

**Leesburg Tree Commission
Minutes**

The Leesburg Tree Commission met on Tuesday, February 16th, at 7:00 pm in the Lower Level Conference Room II at Town Hall.

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

Electronic Participation: Patricia Hatfield (Due to COVID-19 pandemic), Thomas Adams (Work related)

Absent: John Groothuis

Council: N/A

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

Volunteer: Chris Spigt

Public: Jennifer Chu, Environmental Advisory Commission Chair

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hower at 7:04 pm.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Commissioner Hatfield called in and asked to participate electronically. Thomas Adams was not able to make into Town Hall for the meeting and asked to participate remotely. Chairman Hower asked for a motion from the commission to allow Hatfield and Adams to participate electronically and remotely.

Motion to allow for electronic participation: Marshall

Second: Welch

Carried: 4 – 0 – 3 (Groothuis, Hatfield, Adams)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion to approve the amended agenda was asked for by Chairman Hower (Add P. Hatfield as Vice-Chair).

Motion to approve agenda: Marshall

Second: Platt

Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Groothuis to approve minutes from January, 2021 meeting.

Motion to approve: Marshall

Second: Platt

Carried:

5 – 0 – 1 (Adams) – 1 (Groothuis)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Miss Jennifer Chu, the Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) Chair, attended the meeting to share that the EAC would like to see more collaboration where possible between the two groups. She is glad to see the commission moving many different projects forward and at the number of projects in the works at one time. She congratulated the commission for their accomplishments. Chairman Hower thanked Chair Chu for attending the meeting and is responsive to meeting with the EAC and collaborating on more projects in the future.

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 Member Wright is still moving this project forward by placing photos and text on the app. He hopes to have the final product in place by the Flower and Garden Festival.

Adopt A Spot

Maintenance assignments will be held in the early spring (March/April) and new commissioners will be shown how to maintain the area. It was discussed by Staff Member Wright that he will be introducing photos to Town Manager soon about expectations for pruning the maple tree at the Adopt A Spot. Commissioner Hatfield expressed concerns for the tree and does not endorse any pruning of the tree; except for lifting to maintain height for vehicular traffic.

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

Commissioner Welch has agreed to take on the responsibility of putting together a presentation to Town Council about the SLF. She will reach out to Beth Sastra from the Extension Office for more information. She would like to know if this presentation should be more about the town or county, general or very specific information, and where, if any, is Tree of Heaven in the town. Chair Chi brought up an idea to have a day of invasive removal in parts of town, similar to the trash clean-up day. Staff Member Wright informed the commission that Tree Bank funds could probably be used if we replanted trees where we have been taking out invasive trees. There was some discussion about creating a 'NextDoor' account for social media/social sharing application to identify invasive plants in your neighborhood. Commissioner Welch will put together some information for the next meeting.

Flower and Garden Festival

Discussion was had about the logistics and feel for the F&GF for 2021. It will be socially distanced at Ida Lee Rec Center and Wright has asked for a booth with access to water. Commissioner Hatfield has asked for a count of the number vendors at the festival this year. There will be no raffle trees and expected to give out only 500 seedlings. A newspaper insert will need to be discussed and voted on at the next meeting. Plexiglass and a new banner will need to be purchased as well. Staff Member Wright told the

commission that he may not be able to help this year due to overtime restrictions. He will help facilitate the process as needed.

NEW BUSINESS

Participation in future meetings: Virtual or physical

Staff Member Wright explained the commission about the new laws for continuance of government during the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that the commission could continue with a physical quorum at each meeting with electronic participation or the commission could vote to go to a meeting where a quorum is established and members can meet from any location. If the commissioner would like to meet in person at town hall, then the staff liaison would be present. Some discussion was had about who would want to meet in person and who would rather participate electronically given our current health pandemic.

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to move the meetings to become all virtual with the possibility of people meeting at town hall as well.

Motion as stated:	Marshal
Second:	Welch
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis)

COVID-19 Vaccine

Staff Member Wright shared with the commission that they are in the 1.B.9 group for vaccine availability as they are employed by the town. They should check email regularly for information as far as if/when the vaccine may become available to the commissioner.

Annual Report to Town Council 2021

Chairman Hower stated that the 2020 Annual Report was not given to Town Council due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outline DRAFT for Town Council Report

Planning and Zoning Ordinance Article 12 Update

Arbor Day and Fourth Grade Foresters

Flower and Garden Festival – Cancelled

Ten-Year Tree Canopy Report

Arbor Day 2020 at Raflo Park

Revised Tree Walk brochure

Leesburg Tree City USA signs

Enhancement of the Adopt A Spot

Chairman Hower is going to review procedures and determine the best method to produce a town report this year.

Arbor Day 2021

Normally, Arbor Day is celebrated at an elementary school in the spring. However, due to on-going COVID-19 pandemic, this may not be possible in 2021. However, Chairman Hower and Commissioner Marshall have been able to locate a mimosa cultivar to replace the mimosa from the Historic Tree Walk that was removed from damage from the spring 2020 tornado. This will hopefully become the new Arbor Day tree for 2021. There is still some debate about this.

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 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.

2,000 for 2000 Initiative. Staff Member Wright informed the commission of the initiative launched in 2000 of the town expecting to plant 2,000 trees. At the end of calendar year 2020, the town had planted ~2,500 trees, 11,000 live stakes, and 3,500 seedlings. The commissioners were glad to see the initiative met.

Staff Member Wright also informed the commissioners about the LCPS GIS study. Due to snow days, the presentation was push back a few weeks but Wright should get the data soon and will be able to present to the group.

Commission Comments

Chairman Hower thanked the other commissioners for attending the meeting. He also expressed comments from the new Council Liaison Council Member Nancy. Council Member Nancy was excited to be a part of the commission and is eager to read the Ten Year Tree Canopy Report the Tree Commission is currently putting together.

Council Comments

N/A* See above in Commission Comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 PM.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.