



**PARK AND RECREATION
COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201**

Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2022

****Due to the Countywide precautions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting was held virtually on Microsoft Teams.***

Commission Members Present:

Shruti Kuppa, Chair
Jill Barker, Vice Chair
Sarah Baryluk
Gerald Brandt (APS Staff Liaison)
Sergio Enriquez
Dean Foster
Colt Gregory
Peter Harnik
Gretchen Hickey
David Howell
Neal Hunter
Mark Lincoln
Kevin Manuel
Drew Murray (Sports Commission Liaison)
Melissa Riggio

Guests:

Board Member Takis Karantonis
Bernard Berne
Meng Ding
Bill Ross
Caroline Haynes

County Staff:

Max Ewart, Associate Planner, Substitute Liaison for Marco Rivero
Adrienne Fine, Assistant County Attorney, CAO
Jennifer Fioretti, Deputy Division Director, DPR
Diane Probus, Associate Planner, Substitute Liaison for Marco Rivero

PRC members not in attendance:

Eric Bozoian
Adam Rasmussen

Chairman's Introduction and Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes

PRC Chair, Shruti Kuppa provided a brief introduction for the meeting, then Diane Probus reviewed the details associated with using Microsoft Teams and recording of the meeting.

The Commission considered its January 18, 2022, Park and Recreation Commission (PRC)

meeting minutes. With no objections, the Commission approved the minutes as presented.

Public Comment

Bernard Berne, Arlington County Resident provided comments on the FY2023 budget's proposed increase towards park mowing. Mr. Berne had also sent an email to PRC expressing his view about DPR's mowing practices. He believes the amount of area mowed is excessive and could be reduced to increase natural areas in parks. Mr. Berne encouraged PRC to write a letter to the County Board and County Manager requesting the county to decrease their mowing budget by 30% and to redirect these funds towards DPR's invasive plant removal program.

Agenda Items

County Board Member, Takis Karantonis Discussion with PRC

Mr. Karantonis spoke to the commissioners about the proposed FY2023 budget. He said the budget expresses the priorities of the County Manager and the county departments. It is important for the commission to critically review the budget and to share their comments on it with him before the March 15 County Board and DPR work session. He also asked the commissioners to bring their ideas they expressed to the upcoming public engagement meetings for the 10-year CIP planning.

Several PRC members provided comments and questions to County Board Member Karantonis, and they included (but were not limited to the following):

- Missed opportunities for land acquisition in past year.
- Interest in capital improvements for nature centers.
- Support for county increasing funds to control invasive species to expand usable park space. Increase the capacity of partnerships with NPS to expand access to their parkland.
- There is space in parks which is not programmed or informally used and could be naturalized. An example is the rain garden behind the diamond field in Bluemont Park which attracts a variety of wildlife.
- Encourage transportation projects to include biophilic elements, in particular wildlife tunnels.
- How do other park systems in the nearby jurisdictions compare with Arlington for their park budgets, priorities and other management practices?

Brief Presentation on DPR Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Proposed Operating Budget [Max Ewart, DPR]

Max Ewart presented the County Manager's proposed FY2023 DPR budget to the commissioners which included a timeline for the upcoming budget and CIP public hearings.

Commissioner comments included but were not limited to the following:

- A commissioner asked where to find information about the CIP public engagement opportunities.
 - Mr. Ewart offered to send the information to the commissioners.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Presentation and Discussion [Adrienne Fine, CAO]

Adrienne Fine presented an overview of the Virginia FOIA to the commissioners, explaining how the law applies to commission meetings, their communication, public notifications and public records. She provided a few best practices for the commissioners to use to avoid conducting business transactions through email,

Ms. Fine told the commission that she had asked Kendra Jacobs, the Clerk to the County Board,

about whether the PRC commissioners are required to submit financial disclosure forms to the county. Ms. Jacobs said that it is currently required by the County Code, but it is worth looking into whether the code applies to this commission.

- The PRC Chair will contact Ms. Jacobs to discuss the matter further.

Commissioner comments included but were not limited to the following:

- Commissioners should copy the liaison on all their PRC emails and limit email conversations between the commission chair and themselves to abide by the FOIA rules.
- The commission adopted their own virtual meeting policy in 2021.
- Discussions are beginning on a post-covid meeting plan.
- Before the pandemic, attending physical meetings was challenging at times due to health, work or family issues. Hybrid meetings in the future would be a better option for most people and would provide equitable meeting access.
- The public will still be able to attend meetings virtually moving forward.
- Commissioners are not given county email addresses to use for their PRC work. Personal and PRC emails are mixed together. Would a FOIA request require them to submit personal emails too?
 - The PRC Chair responded that if the commissioners copy the liaison on their emails, then their emails are automatically flagged on the county side as PRC emails. Some people also create a separate email address just for commission work as a way to keep personal and business emails separate.

2021 Bill Thomas Park Volunteer Award Preview [Dean Foster/Melissa Riggio/PRC Chair

The PRC Chair introduced the discussion on the Bill Thomas Award, noting a key responsibility of the PRC is to recognize a community member who exceeds in their efforts to care for the County's natural resources. The commission will vote on the individuals the committee brings forward in March. She asked Ms. Riggio and Mr. Foster to give an update on the nomination process.

- Ms. Riggio reported that she is currently assessing the qualifications of the two nominations.
- Mr. Foster noted that the committee would need to meet to decide on who they will bring forward for approval, but he is not sure if their meeting would be allowed according to the FOIA rules. He asked whether it would be okay for the awards committee to have a phone or Zoom meeting to discuss the nominations?
 - The PRC Chair said that a meeting is allowed because different commission members are coming together as a committee for the purpose of selecting the final award nominees.
- Mr. Foster confirmed the committee will hold a meeting to select the nominees and will prepare a report to present to the PRC in March.
- The PRC Chair encouraged other commissioners to become involved in the committee next year.

Staff Reports

The PRC chair asked Mr. Ewart to provide an overview of the Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) Project.

Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) - Crystal City Substation (Max Ewart)

Mr. Ewart reported that DVP requested a subterranean easement for a utility line which will go through parkland (the southeast tip of Virginia Highlands Park) and will require the removal of three existing trees. DVP will replace the existing non-native trees with native trees. The easement request will go to the County Board in the next couple months. The Urban Foresters are

not concerned about the removal of the non-native trees because better species will replace them.

Commissioner comments included but were not limited to the following:

- The PRC Chair commented that her understanding is that location for the new trees will not affect future park master planning and potential uses of this area.
 - Mr. Ewart confirmed that she is correct. The trees would be planted on site prior to the master planning process in a location that fits the context of the park and other, existing native trees.
- A commissioner noticed in the staff reports a few APS projects were listed and asked if these projects had park components.
 - Ms. Probus responded that the Education Center Reuse project is next to the W&L pool which is programmed by DPR and has impacted the parking availability during its construction. At Cardinal ES, a diamond and rectangular field are impacted by the ongoing construction of underground stormwater facilities and at the Heights Building, APS will build a parking garage with a rectangular synthetic field over it which will be programmed by DPR for after school sports. She promised to provide information about the plans for the parking garage and synthetic field to the commissioners.

Commission Member Reports (8:15-8:30)

The PRC Chair mentioned two vacancies where commissioners are needed to represent PRC, one is for following the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee and the other is the Melwood Special GLUP study. She asked for volunteers to follow these projects.

- Kevin Manuel offered to follow the Melwood Special GLUP study.

• Pentagon City Sector Plan Discussion

- A commissioner commented that he was surprised by the flow of events from when this plan was discussed by the commissioners and its approval by the County Board. He said the commissioners had an interest in expanding the public space. He does not believe that PRC concerns were addressed. He noted that at the County Board hearing that another acre of public land had been added by then.
- The PRC Chair mentioned that the planning process had been going on for some time and staff had presented the project four times.
- A commissioner mentioned that all the county projects have a project page and that is how you follow them. He highlighted the importance of sector plans in the county and how these plans guide the development of these areas.

• 55+ (Dean Foster)

- Registration for classes, travel and activities began on February 16 at 10:00 AM for county residents. Due to the continuing CO-VID situation, indoor activities are nearly all with masking. Outdoor are generally not but social distancing may be recommended.
- Many group classes are still virtual. According to the Spring 55+ Guide there are more drop-in classes than in the last registration and 55+ Travel has returned. It has been at least two years since the travel program was closed due to CO-VID concerns.

• Alcova Heights Park Renovations (Colt Gregory) No Updates

• Arlington Public Schools (APS) (Gerald Brandt)

• Bill Thomas Park Volunteer Award 2021 (Dean Foster/Melissa Riggio)

- The BTPVA committee are PRC members Dean Foster (Chair) and Melissa Riggio (Vice-Chair). Also, John Carey from the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission and Mikaila Milton, from the C2E2 Commission and DPR Parks Planning Division Chief Erik Beach.
- Two nominees have been received for the Award: the Bon Air Park Extension Master Gardener Demonstration Garden Leaders and Ann Marie Douglass. The Selection Committee Guidelines and the evaluation forms have been distributed to the committee members. The individual committee members completed evaluation and scoring forms are due to the committee chair by March 5. The committee will then hold a conference call the week of March 8 to jointly discuss the nominations and scoring. The recommended awardee will be determined by the evaluation scoring procedure. The committee chair will prepare a report on the nominations and the evaluation results, including a recommendation for awardee. This report will be submitted to the PRC Chair and to the commission in time for consideration and vote on the nomination at the PRC March 15 meeting. The presentation of the award and reception will take place at the April 26 recessed meeting of the county board.

• **Clarendon Sector Plan Update (Sarah Baryluk)**

- PC has reviewed the plan. They sent their comments to staff for revisions to the plan. She has not seen the updated plan yet. The 10th Street site – they would like flexibility for the site to be used as parkland if the other facilities fall through. She does not think a new letter needs to be sent at this time.
- Shruti suggests talking about a letter next month.

• **Combating Hate Working Group (Mark Lincoln)**

- Much of the meeting was spent discussing the language and deliverables that the working group is planning to provide and how we want to recommend them to be used by the referenced youth sports organizations. In addition, a very interesting discussion was initiated regarding the subject of the huge participation disparity in Arlington County youth sports between the youth that attend North Arlington schools versus those who attend South Arlington schools. The participation numbers are quite stunning, and the feeling of the working group is that the youth sports organizations in Arlington County, from the largest to the smallest, need to be doing a much better job reaching out to the communities in South Arlington. This quote from one of the members of the working group sums up this sentiment:
- “In the “world-class community” that Arlington aims to be, our organizations should not be struggling to encourage more than 20% of students from Abingdon, Carlin Springs, Drew, Hoffman Boston, and Randolph to play sports. The participation gap is the opportunity gap, and the opportunity gap is equivalent to historical marginalization. We have to involve more children and families in sports as a major piece of educating those who are participating now.”

• **Community Energy Plan (Jill Barker)**

• **Courthouse West Special GLUP Study (Sarah Baryluk)**

• **Crystal City Citizen Review Council (Shruti Kuppa)**

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- **Deer Management**

- After the County conducted its drone deer survey last spring, it authorized an RFP to conduct a deer management assessment. The second draft of the assessment RFP is in-progress.

- **Field Fund Working Group (Mark Lincoln/Adam Rasmussen)**

- **Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (David Howell)**

- **Forestry and Natural Resources Plan Update (Colt Gregory)**

- Status 2-18-2022 - Contractor has completed the preliminary draft FNRP and submitted for internal and core team review. Must also undergo legal review. Estimated that public review and release is two months away (mid-April - May). This update will become a component the Public Spaces Master Plan, an important County and PRC guidance document.

- **Four Mile Run Joint Task Force (David Howell)**

- **Gulf Branch Stream Restoration (Colt Gregory)**

- **Jennie Dean Park, Phase 1 Construction (Colt Gregory) o No Updates**

- **Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (NRJAG) (Gregory/Barker/Howell)**

- Received briefing from Wayne Savage, DC Sierra Club, Rep to International Dark Sky Assn. Major points: Too much night lighting increases energy consumption, carbon emissions, and street glare. It disorients migrating birds and attracts bees/moths to their demise. (Think bugs around your porch light many times over). Blue wave light length (Street lights) exposure is now linked to adverse health effects. Take away: Make streetlights point down and use a shielding to reduce up light release. Consider light dimming curfews during Spring/Fall bird migration (Pittsburgh/Tucson models). Change Arlington Code and/or Green Building Incentives to reduce street light intensity to under 3,000 Kelvin.

- **NRJAG on Updating Arlington Co. Site Plan Conditions -**

- NRJAG is collecting ideas on changes needed to Site Plan Conditions for development/building activities (Amazon, River House, Clarendon). Some issues: Do developers keep their community benefits commitments? Should County increase penalty for failure to replace trees on a development site? PRC thoughts are welcomed. Example Recommendation: Move the public space discussion to earlier in the SPRC process so landscape and biophilic design is not an afterthought. (Built in - not bolted on).

- **Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) (Vacant)**

- **Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) (Neal Hunter)**

- **PenPlace Park Master Plan (PMP) and Design Guidelines Process (David Howell)**
- **Plan Langston Boulevard (Shruti Kuppa)**
- **Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) (Vacant/Sergio Enriquez)**
- **Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) (Sergio Enriquez)**
- **Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) and Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC)**
 - o **Crystal City Building Heights Study (Shruti Kuppa)**
 - o **Fort Henry Gardens (David Howell)**
 - o **Macy’s (Dean Foster/Melissa Riggio)**
 - An on-line engagement opportunity was held February 7-17 to receive public comment on the proposed site plan prior to the initial SPRC meeting which should begin in the Spring. Some concerns with development which were noted in the feedback include potential pedestrian/vehicular conflict from proposed changes to Glebe Rd. For example, a left-hand turn for large delivery trucks from what is now a private street between Macy’s and the Ballston Point Building. The plan also reduces the pedestrian refuge island near this location from 11 feet to 6 feet. And a new loading dock is proposed fronting this private street.
 - The applicant also wishes to use a TDR to increase the permitted density from 155 dwelling units to 555 dwelling units with 16 stories.
 - The site has virtually no open space so a community benefit in the form of a monetary contribution for park/recreation/greenery/bike or walking trail nearest and as the building has large glass exteriors, bird safety should be considered.
 - o **Marbella Apartments (David Howell)**
 - o **Melwood Property (750 23rd Street South) Special GLUP Study (Vacant)**
 - o **PenPlace (Shruti Kuppa)**
 - o **Pentagon City PDSP (Shruti Kuppa)**
 - Version 4 of the Pentagon City Planning Study was approved by the Arlington County Board on 2/12. The PRC is excited to continue to advocate for public space and additional community benefits as individual projects come up within the planning commission’s SPRC processes.
 - o **Wendy’s Site (Neal Hunter)**
- **Virginia Highlands Park (Colt Gregory)**
 - FYI on Virginia Highlands Park - This park is affected by Pentagon Planning Study and Sector Plan. “Beyond a new elementary school, Pentagon City’s existing library and community center will need to expand to accommodate its growing population. The Plan encourages opportunistic pursuits of such community uses within the ground story spaces of near-term private redevelopment which may qualify as alternative means to achieving community benefits. However, should those efforts prove unsuccessful, (either due to

economic feasibility or a willing partner) the park master planning effort for Virginia Highlands Park should include a commitment to siting these facilities in a coordinated approach that considers other uses VHP will also need to accommodate.”

- **Sparrow Pond Restoration Project (David Howell)**

- **Sports Commission (Mark Lincoln/Adam Rasmussen)**

- John Mingus gave a presentation on the Arlington Soccer Landscape and the programs run by both DPR and Arlington Soccer. There was a discussion of the participation in both the recreational soccer program and the travel soccer program and the amount of “churn” of players that come to Arlington Soccer from outside Arlington or who leave Arlington Soccer for other Northern Virginia soccer clubs. Arlington Soccer continues to push the notion that there are not enough rectangular artificial turf and lighted fields in Arlington County, however, the field usage statistics do not appear to support this notion.

- **Vision Zero Action Plan Updates (Neal Hunter)**

Other Business

- **The PRC Chair asked for assistance with drafting letter to the County Board**

- Mr. Howell was identified to draft the budget letter, but additional commissioners to edit the letter are needed. Mr. Manuel and Ms. Hickey volunteered to be editors.
- Mr. Gregory will draft the letter on the site plan conditions updates?
- Mr. Gregory explained they have eight recommendations for the site plan updates. One recommendation is to move the site plan and the landscape plan together, to look at the tree canopy fund and how effective it is and how additional funds could be added with the intent to project mature trees.
- Ms. Barker and Mr. Manuel volunteered to edit this letter.

- **Ms. Baryluk updated the commissioners on the Courthouse West Special GLUP Study**

- The formal plan has not been posted yet. She said that staff supports the approach PRC recommended in an earlier letter of providing flexibility in the plan for the future use of the 10th Street parcel. An option that it could be public space if an affordable housing is not feasible on the parcel. A letter is not needed at this point.
 - The PRC Chair asked Ms. Baryluk to let them know if for some reason a letter is needed before the March meeting.

- **The PRC Chair is still updating the PRC roster and will send it out soon.**

- **Spring Garden Kickoff hosted by the Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture**

- Ms. Riggio announced that an educational event will be held by the Central Library on March 12 at Quincy Park. PRC can host a table at the site to advertise the work of PRC. She asked if other commissioners could help host the table. Mr. Harnik volunteered to help.
- Ms. Riggio asked Ms. Probus to find out if DPR staff are planning to have a table there. If so, they may want to partner with them.
- She asked the commissioners to let her know if they are interested in the event and can help.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 7:00 p.m. (Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams)

Meeting adjourned at 9:13pm