

Leesburg Tree Commission Minutes

The Leesburg Tree Commission met on Tuesday, January 25th, at 7:02 pm in the Lower Level Conference Room II at Town Hall.

Present: Commissioner Earl Hower, Patricia Hatfield, Philip Marshall, Joe Garnreiter, and Elizabeth Welch.

Electronic Participation: N/A

Absent: John Groothuis

Council: N/A

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

Public: Jennifer Chu, Chris Spigt, Paul Schaffer

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hower at 7:02 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion to amend the agenda to table 5A was made. Chairman Hower then asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda.

Motion to approve agenda:	Marshall
Second:	Hatfield
Carried:	5 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chair Hower asked for a motion to approve the December 2021 minutes.

Motion to approve:	Marshall
Second:	Welch
Carried:	3 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis) – 2 (Hatfield, Garnreiter)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Riparian/Buffer Area Tree Planting Projects

Chairman Hower brought up the idea again about where the Tree Commission and Environmental Advisory Commission can install trees in riparian buffer areas or floodplains in the Town. Commissioners and Staff explained the Tuscarora Creek Mitigation Project to the Public Participants. Staff then explained the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant program through Virginia Department of Forestry and how both commissions could apply for the grant and use Tree Bank Mitigation Funds as well. The Town has received three VTCW VDOF grants in the past two years.

Staff Member Wright recommended the commissions start on a small project first and to contact the Floodplain Coordinator, Bill Ackman, first to start the ball rolling. There was debate about the ownership of the Old Westpark Golf Course and if a project could happen within those boundaries.

The discussion produced two questions:

What are the criteria for projects (what is a small or large project)?
Where or What needs improving with the Town or private property?

More information should be gathered before more discussion on this topic.

A Special Insertion was added to the agenda for the Environmental Advisory Commission to discuss the riparian buffer plantings in Town. The original 21 Jan 2022 meeting was supposed to take place where staff from Plan Review were to discuss how floodplains, FEMA, and issues with planting trees in a stream or riparian buffer area. Town staff gave guidance to both commissions that each riparian buffer will need to be individually addressed and assessed by Town staff as major and minor floodplains are different through the Town.

Chair Paul Schaffer with the EAC and public representative Jennifer Chu gave a synopsis of what the program/projects could look like and how the EAC could help. Chair Schaffer asked that the bulk of the planning be at the onus of the Tree Commission and the EAC would help promote the event and engage volunteers.

Chairman Hower produced a list of riparian areas in Town that he would like to see trees planted to help with soil erosion. Discussion occurred about these areas and how this could be funded. Staff Member Wright described the Tree Bank Program as a viable option for funding or going directly to Town Council and asking for an appropriation from the General Fund. Tree species to be planted were also discussed.

Chair Schaffer has purchased the rights and trademark for the slogan 'Treesburg' acting on Leesburg. He would like to use the site to promote these types of projects as well general benefits of trees. Staff Wright shared his knowledge of a tree plotting on-line site where individuals can virtually plant a tree on a map and it will calculate the benefits of that tree (over years as well). The EAC will meet in February and discuss items that were discussed at this meeting and will provide feedback at the next Tree Commission meeting.

Tuscarora Creek from Raflo Park past the new bowling alley and Catoctin Creek from Dry Mill to King Street where the two areas that would be the most impactful in terms of the general publics awareness of the program.

Commission Joe Garnreiter introduced himself and spoke as to why he wanted to join the commission. Chairman Hower greeted him and welcomed him.

SUBCOMMITTEES

Adopt A Spot

Staff Wright asked the Tree Commissioners to continue to keep the area clean and tidy through the winter. The commission will discuss new plantings for the spring at the February meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Email Usage and Awareness Training

Staff Member Wright reminded all commissioners to use Town of Leesburg email when conducting business and to ensure that their Awareness Training will be renewed soon. Wright explained the importance of these items to the commission.

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.

Update 16 June:

LCPS has still not submitted land classification study. Staff Member Wright will reach out to the program. Photos of tree loss, tree plantings, and insect/frost damage are needed for the report. Please send to Chairman Hower or Staff Member Wright as soon as possible. A Work Session may be in order this summer to finalize the details.

Update 21 July: Tree Commissioners and Staff will meet for a Work Session to go over the outline and begin writing the document. LCPS has still not sent the Land Classification Study to Staff.

Update 21 Sept: LCPS has still not given data and report to staff. Staff Member Wright is still working to obtain data and move this forward. Chairman Hower gave all commissioners a Draft Copy of the document. The Commission may make the October meeting as a work session.

Update 19 Oct: LCPS still has yet to send over data. Wright will reach out again. Chairman Hower has a more polished draft and will send to the commission. Wright asked for a new Work Session in February, 2022 if possible.

Update 21 Dec 2021 – N/A

Update 25 Jan 2022 – LCPS has been in contact with Staff Wright and is continuing to work with the group to get the Land Classification Study.

Flower and Garden Festival

The Tree Commissioners determined that having a booth at the Flower and Garden Festival was needed. A motion to approve the filling out of the application and paying the booth fee was made by Commissioner Marshall.

Motion to approve Tree Commission booth at Flower and Garden Festival:

Motion: Marshall
Second: Welch
Carried: 4 – 0 – 2 (Hatfield, Platt)

Staff Member Wright asked the Tree Commission to discuss which trees were to be given away at the booth for 2022. Wright brought up the website where seedlings are purchased, and discussion began. Wright asked the Tree Commission to approve at least three (3) species seedlings to purchase, with the goal of only one species to be bought (in case of inventory supply issues).

Commissioner Marshall discussed having two species and a consensus was agreed upon to have two species of trees. One tree species is to be a large mature shade tree. The other is an ornamental tree. This has never been done before and it was agreed upon that this would not alienate or impoverish some residents and festival goers if they did have enough space for a large mature shade tree.

A motion was made by Commissioner Marshall to purchase both one large shade tree species and one ornamental tree species for the Festival and that later quantities would be voted on. Large Mature Species: Sweetgum, Yellow Poplar, Bald Cypress. Ornamental Species: Chickasaw Plum, American Plum, Redbud.

Motion: Marshall
Second: Welch
Carried: 4 – 0 – 2 (Hatfield, Platt)

Update 25 Jan 2022:

Tree Commissioners will need to find a cold storage unit for the 2,000 trees that will need to be ordered. Loudoun Now is going to continue its tradition of giving a BOGO discount for the Tree Commission advertisement. It will also be held downtown.

The Tree Commission will vote at the February meeting on what material will be handed out as flyers or PSA. Some ideas are for the new riparian buffer plantings with the EAC, spotted lanternfly, a general urban forestry update, or why trees are beneficial. Also, Northern Virginia Tree Service may be able to donate two trees (15-30 gallon) as raffle items for the Flower and Garden Festival.

New Business

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Due to Commissioner Groothuis being absent, Chair Hower asked for the elections to be tabled until the next meeting.

Motion to table 7A and hold elections in February was made by Commissioner Marshall.

Motion: Marshall
Second: Welch
Carried: 5 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis)

Arbor Day 2022

Staff Wright asked the Tree Commission to decide on whether they would like to hold an Arbor Day celebration at an elementary school this year. Wright informed the group that he anticipates the Arbor Day Foundation will require some type of celebration or event around a tree being planted for the Tree City USA requirement (which the Town has held since 1989). Commissioner Marshall said he would reach out to Leesburg Elementary School near his home to see if they are interested in the Fourth Grade Foresters program and have a tree planted on their campus.

Annual Memo or Presentation to Town Council

Staff Wright asked for the Chairman or a Tree Commissioner to present or create a memo to be presented to Town Council. This is a requirement for each commission and the Chair is usually the driving force behind this program. Chairman Hower said that a memo might be the best form this year since the Commission presented in annual report in June, 2021.

Council Comments

N/A

Staff Comments

Liaison Wright thanked the Tree Commissioners for their continued mission and meeting this evening. He reminded the commission that each commissioner is allowed to attend remotely via phone call twice in one calendar year. He also informed them of the change to the attendance policy.

Commission Comments

Commissioner Marshall brought up two items that have been asked for assistance from the Plant Northern Virginia Initiative. The first is to determine if the Tree Commission has a bank of names or contact numbers for business in the Town that can financially contribute to their initiative. It was deemed the Tree Commission did not have that information. The second item asked if the Tree Commission wants stickers from the initiative. The Tree Commission declined.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hatfield asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 PM.

Motion to approve adjournment: Hatfield
Second: Marshall
Carried: 5 – 0 – 1 (Groothuis)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.