

October 12, 2024

Dear Mayor and Town Council,

This letter asks the Mayor and Council to postpone any vote to approve the cutting down of 37 cedar trees (Phase 1), and any other proposal to cut down an additional 38 cedar trees (Phase 2), in the Washington Grove Conservation Meadow until:

1. The Ad Hoc Meadows Committee (Committee) clearly articulates
  - a. what they mean by “restoring the meadow” which was identified as one of their stated purposes in the August 12, 2024, Committee Update to the Mayor and Town Council, and
  - b. the specific steps that would need to be taken to “restore the meadow”;
2. MNCPPC provides information requested by several Town residents at the September 18, 2024 meeting with MNCPPC representative Ryan Colliton and the Committee concerning the minimum number of cedars that would need to be removed to achieve the 25% tree cover MNCPPC uses to represent what a meadow is; and
3. We have a better understanding of the trees’ role in mitigating noise from I-200.

Removing these trees has been energetically promoted by the Committee to "preserve" the meadow. Their logic has been challenged by Town residents, and requests for more compelling documentation have not been addressed. The Committee seems resistant to rethinking their position, despite evidence that:

- The *draft Operation and Use Plan of 2013* includes clear objectives for retaining Eastern Red Cedars, specifically to “Create areas within the meadow with woody, early successional vegetation to provide wildlife refuges.”
- Aerial views demonstrate that the yearly mowing since 2013 has prevented propagation of Eastern Red Cedars in the Meadow. The number of cedars has not increased since 2013.
- Noise from I-200 has a serious impact on the quality of life on Ridge Road and beyond. Residents deserve a thorough, documented review of the current research on trees' role in noise mitigation before these trees are removed.

We believe the Town needs more time to consider our goals for the management of the meadow, and how best to achieve them in partnership with MNCPPC before acting. We request the Mayor and Town Council table any vote to proceed with tree cutting until this has happened.

Thank you for your consideration and services to the Town.

Signed,

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