

**Town of Bel Air Government**  
**MINUTES**  
**TREE COMMITTEE**  
February 10, 2021

The Town of Bel Air Tree Committee meeting took place via the *GoToMeeting* virtual platform on February 10, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mike Simini, Chair  
Frank Lopez, Vice Chair  
Graham Becker  
Marion McCarron  
Wayne Merkel

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Kevin Bianca, Town Commissioner  
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner  
Kevin Small, Director of Planning  
Kathi Santora, Recording Secretary

**ABSENT:**

Mr. Simini opened the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

**I. Administrative Matters**

**A. Review of Minutes**

Mr. Simini asked for a review of the January 13, 2021 minutes.

Mr. Merkel noted that a correction to the December 9, 2020 minutes was not accurate. P. 2, Section C., 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph should read: "Mr. Merkel noted that October Glory Red Maple trees were planted **on the west & east side of Rt. 24 N**, primarily from Aldi to Best Buy." (current corrections in bold)

P. 2, 9<sup>th</sup> paragraph, first sentence: remove the word "red."

Ms. McCarron moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Simini seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

**B. Election of Officers**

Mr. Glidden took the lead to conduct the election. He asked for nominations for committee chair.

Ms. McCarron nominated Mr. Simini. Mr. Lopez seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Simini requested nominations for committee vice-chair. Mr. Lopez nominated Mr. Merkel. There were no other nominations. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Lopez noted that he is stepping off the committee due to his professional retirement and upcoming move to Maine.

Mr. Glidden requested that Mr. Lopez continue attending as long as the meetings are held virtually.

## **II. Old Business**

### **A. Street Tree selection list update**

Mr. Glidden stated that Mr. Merkel had supplied comments to the current street tree selection list.

Suggestions as follows: add Amur Maple and Japanese Tree Lilac to the 4' – 6' listing; add Columnar English Oak to the 6' – 10' listing. Add October Glory Red Maple and Autumn Blaze Freeman Maple to the 10+' listing.

Mr. Merkel also recommended removing the Goldspire Sugar Maple from the 6' – 10' listing, as it is sensitive to road salt.

Mr. Glidden asked for other discussion. Mr. Merkel stated that the Autumn Blaze Freeman Maple is a cross between a Red Maple and Silver Maple. It turns bright red in fall. There are several varieties of Freeman Maples. These should go in the 10+' listing.

Mr. Glidden recently attended the first of a three-session online presentation from Tree City USA about urban canopy street trees. The presenter suggested that urban canopies have been overpopulated with maple trees. He indicated that they like all other genus are at risk for disease and recommended that no more than 5% of any one genus be present in a canopy. This would protect against massive loss due to insects and disease.

Mr. Becker noted that red maples tend to be host trees for spotted lantern flies. They don't kill the trees, but create widespread honeydew. The spotted lantern fly is here to stay.

Mr. Bianca asked if the tree diversity of Bel Air's tree canopy is known. Mr. Merkel noted that an inventory and assessment of all trees was completed in the 90s. Mr. Glidden will locate the file. It will be a starting point for a current assessment. Most trees removed over the years have been ash trees. Mr. Simini believes this list has been

updated since then.

Mr. Glidden returned to the discussion of the recommended street trees. The 4' – 6' descriptor refers to the distance from back of curb to sidewalk. He asked if the Serviceberry (single stem) and Sargent Cherry should remain on the list. All agreed.

In the 6' – 10' list, there is now the Columnar Beech, Columnar English Oak, Alternative-leaf Dogwood, Purple-leaf Plum and Hornbeam.

In the 10+' section, there is Liberty Elm. Mr. Becker noted that these are Elm trees that are disease resistant.

Mr. Glidden asked if the Japanese Zelkova has been overused in town and Mr. Lopez agreed. He said there are many around the Mary Risteau building that are dying off. It will be removed from list.

Others to stay on list are Ginko (male), Honeylocust, Londonplane Tree, Swamp Chestnut Oak, and Littleleaf Linden. Mr. Lopez suggested the American Linden.

Mr. Becker suggested other varieties of oaks, rather than the Pin Oak.

Mr. Glidden will incorporate all suggestions and reissue a draft for final review. He would like to limit the choices to no more than six in each category.

## **B. Champion Tree measurement**

Mr. Merkel provided Mr. Glidden with a list that contained 30 trees. The previous Town booklet contained 51 trees. Some decrease is due to the fact that the Big Tree program stopped measuring trees that were under 70% of the State Champion.

Mr. Glidden will review. He asked if any measurements were taking place. Mr. Simini stated that the Harford County Forestry Board's list previously contained 47 trees; now it contains 30. Mr. Glidden asked if the list can be shared with the Town of Bel Air. Mr. Lopez noted that the Freedom of Information Act dictates that lists with personal contact information cannot be shared by DNR without landowner permission.

Mr. Merkel stated he can contact Mr. Sherring and offer assistance in measuring. Perhaps the trees in the Town of Bel Air can be measured at the same time the Forestry Board measures others in County. Mr. Merkel noted that the Forestry Board has the needed measuring tools. He will join the group when the measuring project begins this Spring.

Mr. Glidden stated that the Town's booklet will be updated when the new measurements are available.

Mr. Becker left the meeting approximately 5:10 p.m.

### **C. Bel Air Downtown Alliance Design Guidelines**

Mr. Glidden noted that Mr. Merkel supplied comments via email. He asked for others.

Mr. Small noted that this is not an urgent issue. Mr. Glidden asked if all members received a copy and for any additional comments. Mr. Lopez asked for a copy via email.

### **D. 26 N. Hickory Avenue – American Sycamore Tree**

Mr. Glidden noted that the Town received a letter from Arbor X that described their assessment of the tree. It confirmed the need for removal. Developer does not yet have control of the property. Mr. Glidden asked the developer to share the date and time of removal when scheduled. He would like to observe and document the tree removal.

Mr. Merkel stated that Arbor X is not currently on the list of licensed tree experts. Mr. Glidden agreed to the importance of this for tree removal on this property. He will advise the developer. Mr. Glidden added that the tree is entirely on private property and therefore does not require a street tree permit for removal.

## **III. New Business**

- A.** Mr. Glidden stated he received an e-mail from AA Tree Experts with a reminder about the bi-annual fertilizer treatment of the Major Oak. This was authorized to be done in Spring 2021.
- B.** Mr. Merkel stated he dropped off photo slides of a previous town entry way sign and the StreetScape project. He asked if Mr. Glidden has any past photos. Mr. Merkel possesses 100 – 150 slides from previous tree projects. Mr. Glidden will check with town IT if they have the capacity to scan these slides.

Mr. Simini noted that the Forestry Board purchased seedlings as per usual for Spring giveaway. Given COVID 19 restrictions, he wondered if a tree giveaway is feasible this year. Is Farmers Market an option? Mr. Small stated that it is up to the Tree Committee if they wish to participate this year.

Mr. Glidden noted that applications have been submitted for Tree City USA and PLANT Awards. Public activities, per se, are not required due to COVID 19. The upcoming street tree installation may qualify. The town's Arbor Day proclamation should also take place in March or April.

Mr. Lopez stated that the Harford County Forestry Board gave away seedlings to the

public at the landfill last year. It was a socially distanced setup. Perhaps this process could be adapted at the Farmers Market. Mr. Small added that the Town's Kite Day is still scheduled for the week after the Farmers Market opening. This takes place in an open area at Rockfield Manor. Tree giveaways could also take place somewhere downtown. The Farmers Market attracts the most people, however. This can be discussed at the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Merkel noted the State's purchase of about 904 acres to add Stoney Forest near Nova Scotia Road in southern Harford County. Active recreation, trails and demonstration areas are planned.

Mr. Lopez moved to adjourn. Mr. Merkel seconded the motion. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.