

MINUTES OF THE FOREST PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2013 IN THE GREENBELT COMMUNITY CENTER

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Robert Snyder called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT were members Donna Almquist, Valerie Elliott, Susan Gregersen, Donna Hoffmeister, Damien Ossi, Robert Snyder, Yoni Siegel and Willis Witter. Mr. Murray had notified that he would not be present.

ALSO PRESENT were City Council liaison Rodney Roberts, Celia Craze, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development, and Jim Sterling, Brian Townsend and Luisa Robles from the Public Works Department.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved by a vote of 7-1.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting of November 21, 2013 were postponed until the January meeting.

PRESENTATION OF SERVICE PIN: Chairman Snyder presented Donna Hoffmeister with a 5 year service pin to signify her years of service on the Forest Preserve Advisory Board.

UPDATE OF FPAB CONTACT LIST: The list was circulated and corrections noted.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

REVISED TREE SURVEY OF GARDENWAY GARDENS AND REVISION TO FPAB REPORT NO: 2013-03: Chairman Snyder distributed a revised tree survey for the Gardenway Gardens. This summary identified a large sweet gum tree which should be preserved when garden buffer zone maintenance is undertaken by Public Works. On a motion by Ms. Siegel and seconded by Ms. Gregersen, it was moved to revise FPAB Report No. 2013-03 to include protection of the Sweet Gum tree at Gardenway Gardens as a condition of the report.

The motion passed by a vote of 6-2.

DISCUSSION WITH PUBLIC WORKS STAFF RE. GARDEN MAINTENANCE AND RELATED ISSUES/QUESTIONS: Representing the Public Works Department were Jim Sterling, Brian Townsend and Luisa Robles.

Mr. Sterling reported that the city received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to evaluate city woodlands. The city contracted with Maryland Department of Natural Resources to prepare the tree survey and evaluation. He also noted that a street tree inventory was undertaken by students at the University of Maryland.

Other comments/points raised included:

- The city's land care policy is cumbersome. Public Works staff is looking at Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as the preferred policy for land care.
- Two documents have been created addressing land care and sustainability. The Sustainable Land Care Policy was drafted by Ms. Riddle and came to Public Works as the ACT pesticide report. The Sustainability Framework is the most recent document that was prepared by Green Aces. This document has not been approved by Council.
- Public Works would use a tractor with a 7 foot cutting diameter, which is why staff recommended the 8 foot maintenance zone around the community gardens.
- All trees and brush cleared from around the gardens will be taken to the Northway compost yard.
- After initial maintenance at the gardens, routine maintenance would be scheduled twice a year.
- Staff will take all measures necessary to protect wildlife.
- Public Works recommends that permanent markers be concrete monuments with an iron pin. Ideally this would be flush to the ground. FPAB is recommending a permanent marker one foot tall from the ground.

REVIEW OF HENRY'S HOLLOW TREE SURVEY: Chairman Snyder reviewed the findings of FPAB field inspection and tree survey. Ms. Gregersen made the following motion: "(T) hat Public Works begin the tree trimming and clearing within the 8 foot staked areas of Henry's Hollow community gardens. The staked areas are defined as the perimeter areas outside of the gardens starting at the gardener's fence line and measuring out eight (8) feet.

It is recommended that a permanent marker (at least 1 foot in height*) be placed at this 8 ft. line so that both Public Works and the community gardeners know exactly where this boundary line is located. The entire staked area is NOT to be considered additional garden area and the application of pesticides is prohibited in this area by both gardeners and Public Works staff. This 8 foot buffer area is to be maintained by the city and is not to be maintained by any other entity.

This 8 foot area is to be cleared of trees and other vegetation all around the perimeter of Henry's Hollow with the following three (3) exceptions:

1.) The **north side of the smaller rectangle** of garden plots (east of the larger gardens) has two trees (to be flagged by FPAB) within this 8 foot buffer which should not be removed as they would not hinder access to the garden fence lines for maintenance and present no shade issues here. Trees should be trimmed/pruned to garden plot fence lines to eliminate overhanging branches. (Public Works should advise on proper pruning techniques of these overhanging branches). The under story is to be cleared here.

2.) The **north side of the larger rectangle** (fronts GHI admin.) of garden plots: there are several larger established trees that should not be removed which are within the 8 foot staked area as they would not impede access to the garden plot fence lines here. These trees will be flagged by the FPAB prior to Public Works undertaking the clearing. Trees should be trimmed/pruned to garden plot fence lines to eliminate overhanging branches. (Public Works should advise on proper pruning techniques of these overhanging branches). The under story is to be cleared here.

3.) Along **east side of larger rectangle** of garden plots there are several larger established trees that should not be removed which are within the 8 foot staked area as they would not impede access to the garden plot fence lines here. These trees will be flagged by the FPAB prior to Public Works undertaking the clearing. Trees should be trimmed/pruned back to the 8 ft. line to reduce morning shade of garden plots. The under story is to be cleared here.

Public Works should remove any trees growing within the garden plots and that are growing along the fence lines (as referred to under routine maintenance as set forth in the cities Management & Maintenance Guidelines) and access within the gardens will be permitted by the gardeners for removal of these trees.

NOTE: The wooded area between the two rectangular garden areas of Henry's Hollow which is approx. 30 to 40 feet in width and runs the length of the gardens is not to be disturbed, maintained or altered.

* *Recommended*, as it will mark a clear boundary mark. It needs to be visible and easy to locate.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Elliott. Mr. Ossi recommended that the motion be amended to include language recommending that the ANSI 300 standard be followed for tree pruning and limbing. Ms. Elliott moved to amend the main motion to include the following language: *“Since the best time to prune large trees is in the late winter, it is recommended that the cutting of the upper portions of the trees (whose trunks are within the preserve but upper branches are leaning over the gardens) be scheduled in late January or February; and that such limbs and branches be pruned or trimmed consistent with the ANSI 300 standard”*. Mr. Ossi seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 8-0.

There was a short discussion regarding the possible regulation of the use of pesticides in the forest preserve, including the community gardens. It was suggested that this issue be deferred to future discussion.

Chairman Snyder called for a vote on the main motion to establish a maintenance zone around the community gardens at Henry’s Hollow. The vote passed by a vote of 5-3 (Aye – Snyder, Gregersen, Almquist, Siegel, Elliott; Nay – Hoffmeister, Ossi, Witter).

REVIEW OF HAMILTON PLACE TREE SURVEY: Chairman Snyder reviewed the findings of the Hamilton Place community gardens tree survey. There was a brief discussion regarding the property line between the GHI boat yard and the gardens. Mr. Sterling described the alignment of the property line, and told the FPAB that he would send a plan showing the property line.

Ms. Elliott made the following motion: *“(T) hat Public Works begin the tree trimming and clearing within the 8 foot staked areas of Hamilton Place community gardens. The staked areas are defined as the perimeter areas outside of the gardens starting at the gardener’s fence line and measuring out eight (8) feet.*

It is recommended that a permanent marker (at least 1 foot in height) be placed at the 8 ft. buffer lines so that both Public Works and the community gardeners know exactly where this boundary line is located. The entire staked area is NOT to be considered additional garden area and the application of pesticides is prohibited in this area by both gardeners and Public Works staff. This 8 foot buffer area is to be maintained by the city and is not to be maintained by any other entity.*

This 8 foot area is to be cleared of trees and other vegetation all around the perimeter of Hamilton Place gardens with the following two (2) exceptions:

1.) The north side of garden plots has an established Sweet gum tree (11” dia.) within this 8 foot buffer area which does not need to be removed (and several trees in the 3” to 5” dia. range); these would not hinder access to the garden fence lines for maintenance and does not shade the garden plots here. These trees will be flagged by the FPAB prior to Public Works undertaking the clearing. Trees should be

trimmed/pruned to garden plot fence lines to eliminate overhanging branches. (Public Works should advise on proper pruning techniques of these overhanging branches). The under story is to be cleared here.

2.) The west side of garden plots, adjacent to GHI boat/RV storage lot, (though staked at 8 feet) should be re-staked at 6 feet out from garden plots fence lines to provide access to maintain the garden fence lines. Containing no trees, there are no shade issues pertaining to the garden plots. This area is approx. 16 to 18 feet wide (and 100 feet long) and is underbrush, tall grasses, wild flowers, native blackberry, and is a habitat for rabbits, birds, American box turtles, bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Existing stakes at 8 ft. should be re-positioned to 6 ft. from the garden plots fence line here.

Trees will not be permitted to flourish in this wildlife habitat area (above) and Public Works should remove any tree seedlings as part of the routine maintenance, however, no other vegetation should be disturbed in this area. This area had been undisturbed for many years prior to the unauthorized clearing in Nov., 2012. It is an important area for wildlife habitat, particularly migrating birds and American box turtles which are in decline. The Forest Preserve guidelines (page 6) state, "The primary goal of these guidelines is the preservation of the Forest Preserve wooded areas and the wildlife habitats within its boundaries."

Furthermore the Forest Preserve Greenbelt city code states, "Natural resources within a Forest Preserve area are considered protected and may not be harmed... Resources of the forest preserve area shall include all forms and species of wildlife," [Sec. 12-157]

The FPAB recommends that this wildlife habitat be protected, therefore it is recommended that a 6 foot buffer area be cleared along the gardens fence line.

Public Works should remove any trees growing within the garden plots and that are growing along the fence lines (as referred to under routine maintenance as set forth in the city's Management & Maintenance Guidelines) and access within the gardens will be permitted by the gardeners for removal of these trees.

** Recommended, as it will mark a clear boundary mark. It needs to be visible and easy to locate.*

Ms. Siegel seconded the motion. There was a brief discussion about maintenance of the GHI/gardens buffer, and a suggestion that FPAB could take on the maintenance of this area. Several members expressed concern that the FPAB should not take on physical maintenance when maintenance activities are otherwise restricted to city government. Ms. Hoffmeister made a motion that any reference to FPAB taking on maintenance of the GHI/ garden property line be removed. Mr. Ossi seconded, and the motion was passed by a vote of 8-0. Ms. Elliott moved to amended the main motion to include the following language: *"Since the best time to prune large trees is in the late*

winter, it is recommended that the cutting of the upper portions of the trees (whose trunks are within the preserve but upper branches are leaning over the gardens) be scheduled in late January or February; and that such limbs and branches be pruned or trimmed consistent with the ANSI 300 standard". Ms. Siegel seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 8-0.

Chairman Snyder called for a vote on the main motion to recommend specific maintenance areas around the Hamilton Place community gardens. The motion passed by a vote of 5-3 (Yea – Snyder, Gregersen, Almquist, Elliott, Siegel; Nay – Ossi, Witter, Hoffmeister).

REPORT ON MARYLAND NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY WALK IN THE FOREST PRESERVE: Mr. Ossi summarized the activities of the Native Plant Society walk through the forest preserve. Mr. Ossi noted that the participants were primarily forensic biologists. It was suggested that the report of the walk be forwarded to the City Council.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 7p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER: Jude Maul announced that the garden club is conducting a survey of gardener's practices relating to use of pesticides/herbicides.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Ms. Elliott and seconded by Ms. Siegel, the meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Celia W. Craze

Director

These minutes were approved by a vote of 9-0.