

July 6, 2026

Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Chair, Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: VHC Carlin Springs Site Proposal

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) has been following the development on the Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) Carlin Springs site closely. A recurring theme in the discussion to date has been the impact of the additional 83 parking spaces “needed” for a future County facility that has yet to be identified. The requirement for the additional parking spaces has created a tremendous increase in impermeable surface parking areas, as well as the additional road around the facility and the proposed second entrance off of Carlin Springs Road.

The FNRC believes that there is strong community interest in defining what the intended use of the northern part of the site will be and in assessing whether or not the additional impermeable surfaces required by this un-named usage are really necessary. The FNRC shares this interest.

The FNRC supports the development of the VHC mental health facility. However, FNRC does not support the imposition of a parking infrastructure capability by the County on VHC when the County has not identified any need, nor articulated any purpose, nor revealed any plan—specific or general—for the use of the remaining acreage on the parcel. The requirement to create parking for undisclosed County use seems to be fanciful and irresponsible, and subverts the attempts by VHC to create an optimum biophilic healing facility on what is otherwise an ideal site for that purpose.

The FNRC calls on the County to either identify a parking need that cannot be met in other ways, or immediately remove the requirement for such parking on VHC, allowing the applicant to achieve a state-of-the-art facility for diagnosing, treating and supporting patients.

More broadly, the FNRC believes that the site should be planned holistically and that the use of the entire parcel would benefit from a greater recognition of the qualities and character of that specific location. Given the adjacency to Long Branch Park, Long Branch Nature Center, the historic Moses-Ball spring and the scenic easement on the site, the FNRC is concerned that failing to plan the entire site as a singular, nature-based concept would be a missed opportunity to fully integrate the unique features, benefitting the VHC facility and whatever other appropriate development the County proposes for the location.

Commission Members

Caroline Haynes, Chair
Bob Benson
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David Howell
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Phil Klingelhofer
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Alex Sanders
Stephen Sockwell

Sincerely,



Caroline Haynes, Chair
Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Arlington County Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Samia Byrd, Director, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development