

Leesburg Tree Commission Minutes

The Leesburg Tree Commission met on Tuesday, April 19th, at 7:02 pm in the Lower Level Conference Room II at Town Hall.

Present: Commissioner Earl Hower, Patricia Hatfield, Joe Garnreiter, John Groothuis, Elizabeth Welch and Tom Stokes

Electronic Participation: N/A

Absent: Philip Marshall

Council: N/A

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

Public: Jennifer Chu, Chris Spigt, Sabina Puppo

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

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to amend Section 7 to add 7A – Joint EAC Meeting to discuss tree planting initiative and educational campaign.

Motion to approve amended agenda:	Hatfield
Second:	Groothuis
Carried:	5 – 0 – 2 (Stokes, Marshall)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Hower asked for a motion to approve the March 2022 minutes.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sabina Puppo was thanked by Staff Member Wright for translating material for Flower and Garden Festival. She also let the commission know about the art event on 05 June 2022 and how she saw an exhibit with two children (in stone) planting a real tree seedling for an exhibit.

Jennifer Chu said she stopped by the bowling alley and dropped off some literature and her contact information for the riparian buffer tree planting the commissions would like to partner together to perform.

SUBCOMMITTEES

Adopt A Spot

Staff Member Wright asked the Tree Commissioners to continue to keep the area clean and tidy through the spring into the summer. He also reminded them of the Flower and Garden Festival coming up and to ensure it looked top notch for the event. Chairman Hower and Commissioner Hatfield will plant new spring flowers soon and April will be done by committee for the Flower and Garden Festival. Commissioner Hatfield and Commissioner Garnreiter will take over maintenance of the spot for May.

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. Commissioner Hatfield stated that she is having issues logging into the system. Wright advised her to call IT to help resolve the issue.

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.

Update 15 Feb – Chair Hower informed the group that Loudoun Now is willing to donate one page to the Tree Commission in its Flower and Garden Festival insert. Chickasaw plum and sweetgum are available from VDOF and will be ordered by Wright ASAP. Northern Virginia Tree Service is willing to donate at least two, maybe four, 15 gallon trees to the booth as a raffle item. Discussion ensued as to what the PSA or theme would be for this year. Generally, it was agreed upon to have the theme be general tree facts and knowledge. Discussion into how to give trees away was also had (as there is no budget for bags). Staff Member Wright asked commissioners to get handouts and printable items ready ASAP.

Trees have been ordered

Update 15 Mar – Staff Member Wright informed the group that seedlings have been ordered. A matrix was created as to when Tree Commissioners will be present on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to hand out seedlings and educate members of the public about the Tree Commission and field questions about tree issues. Staff Member Wright will make copies of a handout from Commissioner Hatfield and also create the handouts for the tree species and how to plant and care for trees properly. Sabina Puppo asked for some QR codes to be created to save on paper. Staff Member Wright encouraged the use of the #Treesburg for social media posts. Loudoun Now PSA will cover the benefits of trees to wildlife and humans. A vote will need to take place before 14 April for the approval of the PSA and the funding.

Update 19 Apr – Commissioner Stokes will provide tractor weights to hold down the tent in case of high winds. He will coordinate with Chair Hower on picking them up. Chair Hower will meet with Staff Member Wright on Friday morning before festival to pick up material from the Liberty Street parking lot storage location. Staff Member Wright made sure to remind the commission to save 100 seedlings to give a way to the Fourth Grade Foresters for the Arbor Day 2022 celebration next Friday.

Donated trees from Northern Virginia Tree Service will be auctioned off at 1pm and 4pm on the Saturday and Sunday at the booth. Staff Member Wright will create a QR code for

festival attendees to scan if they do not want a paper flyer for educational material being handed out. Chair Hower shared the Loudoun Now PSA with the group. Chair Hower asked the commissioners to show up on time for their assignment and be courteous and helpful, as much as possible. Set up and tear down participants have been found and will help get everything ready or taken down for the event. The VDOF will have a representative on hand to give the Mayor and Tree Commission the Tree City USA designation award for their 33rd year. Commissioner Hatfield has volunteered to accept the award on behalf of the Tree Commission.

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.

No updates.

Update 15 Mar – Commissioner Marshall informed the group that Arbor Day Celebration will be held on 29 April 2022 at 1PM at Leesburg Elementary School. A black gum will be installed by select students and each student will receive a free tree seedling (Chickasaw plum). Sabina Puppo volunteered to translate the handout into Spanish.

Update 19 Apr – Staff Member Wright will be performing a Live In Leesburg Facebook event prior to the celebration and asked for any commissioner who would like to be present, be available at 11:30am for this live event. Commissioner Marshall said he would be in attendance. Staff Member A black gum tree will be planted at the school and the Fourth Grade Foresters will be there to answer questions and receive a tree seedling (Chickasaw plum) to plant in their own yard. Sabina Puppo was thanked for translating material into Spanish for this event. The ceremony will be held Friday, 29 April 2022 at 1pm at Leesburg Elementary School with about 75 students in attendance. The Mayor and Town Council has been invited as well.

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.

Update 15 Feb – A Memo will be sent to Town Council.

Update 15 Mar – The group decided to table this item until after Flower and Garden Festival. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to table the item until the May, 2022 meeting.

Motion: Marshall
Second: Welch
Carried: 7 – 0 – 0

Update 19 Apr – The group decided to table this item until after Flower and Garden Festival. Commissioner Groothuis made a motion to table the item until the June, 2022 meeting.

Motion: Groothuis
Second: Stokes
Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Marshall)

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.

Commissioner Bill Replogle 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. Commissioner Replogle 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.

Commissioner Replogle 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 public's awareness of the program.

Update 15 Feb – The Commission updated new commissioners on the project. A process was established for the project.

1. Discuss where new trees can be planted near a riparian buffer area
2. Determine suitability for the project
3. If suitable, provide a landscape design with species and specifics to Town
4. Town staff will ask Floodplain Manager and Urban Forester to review and determine if the project is sustainable and legal
5. Once feasible, Tree Commission will find property owner and obtain permission to install new trees on the property
6. EAC will find volunteers and assist in finding funding for the project
7. EAC and TC will order materials and install trees with the help of volunteers

Update 15 Mar – Jennifer Chu walked the site and sent photos to the Tree Commission to look at the area mentioned above (off Harrison Street). Discussion ensued as to the who is the property owner, what trees are currently at this location and what could be planted. Jennifer Chu and Commissioner Marshall will walk the site this spring and make some recommendations.

Update 19 Apr – Commissioner Hatfield brought up the idea of installing trees in the Greenway Farms HOA where many trees have been lost to pests and storms over the past 5-10 years if the bowling alley is not interested in the event. She stated that some flooding during high rain events can spill on Route 15 and cause traffic hazards.

Discussion also ensued about the possibility of installing trees along Town Brach just south of the Historic District along the W&OD Trail as well.

New Business

Joint Tree Commission and Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting

The Tree Commission is proposing a meeting on 10 May 2022 at 7pm at Town Hall to partner with the Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) to discuss a promotional awareness campaign centered around trees and riparian areas (but also tree planting in general) and an educational campaign to go along with this promotional awareness campaign. Staff Member Wright informed the group that the meeting would need to be noticed and open to the public for comments.

During this meeting, the Treesburg campaign would be discussed and how each commission could fulfill its own unique role. The discussion would be led by the Tree Commission with the emphasis on trees and the natural environment and how residents can keep Leesburg greener, cleaner, and cooler.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hatfield to ask Chair Hower to meet with the EAC on 3 May 2022 to discuss the possibility of a meeting and determine if this is a worthwhile project for both entities.

Motion:	Hatfield
Second:	Stokes
Carried:	6 – 0 – 1 (Marshall)

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 and that he will be in attendance at the April 25, 2022 Town Council Work Session if a Tree Commissioner would like to be present (not required). Wright also informed the group of the changes to the Commissioner Networking event for 2022.

Commission Comments

Commissioner Hatfield wanted to remind the group to push that Leesburg has been a Tree City USA since 1989, 33 years, at the Flower and Garden Festival.

Commissioner Welch informed the group that the spotted lanternfly still has not been found in Loudoun County but continue to look for signs and symptoms of the insects. If you think you see something, contact VDACS.

Commissioner Stokes informed the group that the gypsy moth name has been formally changed as gypsy can be seen as sensitive in nature to groups of people across the globe.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Groothuis asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 PM.

Motion to approve adjournment: Groothuis

Second: Garnreiter

Carried: 6 – 0 – 1 (Marshall)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.