

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

May 6, 2025

5:00 – 7:00 pm

In-Person Meeting – Parks and Recreation Office
(Downtown Mall, Adjacent to Parking Garage)

Call to Order and Approval of April Minutes (*S. Levy*)

5:00-5:05

Staff Report and Discussion (*S. Gaines*)

5:05-5:40

Urban Forest Management Plan Update

- The IRA Grant has been terminated under new mandates from Washington. The city is working with Eocene to finish data acquisition with regard to the Tree Canopy Analysis, Vegetation Inventory, and Street Tree Inventory. These reports will be paid for with City funds and treated as separately purchased projects.
- Several entities/cities/NGOs that either received or administered funding (IRA funds directed toward Climate Change Mitigations) and had grants recently terminated are in the process of appeal.
- The City of Charlottesville hopes to finish the work that was started with Eocene and produce a quality Urban Forest Management Plan in the near future.

Invasive Plant Control Update

- Follow-up foliar applications/chemical treatments will resume this summer on all managed tracts (except Free Bridge).

Urban Forestry Technician

- Position has been re-posted. The plan is to have a new technician onboard by late May.

Garrett Street Tree Removal

- One of the Garrett Street Trees was damaged during recent utility work. The tree has been scheduled for removal on April 25.
- CATS, ReLeaf CVille, and RCA are interested in pursuing avenues for code change in regard to Tree Preservation.

New/Old Business

5:40-6:30

- Updates on Tree Commission Positions (*S. Levy*)
 - Update on LIN position and discussion of recruitment plans
 - Update on Tree Steward position
 - New openings
- Franklin Street Floodplain Fill Project (*S. Levy*)
 - As possible example of vulnerable areas in need of protection
- Review of Garrett Street Tree Letter (*S. Levy*)
 - Discussion, comments, edits
- Preparations for TC meeting with Utilities on stormwater proposal: May 16
(*J.D. Brown, T. Miller, B. Roettger*)

Committee Reports**6:30-6:45**

- Arbor Committee (*M. Tolbert*)
- Codes & Practices Committee (*J.D. Brown*)
- Education & Advocacy Committee (*E. Bredder*)

General Discussion of Commission Wide Priorities**6:45-6:55****Items/Announcements Not on Agenda****General Public Comment****6:55-7:00****Adjourn****7:00**

^(f) At the discretion of the Chair, public comments related to particular agenda items may be solicited at that point in the meeting.

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call the ADA Coordinator at (434) 970-3182 or submit a request via email to ada@charlottesville.gov. The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide a 48-hour notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

Tree Commission Meeting Minutes Meeting Minutes – 4-1-2025

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

April 1, 2025

5:00 – 7:00 pm

**In-Person Meeting – Parks and Recreation Office
(Downtown Mall, Adjacent to Parking Garage)**

Call to Order (*S. McKinnon*)

5:00

In attendance:

- Susan McKinnon
- MaKshya Tolbert
- Woody Parrish
- Hannah Brown
- Manuel Lerdaу
- Betsy Roettger
- Meredith Keppel
- Steven Gaines, CITY
- Rob Mattheis?, CITY

Approval of March Minutes

- March meeting minutes were approved.

Introduction of New Member: Meredith Keppel

5:10

Works for UVA Weldon Cooper Center and has much more very relevant experience.

Eocene Update

- Vegetation Analysis will be starting in April, mailings went out to private landowners the week of March 24. Now getting responses, most people have been responsive. Most sampling will occur in April. (This has to do with the IRA grant.)
- Starting to get preliminary data and baseline comparisons to previous studies from Tree Canopy Analysis (those reports can be made available to Commissioners). Very surprised that we have more canopy than we thought. Canopy was 38% (current), they are finding 46%. BUT they are using more sample points and will be able to get reading on species, etc. this so may be increasing the %
- **Conservation Vulnerability Analysis:** methods for analysis are being discussed by staff and statistics specialists at Eocene.
We have a bit more money than thought and need to spend it down, so can add a new study.
- Investing in beefing up the GIS dashboard on-line.
Meredith asks a question about what GIS layers will be part of this new study – can we compare layers – Development vulnerability database – natural heritage database.

Tree Planting Update

- All tree installations have been completed by contractor. Watering will likely begin in May. 155 trees total mostly in rights-of-way (75%) and then some in parks and schools
- Someone will check them over the summer to see which have died, typically a 10-12% mortality rate

Invasive Plant Control Update:

- All seeding has been completed. Follow-up foliar applications/chemical treatments will resume this summer on all managed tracts (except Free Bridge). Free Bridge is under RCA's workplan

W. Main Street

- Parks and Rec Staff composing management plan for West Main Street trees (similar approach to Downtown Mall Trees). Keeping information inside parks and rec now.

Urban Forestry Technician

- Position has been posted. The plan is to have technician on board by May. So far there are a few applications.

Downtown Mall Trees. Study Summary

- Wolf/Josey has finished the Downtown Mall Tree Study Summary (100 copies). It will be available for public (currently copies at City Hall, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Businesses).

- **Update on LINR Seats on the Tree Commission and New Elections**

Susan – What counts as a low-income neighborhood - what is the list?

The list now includes:

Barracks Road (the Meadows), Rose Hill, Venable, Jefferson Park Avenue, Fifeville, Cherry Avenue, Ridge Street

Now excludes Starr Hill; Belmont no longer on list.

This is likely a City-Wide designation related to census tracks and grant funding.

- <https://charlottesville.org/Jobs.aspx?UniqueId=98&From=All&CommunityJobs=False&JobID=Tree-Commission-24>

- **New Information on the Tree Stewards Seat on the Tree Commission**

- Need to get State of the Forest report on the website – last one is 2022.
- Also need to have new members listed.
- Questions about what “U” means = (someone replacing an Unfinished term).
- Questions about how many ear-marked appointments are there?
- Susan explains how she 3 end up schedule to serve 4 years. She apparently forfeited her original 3 year term when she offered to serve as the representative for Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards (CATS), at which point she was appointed to a new three-year position as the CATS representative to the Tree Commission.
- Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards (CATS) – It is apparently their decision as to who to nominate to apply for the CATS seat on the Tree Commission (rather just inviting multiple people to apply.). The TC takes whomever applies, without any input.
- Many levels of confusion expressed about how people are appointed to specific seats on the commission.

- **Stormwater Meeting**

Stormwater discussions may get started in April.

Who wants to be included in discussions? Tyler, Betsy, Makesha, likely the code committee.

Priority Proposals

5:50-6:40

- Urban Forester (*S. Gaines*)
- Arbor Committee (*M. Tolbert*)
- Codes and Practices Committee (*J.D. Brown*)
- Education & Advocacy (*E. Bredder*)

Steve Gaines:

Conservation Vulnerability Analysis:

Vulnerability – wants to add this layer so that when a development plan comes into the city (NDS), it triggers this (Conservation Vulnerability Analysis) developer worksheet.

Developmental worksheet – that developers have to fill out when they are looking at a site

- Need more information on:
floodplains, critical slopes, sunlight, tree pruning, noise pollution, historical accounts
- Would make a recommendation to the City, to identify sites that should be protected if possible
- Would show where development is likely
- Would be part of the Urban forestry plan – will be a series of recommendations - working with multi-department committees, NDS, Utilities, public works, stormwater

Susan: What is the cost to lose this land, like a cost / benefit analysis?

Manuel: This would be really great to have included and made explicit but given that there is not a direct line from this analysis into the code – he doesn't think the cost analysis is realistic.

We are still battling trying to get these conversations happening in the City not understanding how the City works.

Meredith: Cost analysis plan would cost much time and money - but you could show ...need to show that it is worth doing and important.

Hannah: If you use tree canopy, could show what would be lost on future developments,\.

Woody: Charlottesville doesn't have a lot of virgin land, there is mainly land to redevelopment. With the new zoning code, it will mean lots of new building will be done on pre-existing lots.

- How can we define underutilized parcels?

- Show potential Increase of impervious surface
- Target areas that developers are eyeing, especially as the floodplains expands

Hannah:

Two types of conservation or protection

1. Land we would never want to be developed – paths, rivers' edge.
 2. OR low canopy neighborhoods that would have smaller development projects get more protections against losing canopy and stormwater protections
- The New Forrester for private land should be in charge of watching these properties

Steve: This can overlap with the Parks and Rec Masterplan – there was an acquisitions component for trails and connections after a huge response for "passive play" like trails. No land acquisition planned for new parks

Susan: Think about John Blackburn, are there people who would pay (donate) to buy these pieces of land?

Meredith: Let's identify pieces of land we really want to save – so the nature conservancy could call it infrastructure

Betsy: "green infrastructure."

Steve: how should they proceed?

- This study would be helpful to bring back to the group for him to help report back from Ecocene.
- Charlottesville is unique in requesting the level of study for an urban area.
- Find case studies of cities that have this level of detail in their studies.

Arbor Committee – Shanti, Hannah, and MaKshya, and Meredith to join.

MaKshya:

How are neighborhoods feeling about the tree canopy – culture of different ways

people think and feel about trees.

- Getting out in neighborhoods and build relationships.
- Resilient C-ville – how to work on heat in neighborhoods?
- Cultural landscapes – how do communities/ people feel about trees?
- Different aesthetics of trees, shades, costs, build resilience
- Work and recent money and budgeting for work in neighborhoods to get reflection, needs, what language we use around trees, preferences, etc.
- neighborhoods to raise money for or otherwise support planting elsewhere (i.e., plant sale event with sliding scale, buy a tree/give a tree).
- Demonstration sites with City staff – find ways to show ideas of what a vacant lot can do – show small ways of building resilience

Steve: particularly railroads would be low hanging fruit, Look at City or CRHA owned lands.

Susan: CHIP, City or CRHA land, steep slopes and water ways that need attention for invasive plants – need attention but not sure who is in charge or owner. For example, old Elite Electric Co – they have it fenced off but property that extends out and could be used by neighborhoods.

Hannah: Shanti has a map. This map would be the much smaller version of the vulnerability study.

Meredith: Piedmont Environmental Council and others that have already maps that identify these type of areas

MaKshya:

- Shanti wants to do this in Fifeville – mapping who owns spaces, does arbor committee – trust building
- Demonstration sites – cultural, spatial, formal from different languages appropriate to the neighborhoods at different scales
- Private property is better as there is more control over the future rather than City owned land - Need to locate those fallow pieces of land
- What events would be happening that could attract what events are already happening? To plan for a fall planting

- Want to start working in Fifeville now and this summer, Tonsler League Days
- What about homeowners vs. rental properties
- Looking at where CHIPP's work is happening?
- Coordinate the Arbor and Education committees work together

Woody and Susan: work on CHIPP, thinking of rentals vs just homeowners

Added notes/ definitions from MaKshya:

- **Cultural landscapes** - emphasis on integrating highly-specific and culturally-rooted relationships to place, perceptions, and aesthetics into future Tree Commission efforts. Primary activity - Tree Talks (laying the groundwork in Fifeville, non-prescriptive, focus on listening, refining approach/method, and actually having/hosting them!)
- **Demonstration sites** - emphasis on actually working with plants and spaces to explore alternative approaches to planting, managing spontaneous vegetation, and raising plants. Activities could include: prototyping an urban nursery, anticipatory planting on vacant or fallow lots, plantings with atypical spatial or experiential qualities that could explore approaches or ideas emerging from tree talks, a demonstration site where we collaborate with city staff to curate and edit exst. or spontaneous vegetation ([Wagon Landscaping](#), [EMF](#)). Perhaps there is an opportunity to bring some sawmilling wood into these areas as simple benches or rest areas.
 - Railroad areas - low hanging fruit
 - Owned by city of CHAR (?) in case they want to develop it
 - Ideally, we find a privately owned property for this (railroad might just spray every year)
- **Mapping** - Assist Steve in efforts to map vacant and fallow land for city plantings and/or acquisition. We are likely not the ones who should be doing the mapping itself, but we can figure that out. However, I think we can influence what is mapped and how it is looked at/articulated and hopefully bring in some of our other work to bear.

***Private Lands and Renters** (may fall more under education and outreach, or tie into the Cultural Landscapes work) - envision next steps for CHIPP and how such programs translate to renters and non-owner-occupied areas, how to take advantage of

relationships CHIPP is building in wealthier

Codes & Practices Committee: JD, Betsy, Tyler, - add Meredith?

Betsy:

- JD and Betsy met and talked about continuing to follow what is working and what needs improvement in the new zoning ordinance.
- Look at case studies from other cities how we get this into codes, JD should have some good examples.
- Look at what the tree commission recommended for the zoning ordinance and revisit what would be worth advocating for each year when amendments are made. Planning Board will have a work session soon on list of potential amendments.
- Watch all agendas in the City and be ready for public comment as needed and where any improvements in policy can be made

Education and Advocacy: Eric, Susan, Woody

Susan: Priorities:

- Getting website into shape – want links to other pages and organizations
- Be sensitive to the kind of information the City is trying to put out, “messaging” we need to be mindful or told how the City wants to present or communicate their ideas
- Find out what all the aligned organizations are doing – keep track of them and coordinate better and not try to duplicate, like Releaf, RCA, Tree Stewards

CHIPP work – Susan – keeping us up to date

- Just done a survey of two neighborhoods, Kellytown and Little High
- Started with tree walks.
- Surveyed 300 properties (had ten teams) and 145 had invasive vines on trees, then did a work session in the Robinson Woods HOAs – and then went out and

cut vines and how to cut vines

- Used Google forms for survey – neighborhood, streets, trees that have invasive vines – translates immediately into a spreadsheet and later into a map.
- Teams had one CHIPP person and one neighborhood person – put door hangers on doors that have invasive vines
- In Little High – used “the Farm” property; cut vines off 78 trees
- So have surveyed and had work sessions in two neighborhoods and now figuring out how to move it forward. Lots of positive energy from neighbors who want to do the work.
- Can be a model for working with neighborhoods on other projects.
- Coming up with the same ideas, so you finish and stay in a neighborhood or keep moving to cover more areas.
- The longer-term idea is the neighborhood continues the work on their own.
- Many neighborhoods are interested.

General Discussion of Priorities and Action Items

6:40-6:55

Susan will not be here next (May) – Shanti will run the meeting

Tree Commission Letter to City Council Regarding Tree Removal on Garrett Street

Dear City Councilors, Members of the Charlottesville Planning Commission, City Manager Sam Sanders, NDS Director Kellie Brown, Deputy City Manager of Operations James Freas, and Deputy City Manager Ashley Marshall,

The Charlottesville Tree Commission was deeply disappointed to learn of the erroneous removal of a second mature tree at the Kindlewood development on April 24, 2025. Despite prior assurances from project engineers and developers that this particular group of street trees would be protected, a 50-yearold Pin Oak (36.9" diameter) was severely damaged and ultimately removed.

This incident is more than unfortunate—it highlights systemic gaps in our site planning and tree preservation protocols. Mature trees offer irreplaceable benefits, from shade and stormwater absorption to carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and the less tangible yet crucial value of psychological well-being for nearby residents. The removal of a tree of this size cannot be mitigated by planting a young sapling; the loss to our community and environment will be felt for generations.

We believe this experience can—and should—be a turning point. Many other localities are successfully balancing the urgent need for affordable housing with the long-term need to preserve mature trees. They do so through clear codes, proactive planning, early arborist involvement, and effective enforcement. We urge Charlottesville to learn from these models. Charlottesville has both the vision and credentials to be a national leader in urban forestry. We are proud to be a Tree City USA and a city with a robust Climate Action Plan and a Comprehensive Plan that recognize the importance of the urban tree canopy. However, our current development code does not reflect those values in practice.

In 2022 and 2023, the city undertook an extensive overhaul of its code, but tree preservation provisions remain minimal. This gap continues to result in tree loss, often avoidable, during development. We therefore respectfully recommend the following actions be integrated or reinforced in site planning and permitting:

- A mandatory Environmental Checklist for all projects involving tree removals or preservation.
- Tree Preservation Plans required in all site plans, with early and ongoing arborist consultation.
- Adherence to Best Management Practices and the Standards and Design Manual, particularly regarding fencing and critical root zone protection.
- Site plans drawn to scale that accurately represent tree size and preservation measures.
- Clear accountability and enforcement including stronger penalties for violations. As it stands, a maximum \$2,500 fine and misdemeanor classification for the loss of a Downtown Mall tree is not a sufficient deterrent.

Moreover, the city must re-evaluate its current incentive structure for tree preservation. Existing tree canopy bonuses are not yielding meaningful results. Incentives should be restructured to reward developers who retain healthy large trees on-site and ensure that the preservation of mature trees is seen not as an obstacle, but a shared value and goal. Finally, we ask that the city provide clarification on the following:

- What specific steps are being taken to prevent the unnecessary loss of large trees in future developments?
- How does the city plan to incentivize meaningful tree preservation, especially for large-diameter, high-value trees?

Charlottesville has the expertise, the policy frameworks, and the community support to lead by example. But without strengthening our tree protection codes and enforcement mechanisms, we risk undermining our own climate and livability goals. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

The Charlottesville Tree Commission

FLOOD PLAIN LETTER

Proposal to Remove Area from Federal Floodplain Designation and Grading including Fill in

Area

katherine slaughter Wed, Apr 16,
4:05 PM

To: nmoore3, lmurray, mbarnes2, fmissel, lac2z, cclayborne, jbivins, kfirehock, cshaffer2,b

os, Morgan, Bill, me, Nicholas, Peggy, Elizabeth, Bob

Re: Fill in the Floodplain 5th & Avon Community Advisory Committee

PROPOSAL: Grading activities, including Fill in the Floodplain (Section 30.3.11)

ZONING:

Light Industrial, Flood Hazard Overlay District COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Parks and Green Systems in Master Plan

Dear Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and Supervisors:

Re Thursday meeting,

I understand that Elemental Ecotech seeks a special use permit to fill 1.5 acres in the floodplain off Franklin Street and also requests that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) remove its floodplain designation.

I oppose reclassifying the floodplain, thus reducing pollution absorption adjacent to the river, in order to develop a project that will create more runoff. I urge the Advisory Committee to reject this part of the project as planned.

Moreover, the "community meeting" received little publicity and input from the nearby population. Moreover, the increased danger of flooding from area development requires even more preservation of the floodplains to absorb floods. The various agencies -- Citizens Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, Albemarle Supervisors, and Economic Development Commission -- should oppose any amendment of the federal floodplain map that would allow additional development in vulnerable locations. In the past, city and county governments have turned their collective backs to the River's banks, allowing this great resource to be used for automobile services, truck storage, and other heavy commercial activities.

Most recently, however, City Council recognized the importance of the Rivanna floodplain, refusing to allow development of the former "Circus Grounds" for apartments and ultimately purchasing the property to adjoin the linear Rivanna Trail.

The County has also invested in the River by developing a hiking and biking trail on its northside. Many City and County residents have donated easements for the trails on both sides of the Rivanna that bring citizens to these linear parks.

Because both the Rivanna and nearby Moore's Creek are polluted waterways according to the VA Department of Environmental Quality (not meeting fishable, swimmable water quality in some portions), this project would exacerbate that problem, further polluting Moore's Creek and the historic Rivanna.

As a Cville resident who shares the Rivanna River Watershed, I ask the Citizens Advisory Committee to reject this part of the project as planned. Given that the "community meeting" received little publicity among the broader community, as well as the increased real dangers to the floodplain, the advisory committee, planning commission, and Supervisors should also formally oppose any amendment to the federal floodplain map that would allow additional development in vulnerable locations. Alternatively, a more fulsome hearing about this project should be held at the Planning Commission..

Sincerely,
Kay Slaughter
Riparian Landowner - Woolen Mills
1503 Short 18th Street