

**Forest Conservation Advisory Committee  
Minutes**

**October 16, 2012**

Prepared by: Linda Silversmith

**ATTENDEES**

Members

Ginny Barnes  
Bob Benson  
Mark Buscaino  
Andrew Der  
Ken Ferebee  
Kim Knox  
Dan Landry  
Laura Miller (DEP), ex officio  
David Myers  
Katherine Nelson, (M-NCPPC), ex officio  
Michael Norton  
David Plummer (MSCD), ex officio  
Jason Sheer

Doug Sievers (WSSC), ex officio  
Linda Silversmith  
Kevin Smith

Absent members

David Kuykendall (DPS), ex officio  
Brett Linkletter (DPWT), ex officio  
Caren Madsen  
Jeff Schwartz  
Dan Snyder  
Clark Wagner

Others attending

Stan Edwards, DEP Staff

**MINUTES**

- I. **Minutes of September 18, 2012 meeting:** reviewed and approved with corrections to items 3, 4-C (dropped), 5, and 7.
- II. **Agenda for October 16, 2012 meeting:** no changes from the e-mailed agenda
- III. **Nominating Committee report:** Ms. Knox read the written report prepared by nominating committee chair Caren Madsen: Nominees are again Ms. Knox for chair and Mr. Der for vice chair. The FCAC will vote on forwarding these recommendations at the November 20 meeting.
- IV. **Topics considered for next meeting:** [special note: those chosen were later postponed to give priority to continuing consideration of a comprehensive approach to urban forestry]. Ms. Knox proposed inviting Diane Schwartz Jones, Director Department of Permitting Services, for November to talk about streamlining the county permit process.

When Joe Howard, the champion tree coordinator, was suggested, a member objected, offering the reason that this is not really part of forest conservation. A state speaker might be Marian Honeczy of the Dept. of Natural Resources Forest Service; Mr. Der could invite her. CJ Lammers, who saw through the Prince

Georges County amendments of the Forest Conservation Law 18 months ago, is another possible speaker; these were modeled after Fairfax County, VA.

Ms. Nelson indicated that she could talk about interpreting recent changes in state law – and also about how canopy is measured and tracked – with reference to 2008 forest layers and 2009 canopy analysis. Mr. Buscaino would also like to know about federal funds for state forestry projects.

- V. **Canopy Goals of Other Communities:** This is with reference to urban tree canopy goals. Baltimore County has none. No info from Baltimore City. In Anne Arundel, goals depend on zoning. The Frederick Co. school board has a 20% goal. Bowie has a table. The Pr. Georges goals are linked to development levels (25% for urban residential; 50% for other residential). The American Forests organization reports 42% of urban jurisdictions as having tree canopy goals but only 25% were meeting them. The updated Mont. Co. Forest Strategy report made recommendations in 2004. The Planning Department has more recent data on canopy coverage (2009).

Canopy goals are different from forest goals in a broad diverse county like ours. Ms. Knox mentioned 2004 data showing tree canopy levels lower than recommended in some areas, but again it was suggested that we look at the newer data.

- VI. **Discussion of whether to establish an urban tree canopy goal:** Perhaps such goals need to be identified using zoning and what each zone requires. Communicating such goals clearly to the public could be an important role for the FCAC. The FCAC needs to communicate too with the county executive. As impervious surface increases, trees suffer; this reduction in tree canopy is a trend all over.

During the discussion, we raised the question “Is legislation worth the effort if goals are not set?” One councilmember is considering a project to get 100,000 trees planted in the county. Some places around the country have plans to plant one million trees. But one has to consider the viability of such trees; Casey Trees has noted about 20% mortality of tree plantings and a study by the US Forest Service suggests a 2% loss of canopy coverage in urban areas over 5 years. The public can more easily envision canopy than amounts of forest.

For this county, the FCAC ought to look at urban jurisdictions separately from those covered by the Forest Conservation Law. This topic needs further attention by this committee. Meanwhile some goals could be set regarding both canopy and forest health – such as regarding distribution and diversity. We were reminded not to forget maintenance, which often gets neglected. A 2007 DNR report on Hyattsville was shared that mentions species, age, and various problems.

**VII. Discussion of whether to focus on developing a comprehensive approach to urban forestry (changed during the meeting to the term comprehensive approach to urban tree canopy).**

Ms. Barnes reminded others that when the FCAC was established, it was directed to develop a comprehensive approach to urban forestry – something we have not yet done. This is a broad concept beyond just evaluating any draft urban tree law. Can this tie in with the Baltimore County approach of setting goals (and having less emphasis on. regulating)?

When FCAC members then wondered about the status of the county DEP's draft law, Mr. Edwards said that the concept is due to be introduced to the County Council within the next several weeks, having been sent to the Council by the County Executive. Comments, such as those of the FCAC, are accompanying the proposal.

Mr. Edwards also reviewed with the FCAC the 9 sections of the county law that established this body (as at <http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/dectmpl.asp?url=/Content/dep/climatechange/treefcac.asp> ). Ms. Miller noted some variables in defining urban forestry – whether to use political boundaries, describe a tree community in an urban area, speak of a collection of trees, for example. Others spoke of urban forestry as addressing care of individual trees and, as said earlier, being dependent on zoning or on tiers. It makes sense to have different strategies for different areas.

A go-round concerning resulted in the following major points to stress regarding a comprehensive urban tree canopy approach – and the FCAC will focus on this topic further at its November meeting:

1. Effective Maintenance that is properly funded;
2. Bottom-up Tree Inventory;
3. Distribution and Dispersion of Species and Density in both time and space;
4. Distribution of Trees in Urban and Rural Areas;
5. Prioritize Neighborhoods for Planting;
6. Public Engagement and Outreach;
7. Staff Resources;
8. Planning and Development Policies/Legislative in Zoning;
9. Best Management Practices for Planting and Maintenance;
10. Timeline and Benchmarks on How the County Will Achieve its goals;
11. Review of Existing Regulations;
12. Sufficient Budget and Staff Resources;
13. Socially Equitable Distribution of the Urban Forest;
14. Mapping the Urban Forest with the Country over a timeline;
15. Private Trees/Public Trees-Mapped into Zones;
16. Establish goals by planning zone;

17. ID ecosystem services of trees; and
18. Education/Engagement of K-16 students

A thought question from Mr. Edwards was -- What should happen when a tree is disturbed?