

**Leesburg Tree Commission
Minutes**

The Leesburg Tree Commission met on Tuesday, January 19th, at 7:00 pm in the Lower Level Conference Room I at Town Hall.

Present: Commissioners:, Earl Hower, John Groothuis, Ron Platt, Philip Marshall, and Elizabeth Welch.

Electronic Participation: Patricia Hatfield (Due to COVID-19 pandemic)

Absent: Thomas Adams

Council: N/A

Staff: Tyler Wright, Department of Public Works and Capital Projects

Volunteer: Chris Spigt

Public: N/A

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hower at 7:03 pm.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Commissioner Hatfield called in and asked to participate electronically. Chairman Hower asked for a motion from the commission to allow Hatfield to participate electronically and remotely.

Motion to allow for electronic participation: Hower
Second: Groothuis
Carried: 5 – 0 – 2 (Hatfield, Adams)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion to approve the amended agenda was asked for by Chairman Hower (Add 7A Vote for new Chair and Vice Chair; 7B VDOF Clean Water Grant; 3B Introduction of new commissioners; 8C Employee Portal; 8D iTree Eco Help).

Motion to approve agenda: Marshall
Second: Groothuis
Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Groothuis to approve minutes from November, 2020 meeting.

Motion to approve: Groothuis
Second: Platt

Carried: 4 – 0 – 3 (Adams, Marshall, Welch)

Introduction of New Tree Commissioners

Elizabeth Welch was tasked to serve on the Tree Commission from Mayor Burke. She teaches US History, Social Science, and Global Studies for Loudoun County Public Schools.

Phil Marshall was tasked to serve on the Tree Commissioner from Council Member Bagdasarian. He teaches at Loudoun County Public Schools as a Resource Teacher in the eighth grade.

Both commissioners expressed gratitude for being selected for the Tree Commission and are eager to serve the residents of the Town.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

N/A

SUBCOMMITTEES

Outreach

Town staff has been approved to coordinate a Virtual Tree Walk with the Public Information Officer and Homeowner's Associations within corporate limits.

Updates:

Commissioner Hatfield expressed concerns over meeting with HOA's during the current COVID-19 pandemic. She has been asked by the Greenway Farm HOA to discuss this further into the spring and summer, depending on vaccine availability.

Other commissioners have not been able to reach the HOA or have been finding it difficult to move through them.

OLD BUSINESS

Tree Walk Brochure & Tour Leesburg application

Staff and Chair discussed with new commissioners what the Brochure is and how it was created. Each new member was given a copy. The new commissioners expressed interest in creating new tree walks in Town for the Virginia Tech trees, big trees in parks, and at the Paxton campus. Staff member Wright was asked to see if Tree Commission can go to Paxton Campus and see if some of the large trees can be measured and placed on website for educational purposes. Wright will investigate further and make recommendations at the next meeting.

Staff member Wright followed up with the TourLeesburg application and let the new commissioners know more information about this website. He said it would be a great idea to have the new commissioners take the walk during the spring and take photos to send to him.

Adopt A Spot

Chairman Hower has been keeping the site orderly and clean for the past few weeks. The winter decorations are up now. New commissioners were brought up to speed on

maintenance issues and will schedule a visit in the spring to learn how to work the equipment and irrigation.

Tree Commission Work Session for Tree Loss Report

Spearheaded by Chairman Hower, the commission is going to write a report detailing the loss of tree canopy in TOL and present it to Town Council during a work session. The Tree Commission met on 10 October 2020 from 2-4 pm to discuss this work. The report will show where tree loss has occurred inside the corporate limits and what this loss means to the residents of the town. It will also address reforestation and how to potentially fund new planting efforts within the town.

A significant amount of time was placed on to showing where we are losing canopy and asking Council to justify this loss. The Tree Commission understands that economic growth is important but the town needs to weigh the benefits of trees and green space to more concrete and asphalt. Wright asked the commission to also think about changing the name of the report to something with less negative connotation. The Town has been planting trees and reforesting areas so the report also needs to show where the town has been doing great things and where we can improve our standards or put into place policies for better tree care and management.

The commission was tasked with thinking about what goals they would like to see from the town and have some concrete ideas of how to obtain these goals and some projects which could be managed by town staff or volunteers. Wright informed the commission that he is working with Loudoun County Public Schools GIS program to obtain a land classification study or Urban Tree Canopy Analysis for the town. He will share these items with the Tree Commission once the applications are performed in December, 2020 and January, 2021.

Commissioners urged the report to have more action verbs and very strong and attainable goals. If possible, create an overlay layer in ArcMap to share where tree canopy has been lost and where tree canopy has spread. The Planning Commission and Environmental Advisory Commission has expressed interest in being presented the findings of this report after Town Council has been briefed.

Update:

Chairman Hower has not been able to make the new edits to the document. The new commissioners were briefed on this Report and gave remarks on their vision of how it should look and feel. More discussion to be had at the next meeting.

Spotted Lanternfly

Tabled until the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

2021 Elections

Commissioner Hatfield nominated Earl Hower to continue as Chair. Commissioner Marshall seconded the nomination. No discussion was had. Chairman Hower left the room.

Seeing no discussion, Vice Chair asked for a vote to allow Hower to continue as the Chair.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)
Chairman Hower was elected to continue to serve in his role.

Vice Chair

Vice Chair Groothuis nominated Patricia Hatfield for the Vice Chair position. Commissioner Marshall seconded the nomination. No discussion was had.

Commissioner Hatfield was muted.

Chairman Hower asked for a vote for the nomination.

Vote: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

Vice Chair Hatfield was elected to the position.

VDOF Clean Water Grant 2021

Staff Member Wright asked for a motion to approve him applying for the 2021 VDOF Trees for Clean Water Grant. In 2020, Wright applied and received \$15,000 from the VDOF for trees at Tuscarora Creek. This year, he would like to use this grant for trees being installed on Sycolin Road.

A motion from Chairman Hower was made to endorse the grant application and allow staff to apply for the grant again.

Motion to approve: Hower
Second: Groothuis
Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

Merge Tree Commission and Environmental Advisory Commission

During the December, 2020 Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) meeting Mayor Burke brought up the discussion of merging the EAC with the Tree Commission (TC). The Chair for the EAC reached out to Chairman Hower about the discussion and Hower attended the January, 2021 meeting of the EAC. Chairman Hower made a presentation on the merits of the TC and how the TC was originally an ‘off-shoot’ of the EAC. The EAC voted to not approve of the merger that night and the Mayor asked for the TC to vote on the subject as well.

Chairman Hower detailed to both new and current commissioners, the details of why the TC was formed (experience, merit, trees different from environment, etc.) and that if a

merger were to take place, the two entities would be whittled down from a super-commission of 14, to seven members over the next two years.. He then asked for the opinion of each TC'er:

Hatfield: Commissioner Hatfield expressed concern over the merger. She believes the TC is better able to handle concerns from residents as TC'ers are more experienced in trees and landscape, instead of the overall environment. She believes that trees should be first priority and does not believe the EAC would put trees as a first tier priority.

Marshall and Welch: As new commissioners, they did not feel qualified to give an answer but would like to get more experience on the commission to determine whether or not this commission should continue. From this meeting, they feel confident it should stay separate but need more data to make a more informed decision.

Platt: Commissioner Platt would like to see the TC stay separate.

Groothuis: Commissioner Groothuis said the difference emphasis from each commission would lead to different projects and a watered down end product for the town residents.

After some discussion on the merits of the TC and the active projects in the works, Chairman Hower asked for a vote to stay as a separate entity.

Motion to stay separated from the EAC:	Groothuis
Second:	Hatfield
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

Chairman Hower will write a document to the Mayor and Town Council explaining the merits of the TC and show the vote to stay separated.

Flower and Garden Festival

Staff Member Wright asked the Tree Commission if they would like to participate in the Flower and Garden Festival this year. A motion to apply for the Flower and Garden Festival was made by Commissioner Groothuis.

A motion to apply:	Groothuis
Second:	Marshall
Carried:	6 – 0 1 (Adams)

Staff Member Wright will begin the process of applying.

Staff Comments

Liaison Wright thanked the Tree Commissioners for their continued mission and meeting this evening. He also asked them to complete the Awareness training for FY21 and continue to use Town Email when conducting business.

Staff Member Wright also gave an update to the S King Street Tree Installation Project finishing up. Staff also made the commission aware that the Conservation Lobby Day

2021 was happening on 21 Jan 2021 in Richmond. It is a virtual event this year and has several bills that foresters, arborists, and environmental leaders would like to see passed.

Staff Member Wright gave details to all new and current commissioners about the Employee Portal and to turn in information to Human Resource as soon as possible. He also asked for help with completing his iTree Eco project.

Commission Comments

Chairman Hower thanked the other commissioners for attending and reminded them the next meeting is 16 February 2021. He also iterated to keep active in the COVID-19 pandemic if government enforces new restrictions. He asked the new commissioners to find the Tree City USA signs in town and expressed interest in installing a new sign on Sycolin Road once the new trees are installed. He also expressed interest in planting the next Arbor Day Tree in the Old Methodist cemetery.

Council Comments

N/A

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 PM.

Motion to approve adjournment:	Groothuis
Second:	Marshall
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 PM.