

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

September 3, 2024

5:00 – 7:00 pm

In-Person Meeting

In attendance:

MaKshya Tolbert (MT)
Steve Gaines (SG)
Tyler Miller (TM)
Donna Shaunesey (DS)
JD Brown (JB)
Manuel Lerdaun (ML)
Woody Parrish (WP)
Susan McKinnon (SM)
Rob Mathes (Non-TC Member)

Arrived Late:

Eric Bredder (EB) (Arrived at 5:20 pm).
Maya Claggett (MC)(intern)

Not in attendance:

Shanti Levy (SL)
Betsy Roettger (BR)
Jeff Aten (JA)
Holly Lafferty (HL)
Eric Bredder (EB)

Parks and Recreation Office

(Downtown Mall, Adjacent to Parking Garage)

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

Staff Report – 5:10 pm-5:25 pm (*S. Gaines*)

— Grant Update: The City will be negotiating with two separate consulting firms before awarding RFP for the Urban Forest Management Plan Grant. The City submitted its first scheduled update to the US Forest Service regarding progress thus far.

Notes: Used to have 3 firms, now just two. Both look good and we're just excited to be getting closer to finalizing this." Did go back and forth with the forest service and the company helping us report and execute the grant. That meeting went ok. Will talk about this more next meeting.

— Locations for tree installations and associated maps have been created. Planned Request for Quote (RFQ) to be submitted early September and awarded late September. Spreadsheets and map locations for installation trees can be available for TC commissioners if they wish to view them.

Notes: Is ready. 133 trees - hoping to plant mostly in the right-of-ways. Will be planting seedlings where the goats were and where we mulched. Attaching the watering to the RFQ this year (unlike last year) and we can't go over budget, so if there's anything left we might do a larger fall planting next year. Hoping to have everything installed by Christmas.

— Invasive Plant Control Update:

— Herbicide applications have occurred at select projects (late August/ early September). All treated areas will be treated (targeted herbicide applications) this fall with ground covers (primarily warm season grasses) also installed.

Notes: Planning to hit every site we worked on pretty heavily. Planning to install seedlings this fall. Steve Prefers fall pesticide application b/c he thinks its more effective. We didn't get Fry's Spring and Washington Park - both were very heavily infested so may get hit with pesticide harder. 2 applications this fall.

— Butterfly Greenway and Azalea Park West likely sites for mulching in fall.

Notes: Greenleaf park, sherwood drive are other possible locations - both have kudzu and would like to catch it before its established. But the main takeaway is to make sure the areas we've already hit are under control (maintain what we've done) before we start new things.

— Wolf/Josey is finishing up the Downtown Mall Tree Management Plan. Will be presenting to City Council and BAR this fall. Urban Forester to begin leading walk/talks on the mall this winter and/or spring 2025.

Notes: Gave their final report today (9-3-2024). We'll be hearing a lot more about this as we go, particularly as we hear about money. This last presentation didn't include discussions of funding and money - a topic for another day.

— Parks and Recreation has created an internal group to look at CIP requests. TC will be asked for a letter of support before we submit to City Council.

Notes: Budget season. Rob is probably handling that. My guess is that we aren't going to ask for new line items - but we will ask for more money.

Rob: Invasives, Ash, Tree Planting. Mostly just how to allocate this money.

Steve: There really aren't many ash left that need to be removed. Will discuss more at the next meeting.

— Tree Commissioners have expressed interest in optional hybrid/in-person TC meetings. To do this, TC will need to provide a written proposal describing why the meeting is necessary and additional language regarding how the option would be presented in TC bylaws.

Notes:

Woody Parish "What constitutes a quorum - you have to have this in the room anyway, right?"

— Website follow-up/options:

Notes:

MT: We all discussed two questions Steve got the answers to

Two Questions:

(1) Can an external site that the TC Maintains.

(i) Answer: Maybe. Pretty much an effective no.

(2) Can we have a link to it on the TC Website.

(i) Answer: Definitive No

SM: Can we get a better relationship with the website folks. They've been somewhat incorrect or frustrating, etc. e.g., they removed the old SoF when they added the new SoF

MT: Workflow: I send an email to Steve -> Steve and/or Nathan emails ok -> MT may follow up -> Steve and/or Nathan respond with a response that it's been completed.

SM: There really isn't an archive of past reports on the city website. Its like trying to find the list of nominated trees. Where do all these things go? I'll check with Peggy and Roxanne, and the Wolf Josey guy said that he had. The archiving of things relative to the TC basically just disappears.

JB: Ideally we would have an archive of all the things we've done on the website available to the public.

SM: Not trying to start a revolution here - just trying to get information out to people and be transparent.

EB: Would a bullet point excel style list help.

SG: I like a bullet point list that we can share.

ML: If we could establish a link and an outside website I was sure that I could find talented people to volunteer their time to do the work. Unfortunately we can so it's a moot point.

MT: So what is the next step?

SG: Bullet list.

SM: I'll work this up for next month.

Staff Report Questions/Comments – 5:25pm–5:40pm (*Discussion*)

Discussion of Tree Preservation Ordinance.

MT: Regarding a list of trees we've voted on/nominated - this keeps getting lost in translation. Do we just need to start over?

DS: Allegedly the green print has a layer with just this. It's on the website.

SG: These are just from the Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards. Since I've been here we've not done any.

<Large discussion of tree preservation ordinance> that really didn't come to much of a conclusion. Apparently Freas wants to preserve all trees on public property - but he can also waive all of the provisions of tree protection in the ZC and the tree preservation ordinance doesn't confer any actual protection.

SM: For the CIP thing can we get a date for when you submit it and can you notify us several weeks before the city council takes it up - so that we're not being asked the night before, so that we can actually prepare a decent letter. Too last minute - if we can get it on the calendar that would be very helpful. The night before makes it really difficult to do.

SG: The language that we're going to use is going to be functionally the same as last year since we're not asking for new items, just more money.

Subcommittee Reports – 5:40 pm – 5:55 pm

—Arbor Committee (*D. Shaunesey*) - 5 minutes

Notes: Statewide meeting of tree commissions and related organization is on Monday September 9th at 3:30. I'll send it to the whole commission.

MT: Requested to add: "Need to filter out what trees have already been city-appointed, and then manage next round of private-property trees to submit forms for and to present to CC"

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Further investigate providing credits for tree planting or forested areas as Stormwater Utilities under _____. "See 'A select review of the Virginia State Code for Trees and Forests for more information'"

ara.johnson@dof.virginia.gov <lara.johnson@dof.virginia.gov>

—Codes and Practices (*T. Mills*) - 5 minutes

Notes: No Updates

—Education & Advocacy (*S. McKinnon*) - 5 minutes

—Invasives Coalition Update:

SM: Steve has brought together a group that is interested in the invasives issues. Includes Woody and Manuel. It is now called the Charlottesville Invasives Plant Partnership (CHIPP) something.

- Focus: Charlottesville, Getting Vines out of trees, and Private property.

- hoping to create a neighborhood based system of people who are trained to deal with invasive species and who can inspire awareness and action and/or help people who don't have the resources or capability to do removal on their own trees.

- Partners include: Urban forestry, office of sustainability, TC, blue ridge prism, CATS, Piedmont Master gardeners, ReLeaf Cville, Rivanna Conservation Alliance, Rivanna Master Naturalists, RTF.

- Working on doing a presentation to the meeting of neighborhood associations. Meeting on September 19th with that association meeting. (Maybe a biennial meeting).

 - Woody is skeptical about the neighborhood associations.

- Woody has been doing some research on the HOA's in Charlottesville. They're nested into the city and have their own issues.

New/Old Business – 5:55 pm – 6:30 pm

—TC/PC Fall Work Sessions with PC and/or CC?

- Taking recommendations to workshop with PC/CC

- Steep Slopes Waiver Requests/Discretion (City is not denying Waiver Requests)
- Citywide Tree Removal Permits and Tree Preservation
- Are we doing everything we can (legally) to preserve trees?
 - What legal things are we **already** doing?
 - What legal things are we **not** doing?
 - What are we curious about, that we don't know the legality of?

–Notes:

-MT: Work Session with PC or CC.

-Initially I went to just the chairs, but I think it is time to open that up. If they wrote back and said we could meet in October - that would be really challenging.

-Reaching out again to see IF this is something that people want - or have the capacity or desire to actually do. But I don't know how to move forward if folks don't have time or energy or capacity to move forward with it.

JB: What is the scope of things that could be talked about realistically. Does it make sense to have 1-2 ideas that could be looked at logistically or realistically - about what can actually be accomplished in this kind of setting. It seems like an opportunity to make a point about things that matter to us.

MT: Would be around 45 minutes. Is it taking 1-2 recommendations. Is it just taking something so that we do something.

SG: There are a number of things that I would like to see approved - but its a TC issue.

<Large discussion of Storm Water Fee>

-DS: I think we should send the ideas we've already listed to them and start the conversation.

Steep Slopes:

SM: What happens when we build on all those sites? What is the ecological consequence of continually impinging on those drainages in the city.

Whose interested in Prep and Presentation:

Donna, JD, MaKshya, SM, Tyler, Steve

Notes from MT:

Tyler reflecting on adding a tree component to the Stormwater Ordinance – could be a really smart thing to take to City Council because it answers two questions: how do we pay for it, and what do we do? It would take looking at the numbers and saying, “this makes sense, and this won't hurt people” – are Manuel and JD uniquely qualified to talk about that?; Has come up in three separate council meetings, and discussions at length with at least three council members; Maybe an early step would be a TC sitting down with whoever on council is most interested; we could discuss removal permits, steep slopes waiver, and large diameter shade trees; JD, Tyler down to be involved; there is some interest in Steep Slopes and/or Tree Removal Permit Waivers (2 different waivers); we could get access to site plans via FOIA; right now we have available on floodplains and on riverine/riparian corridors: ecologically, what happens when we build in all those sites, in terms of the consequences for flooding and ecosystems services? Donna, JD, Tyler, MaKshya, Steve

General Public Comment – 6:30pm

Maya Claggett, NDS: Presentation to Tree Commission – 6:30-6:55

— Share out + brief discussion/questions (*Please read attached file before the meeting*)

Items/Announcements Not on Agenda/Action Items for Next Meeting – 6:55pm

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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