

## MEMORANDUM

To: City Council  
From: Tree Commission  
Date: February 11, 2022  
Re: FY23 Budgetary and Organizational Action Required

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City Council should take budgetary and organizational action to support the city's tree canopy goal set forth in the new Comprehensive Plan as "*the creation, protection, and expansion of robust urban forests.*" Such forests are neither a luxury nor an amenity the city can choose to invest in or not; they are a critical element of the municipal infrastructure and essential to the well-being and safety of all. Public health, environmental sustainability, energy usage and cost, stormwater management, and environmental and social justice are all inextricably linked to the planting, preservation, and protection of City trees.

### Plant and Maintain Trees

#### **Planting Trees: \$100,000**

**Purpose:** Expand urban forest canopy and move the city closer to the longstanding goal of planting 200 trees annually. This 25% increase over the current fiscal year reflects a substantial rise in the cost of trees in the pandemic economy. The cost of \$450/tree is likely to increase beyond this fiscal year. It is crucial that Charlottesville plant trees. Further delay in investing in the urban forest will only exacerbate negative health, environmental, and social consequences and risk the opportunity to close a years-long gap in planting.

#### **Combatting the Emerald Ash Borer: \$105,000**

**Purpose:** Confront growing threat to 330 City trees by the emerald ash borer. This is the most serious natural threat to our urban forest, to safety on the City's streets and in its parks, and to public and private property. This will fund the first year of a five-year effort to remove 300 ash trees while continuing to treat 30 of the most vital and well-situated trees. This is an increasingly urgent need as infected ash trees become extremely brittle and break apart more quickly than do other diseased trees. Although Parks and Recreation's operating budget includes tree maintenance, relying on this to remove ash trees would reduce by half the funds available for storm damage, routine maintenance, and preservation of important trees. This would degrade the appearance of the City's streets and parks in ways obvious to all.

### Preserve and Protect Trees

#### **Create a zoning ordinance that treats trees as a vital city asset**

- Increase minimum setbacks and revise other requirements that reduce or eliminate opportunities to plant street trees.
- Strengthen requirements, enforcement, and add penalties for tree protection during construction.
- Increase number of trees required in new development, stressing medium to large canopy trees.
- Provide incentives to save trees in development, whether private or public trees.
- Require meaningful compensation from developers for damages or removal of public trees, compensation based on diameter of tree.
- Encourage large developments to be located on vacant land, parking lots and other areas that do not destroy public trees, forests, streams, and critical slopes.

**Improve organization to better manage urban forest and all natural resources**

- Encourage greater coordination and integration between Parks & Recreation, NDS, and Public Works.
- Support creation of Natural Resources Manager position within Parks & Recreation.
- Support creation of position in NDS tasked with preservation and protection of trees.

**Enhance charge of Tree Commission to better advocate for urban forest and all natural resources**

- Support Commission's review of particular site plans, particularly for large-scale development, development that will have negative impact on trees and other natural systems, and development requiring a large number of new trees.
- To encourage departments to work together on common goals, task a member of Public Works to attend Tree Commission meetings along with Parks & Recreation and NDS representative.
- Explore expansion of Commission's charge to include enhancement and protection of all natural resources as other municipalities have done.