

## Montgomery County Forest Conservancy District Board



### Minutes for the Montgomery County Forest Conservancy District Board Meeting – 13 May 2025

This meeting was called to order by Board Chairman Jim Harris at 1:37 PM.

This meeting was attended by Guest Attendee Ruth Semple, a Policy Analyst working for the Montgomery County Executive's Office. At 1:38 PM, Ruth introduced herself to the Board and explained that she has been working on Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan since its inception in 2021. Developing annual reports that summarize and quantify accomplishments toward the plan's goals is among her chief responsibilities. She noted that in her review of the plan, she recognized that there are many professionals working in the county for various agencies and companies to plant and maintain trees. She then petitioned the Board's interest in collaborating with her to maintain a more comprehensive and quantified record of tree planting events that occur in the county. The Board reciprocated interest in collaborating with her to develop these records.

The minutes pertaining to the most recent meeting that occurred on 8 April 2025 were approved with no corrections major nor minor at 1:51 PM.

#### Chair's Report (1:51 PM)

Board Chairman Jim Harris noted that he, Assistant Board Chairman Dan Landry, and Board Member Lee Derby have interviewed and approved a fifth student's attendance for the 2025 session of the Natural Resources Career Camp (NRCC). Jim mentioned that he received an email from Dawn Balinski, Treasurer of the Maryland Forestry Foundation, praising the Board's success in annually recruiting five students to attend the NRCC. Jim then shared a spreadsheet that Dawn forwarded him featuring the breakdown of NRCC enrollment by Maryland counties. Ashton Manor Environmental will also donate \$650 to the Board to sponsor enrollment in this year's NRCC session.

Board Chairman Jim Harris later shared with the Board an email that he received from the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). MDOT will be accepting applications for fall 2025 tree planting projects beginning 15 April 2025 through the department's Urban Tree Grant Program. Applications will be accepted until 4:30 PM EST on Tuesday 15 July 2025. Jim concluded the Chair's Report by thanking those board members that attended the recent Arbor Day event that celebrated Tree Montgomery's ten years of service in planting shade trees in Montgomery County: Board Members Laura Miller, Andrés Ovalle, Natasha Shangold, and Norman King III, as well as Board Secretary Chris Barger all attended the event.

#### Treasurer's Report (2:01 PM)

No Treasurer's Report was disseminated during this meeting.

#### Legislative Report (2:00 PM)

No legislative report was disseminated during this meeting.

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### New Business (2:02 PM)

At 2:02 PM, Guest Attendee Tony Mazza, Principal Planner of Forest Conservation for the City of Rockville introduced himself to the Board. Tony had a background studying law prior to studying forestry. Tony expressed his excitement for his new role, and he looks forward to working in the field of urban forestry.

At 2:03 PM, Board Member Joe Howard recited to the Board a story about he made a hobby of collecting hollow and rounded pieces of American chestnut wood with holes in them from old branch collars. Joe continued that he would place and glue small ornamental owls in the holes to create charming and rustic decorations. Unfortunately, Joe lost his source of small ornamental owls to create these decorations, so he instead brought a stockpile of chestnut wood to the meeting and offered each Board member a piece to have as a gift. Board Chairman Jim Harris then shared some anecdotal stories about the national champion Wye Oak tree to which Joe added his own commentary.

At 2:26 PM, Board Member Vince Fillah mentioned that he has not had a chance lately to go out to measure big trees, but he will measure trees this coming Monday, 19 May 2025.

At 2:26 PM, Board Member Lee Derby mentioned that he and other Montgomery County Public Schools staff at the Lathrop E. Smith Environmental Education Center have been working to develop a schedule for the next school year.

At 2:28 PM Board Member Andrés Ovalle mentioned that he and other staff working for Tree Montgomery have been addressing the program's backlog of tree planting applications. He noted that the response time has been improved to be about twelve to eighteen months compared to the average response time of three years previously. Tree Montgomery staff have also been carefully considering funding sources and will soon assess the impact of the new fee-in-lieu rate on the program's available funding. The fee-in-lieu rate has recently increased from \$250 per tree to \$470 per tree, and the increase will support future tree plantings. Tree Montgomery staff are also addressing how funds are allocated toward equity planting, and how the program may increase equity tree plantings.

Board Member Andrés Ovalle continued, mentioning that he developed a list of thirteen candidate Montgomery County Champion Trees to map and use to promote awareness of Maryland's Big Tree Program. The list will be sent to Montgomery Parks to develop a map of the trees for public use.

At 2:41 PM Board Member Natasha Shangold mentioned that she has been preparing for a test to become certified as a Zoning Inspector for the City of Rockville. Possessing this certification would qualify her to become a Senior Forestry Inspector. Natasha remarked that this coming July will mark four years of tenure for her with the City of Rockville. Natasha also shared that she will be attending a career day at William Farquhar Middle School in Olney, Maryland, and she will also be assisting Board Treasurer Joli McCathran in issuing certificates for the Big Tree Program.

At 2:43 PM, Guest Attendee Tony Mazza reiterated his excitement to be working in a new location. He also told the Board about a compelling research study demonstrating evidence that trees regulated their energy consumption in preparation of changes in solar radiation from the most recent total solar eclipse that occurred on 8 April 2024.

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At 2:50 PM Board Member Norman King III mentioned that he will be busy conducting tree maintenance in Arlington National Cemetery in preparation for the President of the United States' visit on Memorial Day. Norm told the Board about a compelling study demonstrating evidence that insects can hear small popping sounds that occur when trees die and begin to decompose, and these popping sounds are what attracts them to feed on the wood.

Chairman Jim Harris adjourned this meeting at 2:50 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 10 June 2025 at 1:30 PM. The meeting will be located at the Lathrop E. Smith Environmental Education Center's library at 5110 Meadows Lane in Rockville, MD 20855.

### Attendance:

Jim Harris, Board Chairman  
Chris Barger, Board Secretary  
Lee Derby, Board Member  
Vince Fillah, Board Member  
Joe Howard, Board Member  
Mary Howard, Guest Attendee  
Norman King III, Board Member  
Tony Mazza, Guest Attendee  
Andrés Ovalle, Board Member  
Ruth Semple, Guest Attendee  
Natasha Shangold, Board Member