

CHARLOTTESVILLE TREE COMMISSION

July 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**

Approval of June Minutes (*S. McKinnon*) **5:00-5:05**

Staff Report and Discussion (*S. Gaines*) **5:05-5:30**

Urban Forest Management Plan - Update

- Data acquisition has been completed, Eocene has generated reports and executive summaries for the Vegetation Analysis, Canopy Assessment, and Street Tree Inventory.
- Parks and Recreation has paid all invoices, grant reporting for this project has been concluded.

Invasive Plant Control Update

- Foliar applications on all restoration units have been completed. Forest mulching and some chemical treatments will resume in fall 2025.

Urban Forestry Technician

- Parks and Recreation has hired an Urban Forestry seasonal maintenance worker. Tasks include updating GIS data base regarding tree plantings (fall 2024, spring 2025), seedling inventory/maintenance, invasive vegetation containment, and mapping potential planting areas for fall 2025.

Garrett and Second Street Updates

- Parks and Recreation (in cooperation with ReLeaf Cville, UVA School of Architecture, and Piedmont Housing Alliance) has hired Keith Pitchford to assist with Tree Preservation planning for the Kindlewood Redevelopment Project.

New/Old Business **5:30-6:30**

- Update and follow-through on Tree Commission Recruitment (*All*)
- Update and follow-through on Garrett Street Tree Letter (*S. McKinnon*)
Next steps?
- Member registration and use of Teams (*S. Gaines*)
- SOTF onto Tree Commission website (*S. Gaines*)
- Discussion of the Eocene report? (*All*)

Committee Reports **6:30-6:55**

- Arbor Committee (*M. Tolbert, S. Levy, and H. Brown*)
- Codes & Practices Committee (*JD Brown, Tyler Miller, Betsy Roettger*)
- Education & Advocacy Committee (*S. McKinnon, W. Parrish*)
Update on CHIPP activities

Items/Announcements Not on Agenda
General Public Comment

6:55-7:00

Adjourn

7:00

(†) 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
Tuesday, May 6, 2025

ATTENDEES

- Susan McKinnon
- Shanti Levy
- Tyler Miller
- JD Brown
- Woody Parrish
- Steve Gaines
- Hannah Brown

Only 9 members in commission at present, so attendance achieves a quorum

STAFF REPORT

Urban Forest Management Plan Update

- IRA grant funding was terminated by the federal government as it relates to climate mitigation measures.
 - \$75,000 (half of city's match) remains towards proposed work
- The city will finish the ongoing inventory work with subcontractor Eocene. The forest management plan and community involvement aspects will be removed from the scope. The scope of work will still include the following:
 - Tree canopy analysis
 - Vegetation inventory
 - Street tree inventory

Invasive Plant Control Update

- Sites around the city that previously received herbicide spray have very little coming back; herbicide control was better than anticipated.
- Cultural controls have been effective as well. Cultural controls include seeding warm season grasses and cover crops. Buckwheat has proven to be an effective cover crop.
- Expect to be spraying less this year in invasive treatment areas.
- Steve has a spreadsheet documenting treatment areas, treatment regimes, and timing. How do we best share this information and communication progress updates with the public?

Urban Forestry Technician

- The urban forestry technician role is still vacant
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Agenda Packet

- Internal meeting materials—both the unapproved April minutes and an early draft of the Garrett Street tree removal letter—were erroneously posted online as part of the May agenda materials.
 - There was a discussion of the consequences of incomplete results of the tree inventory work as well as an incomplete draft of a letter to city officials being posted in the public domain.
 - Tree Commission to consult with the city on suggested meeting minutes format and procedures to ensure any information recorded as part of future meeting minutes conveys complete, factual, and contextualized information to the public.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Tree Commission Positions

- No applicants for LINR member position received
- Eric Bredder and Meredith Keppel have stepped down from the Tree Commission
- Total openings
 - (1) general member
 - (2) LINR representatives
- Recruitment
 - Tree Commission members to attend neighborhood meetings to recruit in LINR neighborhoods and consult with Deputy City Manager for Social Equity Ashley Marshall about recruitment
 - Develop a flier to circulate with community leaders. Flier to include:
 - What is tree commission? What do we talk about? How might your voice be valued as a member? Why does it matter? Summary of ongoing projects. Invitation to attend our meetings before applying.
 - Application window
 - Application not currently open online; align recruitment with application period
 - Steve to inquire if we can re-open the application

Franklin Street Floodplain Fill Project

- The letter responding to the Franklin Street Floodplain Fill project by a Commissioner's neighbor was not posted for discussion, but rather to raise awareness of proposed development on the kinds of vulnerable lands we are focusing on and to circulate an example of a thoughtful response.

Review of Garrett Street Tree Letter

- Commission discussion of what happened at Garrett Street and how the tree removal may have been prevented
 - Plans reviewed for technical compliance, not necessarily tree-sensitive design
 - City has a tree protection provision; enforcement is a challenge
- Discussion of proposals to strengthen city's tree protection

- Tree protection measures should integrate into existing procedures and requirements so as not to slow down affordable housing development
- Request specificity in documentation already required:
 - Site Plan
 - Tree Preservation Plan - accurately represented trees, critical root zone, structural root plate, and tree protection drawn to scale (not indicated by symbol)
- Bond - developers post bonds for new landscaping that they receive back when plants are installed. Other cities in Virginia also bond existing trees designated for protection.
 - Challenge - Construction damage to trees may not be visible for a couple of years. Could propose a 1-year review before the bond is released.
 - 4.9.2 planting requirements, sub section D, bonding requirements 1&2 describe bonds for proposed plantings
 - Bonding is a penalty, not an incentive
- Who would inspect a construction site to see if tree protection measures in plans are being followed?
 - A city urban forester. Steve does not have capacity alone.
- Review tree removal permit requirements and how permits interface with tree preservation plans.
 - Civil engineers must sign off on stormwater - should a city arborist be required to sign off on tree removals?
- City code instructs to follow BMPs and Standards of Design
 - What is the process for updating BMPs and Standards of Design?
- Tree preservation plan required in Erosion and Sediment control checklist on projects over 10,000 SF.
 - Tree preservation plan content and requirements are not well described
 - Should any tree preservation measures be required for smaller, urban projects?
- Tree preservation plans cover trees set to be preserved, but not necessarily removals or their appropriateness
 - How do we understand if mature tree removals are easily avoidable?
- Tree Canopy Bonus - developers currently required to have a certain % tree canopy on site. Existing trees count for 1.5 in canopy calculation.
 - This is an incentive for tree protection but doesn't necessarily meet canopy goals.
 - Raising this could further imperil canopy coverage goals
- Tree Commission to refine letter to share with city council. Commission to circulate draft of letter with area tree organizations
- Tree Commission to meet with city/utilities on May 16th to review stormwater presentation
 - Stormwater fees, if altered, could provide an incentive for tree protection

Preparations for TC Meeting with Utilities on Stormwater Proposal

- Entire point of previous stormwater fee research and proposal is to develop mechanisms for enforcement and accountability
- If trees are classified as infrastructure, they receive same rigorous protections as other public infrastructure
- Meeting history - Group of city employees working on stormwater related issues invited Steve to participate in discussions
 - Expecting summary of state of the forest preservation
 - Broad strokes with best tree practices for stormwater requirements and code
- We don't know if the city is planning on an update to stormwater policy or updates to BMPs at this time
- Trees are already considered green infrastructure per state law

CLOSING STATEMENT

- Commission to seek out city models for meeting minutes to develop its own protocol.
- What file management system can we use that doesn't require personal emails?
- Letter regarding Garrett Street to be edited prior to being shared with City Council.