housing authority has an external link because it was getting too complicated through the city. Not sure where that website it housed but will ask. There are free ways to host website.
 - Steve – it will be better to make a page outside of the city. We could get an outside link, but Steve needs to make sure that will be approved. He will look into this. Facebook page might have potential.
 - Manuel – break it into two tasks – build the Tree Commission site and get the City’s permission to link to it. Could probably get grad students to make it pretty in a small amount of time.
 - Makshya – We have two main questions: Can we have an external site the Tree Commission self-maintains? Can we link to that site on the City website?
 - Manual – We will need to specify that this site will be only for Commission sharing out information and not receiving information from public – there are more security issues if information is going both ways.
 - Steve – who will keep maintaining the site?
 - Manuel – Start with plan for three years
 - Susan – Part of the outreach committee’s roles is updating urban forestry website.
 - Steve – let’s minimize efforts until we hear back from the city on these questions. Steve will ask.
- Relationship among/between sites?
- Email/Communication outlets: Discussion
 - Steve – we already have that with organizations like ReLeaf and CATS.
 - Manuel – we should reach out to these partner organizations because they can be more “political”.

- Makshya – should we keep using these organizations or is it worth creating our own list. Should we create more official channels with these organizations where we give them regular updates.
- Makshya – this discussion is happening because there is more need for outreach and pressure on topics that tree commission cares about.
- Susan – we should create and maintain a list of organizations and contacts that we can reach out to.
- Makshya – the invasive species coalition would be a good starting point.

- State of the Forest: January 2025 City Council Meeting
 - Updates: January date for presentation (with Steve support)
 - Michael Payne says this would be the most strategic time.
 - Presentation would need to be complete in December or likely before because people will be out of time.
 - Work session, if interested (Fall 2024)
 - Occur the same day as Council meetings but in the afternoon.
 - We would want it same day or a few meetings before presentation.
 - Betsy – it would be good to meet about a draft or agenda about state of the forest to get feedback we can address before the presentation.
 - We would want at least an agenda for the work session for public notice – possibly a draft report.
 - Betsy – did they offer feedback last year?
 - Makshya – no. The council may not even be reading it. The work session would be a good way to ensure the council thinks about it.
 - Manuel – what would we want from the session?
 - Makshya – we could bring three resolutions and see what the council actually thinks is feasible.
 - October would be ideal for work session. That would allow us to make edits in November.
 - Makshya will follow up with Michael Payne to make sure it makes sense to request a session. Official request needs to go through Sam Sanders.
 - Session will likely last 30 minutes to an hour. They are open to the public.
 - Write CIP Letter with request (December 8, 2022)
 - Resolutions

Makshya – Michael Payne says January would be the most strategic timing for the presentation.

- Hybrid Tree Commission meetings: Vote (if necessary) on bylaws amendment
 - We have this figured out

Items/Announcements Not on Agenda/Action Items for Next Meeting – 6:50pm

General Public Comment

- Matt Carrier – new to the area.
 - It would be interesting to address fine for taking down a tree based on its estimated value rather than the flat \$2500 fee.
 - Steve – tried to get this in the new codes, but it was turned down.
 - Tree Prominence could also be a metric when addressing tree value.

Adjourn – 7:00pm^(†) At the discretion of the Chair, public comments related to particular agenda items may be solicited at that point in the meeting.

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