

MINUTES
TREE COMMITTEE
February 9, 2022

The Town of Bel Air Tree Committee meeting took place via the *GoToMeeting* virtual platform on February 9, 2022, at 4:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mike Simini, Chair
Wayne Merkel, Vice Chair
Kevin Bianca, Town Commissioner
Frank Lopez
Marion McCarron

IN ATTENDANCE:

Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner
Jane Sudbrink, Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

Graham Becker

Mr. Simini opened the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

I. Administrative Matters

A. Review of the January 12, 2022, Minutes

There were no edits or comments to the minutes. Ms. McCarron moved to accept the minutes. Mr. Lopez seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

II. Old Business

A. Tree City USA 2021

Mr. Glidden reported that the town received official notice that it is a recipient of this award, but no official package has arrived yet. Mr. Glidden forwarded the email regarding the award to the committee members. If he does not receive any further information, he will contact Anne Gilbert in April.

B. PLANT Award 2021

Mr. Glidden submitted the application but has not received any updates yet. The application process closed at the end of January, so he suspects that the application is still in the review process. He thanked Mr. Merkel for dropping off the missing component of last year's plaque and it has now been attached.

III. New Business

A. Arbor Day Activity

The Arbor Day activity will be on opening day of the Bel Air Farmer's Market, Saturday, April 9. A time change for the market was noted—hours are now 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Mr. Simini listed the following trees to be given out: American Plum, Bald Cypress, Eastern Red Cedar, Pawpaw, Red Osier Dogwood, Redbud, Shortleaf Pine, Southern Red Oak, and Swamp Chestnut Oak. Last year, 350 trees were given away. Mr. Merkel and Mr. Bianca noted that committee members will be on hand to help with the bagging of seedlings and the giveaway.

Mr. Lopez suggested the native Silky Dogwood as a possible tree for future ordering because of its hardiness and appearance and it is less susceptible to insects. He also commented on the native Swamp Chestnut Oak, which is not commonly found and would be nice to reintroduce in the streetscape.

Mr. Simini also noted that Harford County has an Arbor Day tree giveaway. This year the tree planting activity will be at the Harford Waste Disposal Center on Friday, April 15. Jenny Daniels is the contact.

Mr. Simini shared that the dates for the Harford County Farm Fair are July 25-30, 2022. In the past, the Forestry Board has had a booth.

1. Draft Proclamation

Mr. Glidden will draft a proclamation and requests that it be placed on the commissioners' agenda before April 9. Mr. Bianca noted that he would like to have the committee recognized for their efforts via this proclamation.

B. Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School

Mr. Glidden detailed that HCPS has initiated a project to rebuild the campus of Homestead-Wakefield. Both buildings will be torn down in phases to be replaced by a two-story building. Baseball fields will also be installed in the area of a former building and parking lot. The school system is in the process of developing a forest conservation plan, as required by the state, to determine which forested areas will be preserved and to justify any removal of specimen trees. There are 74 specimen trees on the site. Mr. Glidden is involved with the process and will work with the school system to minimize the loss of trees, though this is a new process for many of those involved. He also stated that Plumtree Run flows to the west of the area.

Mr. Bianca said the commissioners met with council members, Mr. Vincenti and Mr. Giangiordano, regarding this new development and discussed the forested area and the long-contested possibility of a connecting road. Mr. Glidden noted there are four stands of trees on the property and the school system can also do reforestation on the property—3.5 to 4.5 acres of reforestation are possible in order to meet reforestation requirements.

Mr. Lopez mentioned the possibility of installing an outdoor classroom on the campus. Mr. Merkel stated that during his time with the Forestry Board, they installed several outdoor classrooms at various public schools in the county. Mr. Simini said that he will discuss this with the Forestry Board, which may be interested in funding it. Mr. Glidden said that he would also mention the outdoor classroom

possibility at future meetings with the school system. He expressed his concerns that the school system is not focused enough on making the new campus bike- and pedestrian-friendly, particularly since the campus will back up to the MacFaul Activity Center.

1. Additional Trails

Mr. Lopez asked about the possibility of putting trails and tree plantings along the wider sections of Emmorton Rd. and Rt. 24 in order to connect this part of the county with the town. Mr. Glidden noted that the town has always been in favor of this idea, as well as the county. However, Emmorton Rd. and Rt. 24 are state roads. The Maryland State Highway Administration continues to be a “vehicular-centric organization” and it remains difficult to get them to explore other options.

Mr. Glidden updated the committee on the progress of the Ma & Pa Trail. The connections are near completion, with fences being installed from N. Main St. up to Moores Mill Rd. He expects the work to be done this year with a fully functioning trail from Fallston to Forest Hill. Mr. Glidden will look for places along the trail that could have tree plantings. In the near future, Mr. Glidden hopes to get funding for a trail for the Thomas St. leg that would connect downtown area via Heavenly Waters Park to the Ma & Pa Trail. Mr. Glidden said he would get cost estimates to Mr. Bianca for Thomas Street project. Mr. Lopez said the trail grant could also provide funding.

2. Native Plant Activities

Mr. Bianca reported that Harford County Climate Action received a \$5,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. On May 10, Doug Tallamy will be giving a talk at the armory on native plants. Mr. Bianca said that Harford County Climate Action is planning a native plant event at that time where there will be native plants for sale at the annual flower mart, an event at the library, and other activities. Mr. Bianca will share all this information, including a schedule of activities, with committee members via email.

IV. Adjournment

Ms. McCarron moved to adjourn, and Mr. Merkel seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 5:19 p.m. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 9 at 4:30 p.m.