



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 20, 2021 ❖ 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

NOTICE: This virtual meeting of the Urban Forestry Commission was held pursuant to and in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3708.2 and state and local legislation adopted to allow for continued government operation during the COVID-19 declared emergency.

All participating members of the Urban Forestry Commission were present at this meeting through electronic means. All members of the public may view this video of this meeting on the City's website at www.fallschurchva.gov/UFC

Attendees

UFC members: Kathy Philpott Costa, Amy Crumpton, David DeCoste, David Braun

UFC City Staff Liaison: Charles Prince

City Council Liaison:

UFC Student Representative: Dylan Petrillo

City Staff:

Members of the Public: Kate Reich, Mike Nichols

1. **Call to Order** - the meeting was called to order at approximately 7:03 p.m.
2. **Reading of Virtual Meeting Notice** - the notice was read by Kathy Philpott Costa.
3. **Roll Call** - Roll call was taken with all meeting participants announcing themselves.
4. **Approval of the [December 2020 Minutes](#)** - the Dec. 2020 minutes were approved.
5. **Public Comments** - no public comments.
6. **Staff Updates/Informational Items:**
 - o **School grounds maintenance update** - Charles Prince will meet with Seve Padilla (FCCPS facilities) in the next couple weeks. This item will remain on the agenda until a plan of action is identified as a result of said meeting.
 - o **[Council Calendar Update](#)** - Charles reviewed the Council Calendar items.
 - o **[Special Exception Code Amendment](#)** – **Council action will take place on Feb. 16, 2021. See line 132 in linked document for full schedule.** Kathy provided background on the special exception code. The UFC should work with staff to develop a proposal to present to the City Council to address green space topics and standards as it relates to Special Exceptions.
 - o **Dan Sze + Szymanski Commemorative Trees** - Dan Sze commemorative tree: Charles has been in contact with the Recs. and Park Department and is recommending planting a tree on the "Paper Street" (off Fulton near Pennsylvania Ave) that is located

behind Dan Sze's house. Amy Crumpton mentioned that those neighbors are in discussion with Jeremy Edwards (Dept. of Public Works) to use that space for edible plants for kids. Charles will align with Jeremy regarding this space. Dennis Syzmanski commemorative tree: City space is limited, but Charles stated that the UFC could consider the area to the left of City Hall or around the Cherry Hill Park playground. Kathy will follow up with FCCPS Superintendent Dr. Noonan and City Manager, Wyatt Shields regarding the memorial trees to be removed from George Mason high school as a result of the construction and possible memorial tree plans at the new high school and/or at the West Falls Church. It is not clear if memorial trees that are to be removed will be replaced in the grove area.

- **Fellows Property Update and Recreation and Parks Meeting Update** - Charles attended the Rec. and Parks Board meeting to hear the discussion regarding Fellows Property. From the tone of the meeting, Charles doesn't expect any pushback on registering the specimen trees. Charles noted that there may be a trail added along with some stormwater improvements, but it appears that all interested parties want to keep the space "natural." Dave DeCoste suggested that UFC should meet in person to walk the space. Charles has been advised that only two members at a time should review the space. Charles will recommend a date. Charles discussed the process for listing trees as "Specimen Trees" on the Fellows property. The UFC and City Arborist need to transmit a recommendation to the City Council.
- **Streetscape Standards Discussion** - Charles is meeting with the city Principal Planner Paul Stoddard next week to discuss ideas regarding consistent definitions for UFC terms such as green space and canopy coverage. Kathy has begun to discuss these concepts with Paul as well. In addition, under the Streetscape Standards, there have been staff questions of interpretation regarding single tree planters versus multi-tree planters and edged versus flush planters. The guidelines recommend single tree planters; Charles has been recommending multi-tree planters as it offers more design flexibility and meets the goals of the Standards. The Standards recommend both edged and flush planters depending on the context, and Charles has been recommending a flexible approach including edged planters. Kathy has drafted a letter to explain the UFC's support for the Arborist's recommendations to city council and the planning commission.
- **Founders' Row Phase II Update** - At this point, the project is in an early phase. Charles has reviewed the latest proposal and noticed the plan doesn't include green space. He will raise this issue, pointing out the financial and ecological impact this green space omission causes. He also noted that if this and future projects fall short of to the UFC recommendations, he will work to request more financial and/or ecological concessions.
- **Tree City USA Application Update** - The application has been approved so the next step is to pass a proclamation.
- **West Falls Church Update** - The developer is no longer willing to cover the cost for the regulator, thus the city will need to fund the \$2M expense.
- **Legislative Agenda – Stormwater Best Practices Study Group** - Amy raised the topic of two agenda items: 1. HJR527- The study of invasive plants. 2. HJR569 - the Department of Forestry stakeholder advisory group to study and evaluate enabling statutes. It was noted that these two items of interest to the UFC should be shared with Cindy Mester (Asst. City Manager) since she compiles all important legislative agenda items for the City of Falls Church Boards and Commissions.
- **Upcoming UFC Vacancies** - Mike Nichols is a City of Falls Church resident who is interested in becoming a commission member. He would fill the seat vacated by Dennis Syzmanski. In April, there will be another vacancy as David Braun's term will end in

March and can no longer serve as he will be moving out of the City of Falls Church.

7. Current Business

- **Rules of Procedure** - Kathy added a paragraph that addresses members participating remotely, once we are out of COVID-19 procedures, as required by Virginia FOIA. All UFC members reviewed the document and provided comments. A motion was approved to accept the final Rules of Procedure.

- **Annual Report** - Kathy stated that it is best to provide City Council with an executive summary. Kate Reich, former city arborist, noted that historically, Councilmembers preferred to receive the annual report in person so they can ask questions. David Braun suggested redrafting the document so the introductory text written in paragraph form was instead presented in a bulleted list. Amy suggested that the annual report state the UFC's accomplishments while clearly describing hurdles that weren't overcome. The document will be edited so the UFC can approve it during the next meeting, and present it to the City Council in late February.

- **Tree of the Year and Arbor Day** - Arbor Day: Charles is recommending the city host a virtual Arbor Day and will draft a program to celebrate it. He and Dylan Petrillo will create a video featuring city VIP's and tutorials like "*how to plant and care for your trees.*"

Tree of the Year: The UFC selected the Black Cherry as the Tree of the Year. David Braun inquired about preferred suppliers and do we have a process in place for determining from where we purchase our trees? Would it be in our best interest to consider sourcing trees several years in advance? Charles noted that he has contacts that could accommodate this desire if we choose to apply it. Charles will contact local nurseries and develop a recommendation on how we could do this.

Further discussion took place on how the UFC could enhance the promotion of the Tree of the Year and Arbor Day. Ideas included: creating educational opportunities and developing event(s) to give various types of trees to residents. An important factor to consider is the availability of trees, and Amy suggested that shrubs should also be incorporated when possible. It was decided to add this topic as a future agenda item, "Tree of the Year Revamp," so it can be discussed further.

- **Equity Review - The Equity Review is a charge from City Council for each Board and Commission to evaluate its mission, practices and programs for socio-economic equity.** The UFC is being asked to provide feedback by March to the City Council on how it can support this effort.

Initial thoughts included:

- Provide trees to families that can't afford to purchase them.
- Target apartment complexes with sub-standard landscaping and emphasize the need for trees in mixed-used housing for environmental equity.
- Identify subsidized housing locations and suggest that some budget be diverted to improve landscaping in those spaces, or look at possibility of volunteer efforts to clean up invasives and plant trees on these properties
- Ask if the city could develop a grant program to help improve the surrounding green space around commercial or residential properties that can't afford to maintain the landscaping.
- Solicit volunteer groups (e.g. Habitat Restoration) for help with the removal of invasive plants in under-maintained areas of the City.
- Develop an outreach program that targets minorities (e.g. Tinner Hill Assoc., Black Birders, FCCPS Family Resource Centers, Alpha Kappa Alpha, churches) to encourage them to participate on city boards and commissions and to gain insight from them on their members' environmental interests and needs.
- Collaborate with the ESC on mutual goals

8. Recurring Business

- **Insight Project** - Charles believes that the program is going to move forward as it currently stands. The communication from the Insight Project team has been poor - if they respond at all. Answers are vague and don't address the detailed questions that the UFC asked. The Insight Project developers are asking for a 6' reduction from 20' to 14' in the streetscape standards on Park Street. Charles and the UFC would like to ensure that such reduction doesn't affect plans for street tree planting. Kathy asked Charles to inquire as to the soil depth in the area that may have underground parking below it. This is difficult to discern from the blueprints.

9. Future Business

- Counting Tree Plantings (My Tree Counts)
- Green Infrastructure Plan/Standards
- Biophilic Cities
- UF Management Plan
- UF Code Changes
- Tree of the Year Revamp

10. Adjourn - the meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by David DeCoste, UFC Secretary.

Urban Forestry Commission Staff liaison: Charles Prince: 571-238-6306,
arborist@fallschurchva.gov.