

City of Hyattsville Tree Board Meeting Minutes

Friday 1 October 2021

Zoom Meeting

Present: Millard Smith, Gloria Felix-Thompson, Randy Fletcher, Keondra Freemyn, Taylor Johnson

Absent: none

Staff: Dawn Taft, Lesley Riddle

Committee Liaison: Danny Schaible,

The meeting was called to order at 1:34 pm.

The minutes from July meeting were approved.

Remarks from Lesley Riddle, Director of Public Works – praise of Dawn Taft and her work to place trees and track permits.

The following outstanding permits were discussed:

21 approved permits since last meeting

4 were not applicable – wrong size

1 denied

1 pending

New Business:

Danny Schaible, Ward 2 council member is our new board liaison. We are a city of trees with a great arborist and we do what we can to protect them. He shared with us a draft proposal to the council to increase resources through funding to prioritize and plant appropriate trees. The proposal includes money for maintenance, watering new trees, etc. He intends to introduce it when the council discusses allocation of ARPA funds – stimulus, pandemic funds as part of the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress that sent monies to municipalities. Hyattsville will receive \$17 million in two installments. We have to obligate the money and then we have four to five years to spend it. His proposal is to ramp up tree planting to a greater quantity, to hire an intern to conduct surveys, reach out to residents, etc. And hiring a contractor to increase the planting that our current staff cannot handle due to current workloads.

Ms. Riddle says this is very aggressive, in a good way. We have a basic idea of some areas that are available for planting, but we do not yet know everything we need to know to make sure we get the right trees in the right places. Using an outside contractor makes a lot of sense. Dawn

Taft, arborist, needs help! The city staff definitely appreciates the council members' support for this proposal.

Ms. Freeman wondered if we might need someone with a higher level of expertise than an intern to handle this work.

Mr. Schaible responded that we want to do something that has a city-wide impact.

Ms. Taft reported the tree walk at Driskell Park will be 23 October. Spanish language tours begin at 9:30 and 10:30. Noon will be the English tree walk followed by a forest bathing activity. There will also be a self-guided tour that will be left up for the week to accommodate those who will not be able to participate due to covid safety measures restricting numbers to 10 participants. Any suggestions or input would be welcomed.

In FY21 the city planted 235 trees, 98 of which were on private property. For FY22, we have already planted 10 this year and another 91 street trees are scheduled for planting with 9 of them on Nicholson in front of the school in the sylva cells we have discussed earlier to give trees water and room to grow.

These plantings do take into account projected global warming. We are not planting White Oaks, which are currently struggling. Instead, we are planting swamp white oak that have longer tap roots and greater resistance to swings in climate.

Mr. Schaible asked about the sylva cells – what do they allow us to do? Ms. Riddle replied that research on street trees shows that trees struggle surviving in smaller spaces. We have some test cells on Nicholson right in front of the school. Two sawtooth oaks are dying due to compaction of the kids. The sylva puts a channel under the street that allows water to flow to the tree, the surface is also pervious to allow more moisture, and it reduces or stops compaction. The trees will be able to send their roots under the concrete and grow more naturally. This helps to prevent trees from becoming hazards that have to be removed or from dying due to lack of space and water. We also get 30-40 more years of ecosystem services from these trees, such as cooling effects, storm water runoff reduction, cleaner air, etc. This is a tool in our tool box that may allow us to plant trees where we normally might not be able to put them because of constrictions. The city has a very mature tree canopy and we are losing many of them, so we are researching methods of planting new trees to extend their lives. If the current mature trees had been in sylva cells we might have another 50 years out of them.

Ms. Taft reminded us that we had begun the process of revising the tree board ordinance and suggested we re-start the process next meeting. She will circulate to us recommended changes from the city staff for the board to review. We agreed we will try to complete this process by the end of the December meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:16
The next meeting will be 5 November at 1:30.