

Forest Conservation Advisory Committee
Minutes
March 15, 2011

Prepared by: Bryan Straathof

ATTENDEES

Members

Mark Buscaino
Ginny Barnes
Andrew Der
Ken Ferebee
Dan Landry
Brett Linkletter (DPWT), ex officio
Caren Madsen
Laura Miller (DEP), ex officio
Katherine Nelson, (M-NCPPC), ex officio
David Plummer (MSCD), ex officio
Linda Silversmith
Kevin Smith
Dan Snyder
Bryan Straathof
Jeff Schwartz (phone)
Clark Wagner

Absent members

Paul Allen (WSSC), ex officio
Norman Mease
Sarah Navid, (DPS) ex officio
Michael Norton
David Post

Others attending

Dale Tibbitts, Council staff (Elrich)
Harry Phol
Marcia Rucker
Bob Kaufman, MCBIA

Board Minutes Discussion

The Committee discussed the draft of the February 2011 Meeting minutes, prepared by Clark Wagner. Certain edits and action items were recommended, with the draft to be updated. The FCAC would then review and approve the Feb 2011 minutes.

Attendance disclaimer sheet distributed to identify FCAC attendance as public information

Upcoming Meeting Needs Discussion

The FCAC discussed the need to invite a guest expert that could advise on procedural questions related to the County boards and committees.

Clarification of proper procedure is needed with respect to communications via e-mail, formal voting and approval on letters prepared by the FCAC, appropriate public review process, and guidance on best practices with respect to FCAC operating procedures.

Upcoming Events

- Reddy Branch tree protection project in Brookeville area, Sunday March 27th, noted by Kimberly Knox
- Oaks Landfill tree planting on Earth Day, April 22, flyer given to Caren by David Plummer. *Notice later posted to whole group via email.*

Presentation by Katherine Nelson from M-NCPPC on the County's Forest Conservation Annual Report and the New Tree Canopy Assessment Product Procured by M-NCPPC

The report is titled "A Report on the Montgomery County's Existing and Possible Tree Canopy" and was prepared by the M-NCPPC in conjunction with University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Laboratory.

Katherine led an in-depth presentation of tree data and analysis, with discussion among the FCAC. Noted Highlights and comments include:

18 years of tree data

Reviewing forest conservation bank policies in 2011

Excludes ICC tree clearing and planting data

University of VT study 2009 data reflects up to 50% tree canopy coverage for the County

Analysis can drill down to the individual property level

Incorporating external sources, such as from American Forests

Opportunities for mitigation funds to be used to support tree canopy

Goal is to make study data available online to the general public in 2011

County Trees – Discussion on pending legislation to amend the FCL or add tree protection legislation

Consideration of urban tree registration, like the State of MD.

Utilize data and expertise from Casey Trees, which focuses on the District of Columbia

Importance of tree education.

Need incentives to save trees, build preservation / conservation approach

Coordination needed with storm water management and erosion and sediment control

Consideration of separation of FCL from tree preservation, a separate tree ordinance. One member noted that two separate laws could be confusing.

One member noted that there is a current process for protecting trees on-site with reviewers but the process is scattered and subjective.

Environmental Site Design should help this but there are conflicts between trees and current stormwater management practices. Example was raised of MNCPPC not giving credit for trees on a site engineered by one of the committee members.

Should put a rider in a new law: Go back in 5 to 10 years to evaluate and determine survival rate of trees.

Goal of legislation should/can be in part to educate, encourage and inform residents about the value of trees.

Noted that the FCL was a cultural marker in Montgomery County; a tree bill could be the same type of cultural marker.

One arborist noted that he spends about 50% of his time now trying to convince homeowners not to cut their trees down because of fear instilled by Pepco outages. He noted a “backlash” on trees that has also resulted in random cutting and door-knockers doing tree work in neighborhoods (who are not certified tree experts).

Consideration of species advisement, prevent tree saving measures after damage is done

Consideration of accepting a certain tree mortality rate

Consideration of development patterns with respect to trees policy or legislation

Discussion of tree topping and cutting down of trees

DEP Tree Data Update

The final Quality Assurance/Quality Control check is approximately 1/4- way through the final QAQC process on the DEP version of the data. Considered as a comprehensive study, below the canopy with understory vegetation and forest floor included. DEP canopy layer approach built with the intent to meet the needs of the current DEP proposal. DEP process is the same remote sensing tool used by the Forest Service.

Consideration of landowner of property.

VT tree canopy assessment product is state-of-the-art remote-sensing technology used by other jurisdictions now. Considers the canopy from above.

Next steps

Katherine will send link on presentation and study data.

Next Meeting April 19th; Earth Day on April 22nd (*NOTE: Rescheduled to spring break and Easter/Passover week in the County. Moved to April 26th*)

Meeting adjourned.