
**MEETING MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL
ARLINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

2/23/2023

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:00 PM** on **2/23/2023**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON)

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Chair Phil Klingelhofer, Commissioners Bill Browning, Caroline Haynes, David Howell, John Carey, Josh Handler, Kate Donohue, Melody Mobley, Nat Ames, Noreen Hannigan, Mikaila Milton,

ABSENT Commissioner Colt Gregory, who had a conflict with the PRC meeting

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR)

Guests Terri Armao, Mary Glass, Anne Bodine, Bernie Berne

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Public Comments

Terri Armao opposed the hunting of deer and missing middle housing study.

Bernie Berne discussed 10-13B of the weed ordinance Request to Advertise, and asked to amend this section. Concerned about impact to pollinator habitat. Remove “And commercial” from the amendment.

Anne Bodine shared a report with the commission on Missing Middle. Concern about Chesapeake Bay Ordinance application from Missing Middle. Asked to carefully consider landscaping provision. Ensure there is support for the highest amount of trees required.

Mary Glass spoke about tree canopy assessment performed by the Green Infrastructure Center.

Brooke Alexander asked questions about ensuring the trees have sufficient space to grow with setbacks in the current code. Asked for decreases in lot coverage.

Weed Ordinance

Commissioner Haynes spoke about the background of the weed ordinance, and the recent Request To Advertise. Suggest focusing on creating definitions in the ordinance. A discussion followed about whether comments on mice habitat happened at the meeting. Making sure the landscape is intentional. Complexity in writing the exemptions. Question about how utility rights-of-way get managed. Example of the sunny garden at Bon Air. Noted the County is behind. Concerned it’s a Stovepipe issue.

Suggested to write a letter in 3 months.

Deer Assessment Update

DPR Natural Resources Manager Alonso Abugattas provided background on engagement staff shortage. Will update again in the future.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

DPR Director Jane Rudolph presented on the FY24 budget.

Question about temporary staffing. Shift to permanent staff. Commissioner Mobley asked to connect with Jane Rudolph on equity in parks. Total funding for invasives, from 100K to 200K. Priorities between DPR projects and other priorities. Temporary staff and Nature Centers. Asked for numbers on what it would need to open nature centers more days. What it would cost to include a manager for Gulf Branch Nature center. Notes about future input: Support for tree maintenance and invasive plant management. Question followed about how the tree maintenance funding can be used. Consider adding a manager for Gulf Branch Nature center. Add funding for pollinator planting.

Nat Ames will draft a letter for review in March.

Missing Middle Housing Study Letter

A discussion on the letter occurred. Some typo edits were made. Questions about what happens to trees after planting. Suggest scaling to the property size.

Letter approved unanimously.

January Minutes

Minutes approved unanimously.

Commission Infrastructure

Staff Reports

Question about Columbia Pike tree removal.

Staff reports follow:

Maintenance:

- Tree maintenance staff are down to 78 open requests, down from almost 300 this summer.
- Preventive maintenance: Staff met our contractor Greentree and the Mews Association personnel to complete the missing section from batch Six, to complete the pruning in this area. Batch seven (31st and S Buchanan is completed. And staff continues to inventory trees at (S Utah St block, from 36th St S to 32nd St S) for the next batch of pruning # 8.
- The bucket trucks received battery charging stations for our new electric equipment.

- The tree stewards completed mulching of mature tree root zones at Quincy Park and Gum Ball Park
- Tree Stewards have structural pruned or inspected more than 1000 trees.

Planning:

(Projects with high impact or high opportunity highlighted in **bold**)

Long-term planning

- Route 1 planning is coming back with comments from VDOT which prioritizes road width over landscape width and other amenities. This will be reviewed by staff for comment.
- A missing bike lane section is proposed along route 50 between N Granada ST and N Edison ST. This is a wooded hill with up to five very large oaks. Staff is working to reduce the impact on the woodland and to save all the large oaks. Because this is along a VDOT roadway, the negotiation is a little more complex as the bike lane must meet VDOT standards. Among the challenges will be where to plant replacement trees.
- The constructability study for the east falls church W&OD connection is moving forward and will become 30% construction documents. This project will impact East Falls Church Park heavily. Additional challenges are finding places for replacement trees in order to retain programmable space in the park.
- Staff assisted CPHD and DES staff on the Missing Middle Housing Study with the County Board, and answered questions on tree canopy requirements.
- Virginia Hospital has decided to reacquire the 601 S Carlin Spring Road property. Staff will be meeting with the project manager to discuss what that means for the tree planting that was planned for the project. The old building is currently under demolition.

Site plans (special exception and by-right)

- In review:
 - Reviewed the-River House site plan at 1111 Army Navy Dr (SPLN23-0001). The plans were rejected as the applicant did not show the impact of the trees due to the proposed construction. The proposed trail also did not follow the sector plan recommendations resulting excessive tree zone impact. Two sub-sections of the River House Neighborhood Plans (SPLN23-00003) and (SPLN23-00003) were submitted. The highest-level comment was to maintain as much of the existing tree protection zone as possible with the recommendation of Green Ribbon Gateway. A better landscape species selection approach and invasive control management plan was requested.
 - Discussion of the implications of the new bike trail at the Red Lion and the Inn of Rosslyn projects. The new trail realignment may reduce the width of the street pit or it may preclude planting along the outside of the bike trail. Or the building may have to be moved. The trail width will be rebuilt at the minimum width of 10' and DES is working to get a better road section. Forestry staff is discussing the merits of the different options.
 - The Novel Arlington Ridge Site Plan came in for concept review. This site consists of two parcels with hotels on them, and it sits at the junction of Glebe Road and 395. The parcels are in Green Valley/Nauck They adjoin the County

Historic site of Lomax AME Zion church and cemetery and an industrial area on another. There is a concern about buffers, density, organization of the site, and the resolution of uncomfortable contextual issues. The concept can be seen here: <https://dc.urbanturf.com/articles/blog/470-unit-apartmenttownhouse-development-pitched-for-arlington-hotel/20561>

- A historic building at 2415 Shirlington Road is being repurposed as a restaurant. This pharmacy and the adjacent building will be refurbished together, mostly with interior work and site work. The plans will remove some large trees, and that has been approved by HALRB. We still will be requiring canopy cover and street trees as they are disturbing a large area of land.
- Approved:
 - Staff reviewed the Marbella landscape project, where there will be significant tree loss. Currently the new planting satisfies replacement values but is in very tight spaces with small soil volumes. She is working with the designer to modify the proposed work.

DES

- There are two projects in their initial stages at the entrance to Gulf Branch Nature Center, the Military Road Culvert Replacement, and the Gulf Branch Force Main realignment. There will impact some sensitive areas and could result in tree loss. Urban Forestry has asked for the designers to coordinate plans with those for stream restoration and to involve the nature center and parks management staff.
- A CIP review was due for the intersection of N Ohio and 12th RD N, near Madison Manor Park. This is a complicated project because of the grade change and the components of the project which are an outfall into Four Mile Run, roadways and intersections, sidewalks and ramps, and a trail connection. The project is at 60% and was filed with an inventory, but the plans did not show all of the trees inventoried. This project has the potential to remove a number of large trees in good condition in an RPA that is mapped as Natural Lands. The impact has been discussed through previous submissions, but they were not addressed. Staff are hopeful that some modification can be explored as OSEM and Natural Resources are also questioning the impact.

Parks

- Alcova Heights Bi-weekly meeting. The discussion focused on the final additions of the park. Grading of the trail should take place soon and once it does the remaining 20 proposed trees should be installed.
- Encroachment of construction material at Towers Park. After investigating, Urban Forester noticed that the material was on shared property. The management company was notified, and the material was removed out of the park area.
- Onsite meeting at 905 N Harrison to discuss the neighbor's interest in creating a community garden at this intersection. The community shared their thoughts and intentions for the site. NPR requested more information from the community about the proposed species and scope of maintenance.
- Tuckahoe Park's resurfacing was completed, and 10 river birch trees will be planted on-site next week. 2 dead oaks that were planted in the fall will be replaced.

- Arlington Junction Park post review meeting (Cottonwood Park). There will be improvement of the park's soil to allow newly planted trees with adequate growing conditions.

By-right projects

- 885 N Kenmore St (CVS- Highlander Motel). The site protected all offsite trees and planted additional trees to mitigate their tree violation. Two of the newly planted trees are dead and need to be replaced. Certificate of Occupancy cannot be released.
- Discussion with applicant of LDA-52802 at 3411 Arlington Blvd the open comments. The applicant wanted to clarify if the requirements for the disturbance area could be solved by planting in other parts of the property. He will have an internal discussion with his peers to direct the applicant with proper information, given that this property is a cemetery with extensive canopy cover.
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Schools

- The Arlington Career Center is being proposed for redevelopment. Staff is working with APS and DES to create sufficient planting strips along S Highland St and 9th St S, and conserve two large mature oaks on site
- Staff walked the back of Claremont School, an area where APS is considering transferring the natural area of their property to Parks. Notes are being drafted to address some minor issues found on the site.

Federal

- No new projects

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Tree Planting:

- The Spring 2023 Tree Planting list was submitted to Davey last week. 250 trees are planned to be installed. The top 3 species of large trees are: 33 Shumard oaks, 32 Willow oaks and 23 Hackberries. The top 3 understory trees are: 27 Green Hawthorns, 11 Hornbeams and 9 Dogwoods. 129 (51.6%) are large canopy trees. The quote has been submitted for purchase requisition.
- Remaining funding could possibly be used for other tree canopy improvements such as soil remediation or creating planting spaces.
- Two volunteer tree plantings will happen in the Spring: an Eagle scout project at the Water tower, and a rootbag planting at Tyrol Hills Park, with a grant from Marymount University.

Outreach:

- Urban Forester joined Arlington Eco action to review the applications of different apartment Complexes that are requesting new trees to be planted on their property as

way to increase canopy cover thought the county. With a new coordinator, we had to work on getting them used to the process, and we're going to see how we can help improve this for the Fall planting.

- Staff is working on a statistics program with the Tree Stewards, to understand if trees from 2018 development projects are surviving, and being kept after construction.

Personnel:

- No updates

Other:

- Two Urban Foresters joined the Annual Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals conference in Blacksburg, Virginia.
- Urban Forestry attended a training that summarized tree/construction conflict and tree preservation.
- One bucket truck is out for repair, reducing our capacity to respond to maintenance calls slightly.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Shahriar Amiri, Inspections Division Chief, CPHD, spoke to NRJAG on Feb. 6 and stated that staff intended to push forward with the proposed changes to increase civil penalties and include commercial properties under Article II, Section 10 (Condition of Property Ordinance) but had no intention of updating language related to conservation landscaping or the definitions of weeds or grass in the proposed ordinance updates. The proposed updates were included on the January consent agenda, and were pulled so that commissions (C2E2, FNRC, PRC) would have an opportunity to raise the issues about the lack of provisions for conservation landscaping. Discussion of the weed ordinance is on the FNRC meeting agenda, so I will provide more background during the meeting.

Park and Recreation Commission (Colt Gregory)

The Park and Recreation Commission met on January 11, 2023

Discussion with County Board Member PRC Liaison, Takis Karatonis

Security and Policing in Arlington County Parks with Michael Simmons, Division Chief Parks and Natural Resources

Deer Management update, Alonso Abugattas, DPR, Natural Resources Manager

Discussion of PRC Action Plan for 2023, Chair - Shruti Kuppa

Takis Karantonis -- Board Member Karantonis noted the draft of the Forestry and National Resources Management Plan is likely to be available late Spring. Also noted that the Board has approved \$150K to accelerate the collection Arlington tree canopy data. Board Member Karantonis was interested in the development of quality measures/benchmarks for our parks. Commission members continued to press for more park land acquisition and incorporation of biophilic best practices into Site Plans. How can we reward/ encourage plans that build-in strong biophilic elements into the initial site plan design.

Security and Policing -- Arlington County park policing within DPR is addressed with 4 full time Park Rangers from 7:30am - 9:30pm. Issues include graffiti, vandalism, dogs off leash and broken locks. Rangers request assistance from ACPD as needed.

Deer Management Update - Alonso Abugattas, DPR Natural Resources Manager. The first round of community engagement for the deer assessment is likely to begin in Spring of 2023.

The PRC discussed priorities for the for the 2023 work plan.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No update

Planning Activities/SPRC (Steve Sockwell and Caroline Haynes)

Caroline Haynes:

The County Board adopted the Request to Advertise (RTA) the MMH zoning changes at its January meeting. There was some confusion around an amendment offered by Ms. Garvey, and subsequently adopted, about increasing the trees planted per expanded housing unit, and in fact the language was recently updated again on the webpage. A draft FNRC letter was circulated to the commission for review.

Steve Sockwell:

Crystal Towers 3

On a very cold day (February 3rd) I took a walking tour of the site (the things we do for our trees!) JBG is proposing to build out its site with a residential building. Generally, this looks like a well thought out project, but there are some attractive trees on the site, mostly shrubs. The JBG reps commented that about 80 trees will be lost, replaced by 90 or so. The first SPRC is on February 23rd and we may have input then or later in the process.

Americana Hotel

I attended the last SPRC in this site plan process on February 13. This project is a 19 story residential building in a skinny tract, running east-west between Rt. 1 and S. Eads Street. The site design includes 18 new trees. 6 of these trees will be along a new path to the north of the site which will over time (it begins as private space) deliver some attractive green space. Two interesting features of the plan: VDOT is considering landscaping along this portion of Richmond Highway that would include a 24' sidewalk and landscaping and the applicant is proposing 2 outdoor terraces on the 19th floor with raised beds for

trees and shrubs. I was particularly curious about how the applicant will plant and maintain whatever goes there, so I asked the applicant's attorney to check with their landscape architect and get us details.

Ballston- Holiday Inn

This SPRC was on February 16 and probably the penultimate in the process. Therefore we didn't discuss many of the issues that we most care about (like landscaping, stormwater management, open space, etc.); those will come up in the next meeting on March 23rd. This site, fronts Fairfax Dr., but includes some nice trees on the western side that abut the W & OD Trail. Thanks to helpful comments from Vincent and Melissa, I was able to observe that the proposed design obliterates a tree at its front entrance and seemingly destroys several of those trees that abut the W & OD, even though there is no real change to the area around those trees (the comment was the applicant was allowing for grading and utilities.) I asked that the applicant look at preserving these trees. The consensus of the Committee was that the design was improved over previous plans, but we are still lacking any information about those pesky details on stormwater management, landscaping, etc.

Kate Donohue:

There were no meetings for the Arva or the Wakefield Manor Projects; the second SPRC meeting for the Arva project is tentatively scheduled for March 20. The Wakefield Manor SPRC meeting is still TBD.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Kate Donohue)

No report

Langston Highway (Caroline Haynes)

No update

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Tree Stewards have been active in Arlington over the past month. Tree Steward volunteers built a 4x4x4 "water tank pad" at Tower Woods, where a Boy Scout planting event is planned for later this spring. The pad will support a watering tank for the scouts to use to get water to the trees they install. There were invasive-plant removal events at Lacey Woods Park on Feb. 18th and at Brandymore Castle for President's Day. In addition, the Urban Forester's office has asked Tree Stewards to spearhead a major park-mulching operation (involving TS volunteers and community volunteers) over the coming weeks and months. Many cubic yards of mulch (surplus from the County's materials yard) will be delivered to 8 neighborhood recreational parks to be spread around the drip lines of vulnerable mature trees on those properties. Two loads of approx. 35 cu. yds. each has already been spread at Quincy Park and Gum Ball Park, and the next sites are being planned. (If you want to help, let me know!)

Tree Canopy Fund (Kate Donohue)

Noreen Hannigan, Nora Palmetier, and I visited White House Natives on February 21 to tag trees for spring planting. Attached is the list of species, as well as the number of each species requested and the number we were able to source from WHN. In those instances where we came up short, Davey will

source the trees elsewhere. I suggested to EcoAction that we shift the application dates back by two or three weeks to ensure that we have the best selection available.

The shrubs on the list were offered as part of the Tree Equity Program, and are being purchased with a grant separately from the TCF program.

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) met on Monday, Feb. 6, 2023.

Ms. Anh Phan from NOVA Parks introduced herself as the person who will be spearheading the W&OD Dual-Trail proposal in Arlington County and said that they are still working on the preliminaries. Some committee members commented that they expect Arlington to oppose the increased pavement and removal of trees. Someone also said to expect Arlington to claim that the old Four Mile Run Trail is an adequate alternative to the W&OD, which she (the committee member) disagreed with. Another committee member suggested that the committee waits until we get more specifics of the proposal, the environmental assessments, etc., before making assumptions and arguing over generalities. The committee agreed. Ms. Phan said that she is a "tree hugger" herself, and echoed the need for environmental assessments to be carried out first.

Antonio Rossi, a county DES contractor from Capital BikeShare and ScooterShare, introduced himself and talked in detail about the status of the Scooter program. Scooter use is down from the initial pilot-program days, but still the program is still seeing a lot of participation. He said 75 scooter corrals have been installed to date, with the goal of adding 100 more each fiscal year. These corrals are funded by permit fees. He explained that the old system of citizens having to report problems (such as scooters parked in the wrong places) directly to the operator wasn't working. There is now an entry on the County's "Report A Problem" site for scooters. The operators will still be responsible for addressing the problem, but the County will hold them accountable from now on. The operator will have 2 hours to fix the reported complaint. If numerous complaints are received and not addressed, the County doesn't have the ability to impose fines, but it can revoke the operator's permit. Someone asked if it was OK for a citizen to simply move the scooter out of the way, and Mr. Rossi said yes, use your judgment. If it's easy enough to move it quickly (and it's not a recurring problem in that spot), feel free to do that as opposed to going through the steps of reporting it to the County and waiting 2 hours for an operator to send someone out.

Judd Isbell, President of Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail, briefed the committee on the mission and accomplishments of the organization. The Trail recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Going forward, Mr. Isbell said they will continue their advocacy work and volunteer maintenance work (invasives removal, power washing slippery wooden bridges, cleaning out culverts so standing water can drain, grinding down bumps, etc.). He went over some of the statutory constraints to working on National Park Service property, but that the Friends-Of organization is still able to accomplish a lot of things to make the trail usable. He highlighted several projects coming up, the following of which will take place in Arlington County: Reconstruction and widening of the northern section; Crystal City Waterpark; Gateway Park (near where the Custis Trail and the Mt. Vernon meet); the Alexandria power plant (Dominion Power) redesign; Crystal City to National Airport; Long Bridge; the Arlington Cemetery Wall (along Rt. 210); and "Bridge 31" realignment (the wooden bridge where the trail splits from the Mt. Vernon to go to Theodore Roosevelt Bridge).

Leah Gerber, Arlington Staff liaison to the BAC) gave brief updates from her office. The boardwalk past the Power Plant (Dominion Power) project on Four Mile Run between Arlington and Alexandria is

expected to be constructed in March, and the side-street detour will remain in place until then. The South George Mason multi-modal project is being delayed briefly while the contractor reassesses the traffic signal situation at South George Mason and Columbia Pike. (This is on the Engage Arlington page.)

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vacant)

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ArNac) (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Shawn Norton)

No report

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jim McGlone)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Kirsten Ann Conrad)

No report

New Business

Deer report from Bill Browning.

Revisit tree canopy report by GIC.

Meeting adjourned at **9:00 PM**.