

## **Leesburg Tree Commission Minutes**

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

**Present:** Commissioners:, Earl Hower, Patricia Hatfield, John Groothuis, Philip Marshall, and Elizabeth Welch.

**Electronic Participation:** Ron Platt

**Absent:** Thomas Adams

**Council:** N/A

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

**Volunteer:** Chris Spigt

**Public:** Jennifer Chu, Environmental Advisory Commission Chair, Liam Dollan.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hower at 7:06 pm.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chairman Hower read aloud the statement put forth by the Leesburg Town Attorney to allow for all virtual participation.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

A motion to approve the amended agenda was asked for by Chairman Hower.

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

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Marshall to approve minutes from February, 2021 meeting.

Motion to approve:	Marshall
Second:	Welch
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.

Mr. Liam Dollan also attended the meeting and expressed his interest in learning more about ecologically and biology as he is a student at George Mason University studying Conservation Biology. He was welcomed by the group.

## **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.

Update 16 Mar 21:

There is still some pushback from HOA's to wait until spring/summer to meet due to the ongoing pandemic. The item was tabled until after the Flower and Garden Festival.

Chairman Hower would like to see some private trees be added to the lists and have the impetus for wanting to perform these tree walks are to educate the general public on why trees are necessary and the ecosystem service benefits which they provide to humans and wildlife alike.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Ten Year Tree Canopy Health Report to Town Council**

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.

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.

Update 16 Mar 21:

No new edits have been made. Chairman Hower has asked all commissioners to send tree loss/gain photos to Staff Member Wright.

### Spotted Lanternfly

Commissioner Welch shared her first iteration of her PowerPoint presentation to the commission. All commissioners were asked to review the information and give ideas and examples. Chairman Hower shared with the group how the emerald ash borer presentation to Town Council was short and provided a brief overview of the insect and what it could do to tree canopy in town. Hower asked Welch to shorten the presentation a few slides and put in more action verbs to determine how we can better address SLF in the town.

### Annual Report to Town Council

Chairman Hower presented his first draft of the Tree Commission Annual Report to Town Council. He highlighted many areas of what was accomplished from late 2019 to early 2021. The Tree Commission did not present an Annual Report in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He asked all commissioners to send photos and any other news or information that would be relevant to the mission of the commission.

### Flower and Garden Festival

Chairman Hower went over the schedule for the Flower and Garden Festival 2021. There were time slots to be filled for a morning and afternoon shift for Saturday and Sunday. Commissioners filled out the time slots.

After reviewing the VA Department of Forestry website, Commissioner Groothuis made a motion to purchase 500 persimmon tree seedlings to give away at the festival.

Motion as stated:	Groothuis
Second:	Hatfield
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

To determine how best to give them to festival participants, Commissioner Hatfield made a motion to allocate no more than \$90 to determine if a brown paper bag could be purchased or donated to hand out with the seedling.

Motion as stated:	Hatfield
Second:	Marshall
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

Chairman Hower stated that most participants at the festival believe they are with the Arbor Day Foundation and wanted to ensure this year a new sign was purchased to say that this booth is for the Leesburg Tree Commission. He was able to find a vendor that could create a 18” by 24” sign with metal posts that could be used to insert into the ground in front of the booth. He hopes to measure the booth this year and create a new banner that will run across the entire length for next year.

A motion was made by Chairman Hower to create a new sign to be used at the Flower and Garden Festival with the Town of Leesburg seal and the groups name and not to spend more than \$40.

Motion as stated: Hower  
Second: Groothuis  
Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### Town of Leesburg TourLeesburg App Assignments

Chairman Hower asked if any commissioners were interested in walking the Historic Tree Walk of Leesburg in the spring and taking photos of the bark, leaves, buds, and flowers to send to Staff Member Wright. Commissioners Hatfield and Groothuis will, at different times, take photos this spring. Liam Dollan also expressed interest in helping as he has high resolution cameras. Chairman Hower asked all commissioners to take the tree walk this spring, as long as no more than two members at a time were present.

#### Adopt-A-Spot

Chairman Hower and Commissioner Hatfield will meet on a Saturday in March for the annual spring clean up. The new commissioners will be paired with a veteran commissioner to be trained on how to maintain the area. This discussion will be highlighted more in April or May (weather dependent).

#### Arbor Day 2021 Tree

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.

#### Update 16 March 21:

After some discussion, it was decided to table this item until after the Flower and Garden Festival.

#### Change Meeting Date from 21 April to 13 April 2021

Due to the Flower and Garden Festival, Chairman Hower asked the Tree Commission to meet one week prior to the next scheduled meeting to alleviate any last minute items for the Flower and Garden Festival. There was little discussion. Commissioner Groothuis made a motion to move the date to the next meeting to 13 April in the same location (if possible).

Motion as stated: Groothuis  
Second: Hatfield  
Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Adams)

### **Staff Comments**

Liaison Wright thanked the Tree Commissioners for their continued mission and meeting this evening. He also made them aware that the Town of Leesburg has been granted Tree

City USA status for 2020 calendar year and thanked them for the assistance in making this possible.

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 asked for Staff Member to explain what happened at the Rusk Library in town. Wright explained that the Loudoun County horticulturist deemed these trees unsafe due to the many times that the trees have been pruned by the utility company and that decay and disease were make them unsafe and unwanted. The trees have been removed and more appropriate trees and screening features will be installed in the spring.

Hower also made the commission aware of the new guidelines from the Forest Service and Arbor Day Foundation on the Good and Bad of reaching a 40% urban tree canopy standard for all municipalities nationwide. He will send out a link soon for the perusal. Finally, Hower made the commission aware of the new Tree Campaign for the Chesapeake Bay Program. This program needs to plant 600,000 trees in five years and needs all the help it can get.

Commissioner Hatfield would like to see a scholarship fund be provided for students interested in trees and nature by the Tree Commission each year. Chairman Hower expressed interest as he reviews scholarship applications for his position.

Commissioner Groothuis asked for everyone to keep a keen eye out for defects in trees. A recently remodeled house in his neighborhood had a large tree fail and fall and cause some roof damage. He suspects it was from roots being cut for the remodel.

### **Council Comments**

N/A

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 PM.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM.