

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

04/23/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:00 **PM** on **04/23/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Caroline Haynes, John Carey, Bill Browning, Phil Klingelhofer, Bob Benson, David Howell, Neal Hunter, Connor Goolsby, Josh Handler, Alex Sanders, Noreen Hannigan, Lisa Marcellus

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Jenn Hazen

ABSENT Nia Bagley, Steve Sockwell, Elizabeth Gearin

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR), John Marlin (DPR), Anh Phan (NOVA Parks), Steven Bernheisel

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments

Steve Young spoke about the Virginia Hospital site (VHC health wellness facility) on S Carlin Springs Rd. Steve spoke about community support, with reservations. Concerns about biophilic design, stormwater mgmt, landscaping plan, LEED, watershed protection. Concern that the spring is not recognized on the plans. Asked for significant portions of the Eastern part of the site to be integrated into Glencarlyn Park.

Jack Person spoke on behalf of Ballston Civic Association about Callery pears along 11th St N and Fairfax and N Quincy St. Jack suggested working with new legislation to gradually remove and replace Callery pears.

Liz Grossman from Arlington Tree Action Group spoke about 601 S Carlin Springs Rd (VHC Health Wellness & Behavioral Health Facility). Liz spoke about the Moses Ball Spring, concern about underground garage and impacts on water table. Gave an example of Bluemont where an underground parking garage caused tree death from water table reduction. Provided the support of trees in mental health benefits. Concerned that tree preservation is not a major component of the site.

Deer management project update – John Marlin

John Marlin spoke about the Deer Management Program update.

Discussion:

- Lack of deer at Upton Hill Park and human presence causing deer to go elsewhere
- Bait timing

- Expectations of the program and how much was achieved
- Weather impacts
- Impacts to staff in cold weather

Recently adopted legislation on tree canopy and invasive species – Caroline Haynes and Bob Benson

Bob Benson spoke about tree legislation HB549.

Discussion:

- What staff may want to adopt.
- Recommendation to County board to adopt the new provisions, to be discussed in June for July.

Caroline Haynes spoke about invasive plant legislation on planting and managing invasive plants on VDOT ROW, removing “commercial viability” from the noxious weed list exclusion with phaseout, service districts for invasive plant management, pesticide control on state property, fines for landscapers planting invasive plants.

Discussion:

- Blue Ridge PRISM had a webinar on this topic.
- Future letters on VDOT invasive plant management in Rights-of-way
- Dumping of vegetation material in parks from homes, and the “Be a good neighbor” campaign from Extension. Leslie Fillmore will share the flyer with the FNRC.

Examples of bird-friendly glass and dark sky lighting – David Howell

David Howell spoke about bird-friendly glass and shared samples he received from Guardian Glass.

Discussion:

- Effectiveness of ultra-violet coating.
- Amount of buildings going for Green Building options
- Advocating for bird-friendly glass during and before SPRC
- Context with the Virginia Healthcare project

Invasive and tree planting surveys on school properties by Arlington Regional Master Naturalists – Bill Browning

Bill spoke about meetings with DPR and APS staff. Steve Bernheisel spoke about the three schools involved, Gunston, Oak Ridge and Wakefield. Bob Benson spoke about the standardization of the project, and Bob’s effort to work with school board members on the other items on the white paper on collaboration with APS/DPR.

March minutes and Staff Reports

Minutes were approved unanimously

Vincent spoke about Beech Leaf Disease, a brush fire along Arlington Mill Dr, Smithsonian Zoo branch donations, planting concerns, watering funding, and circuit maintenance.

Bob Benson spoke about the amount of land disturbance permits being managed, and asked for updates on the Historic Preservation staff item in the future.

Josh Handler asked about the impact from Beech Leaf Disease on our canopy.

Commission Member Reports (Taken in order of Action Items first)

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

Much of our meeting was dedicated to a discussion with County Board Member and PRC liaison, Susan Cunningham. Cunningham updated us on the budget discussions concerning DPR matters, including the County's likely decision to continue the hotly debated gymnastics program while requiring higher fees to recoup the County's costs. We also learned about the status of planned County projects such as the Boathouse and the pedestrian path over the GW Parkway to National Airport.

PRC also heard a report on the 2025 Bill Thomas Park Volunteer Award process and the proposed awardee. We voted to accept the recommendation.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

No reports

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

With the coming of spring, activities for **Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (TSAA)** are picking up. There are several things (noted below) that FNRC Commissioners are welcome to participate in this month, including this special invitation to FNRC Commissioners.

Invitation to Commissioners: Sue Kim, County Natural Resources Technician and manager of the County's native plant nursery) will be conducting a tour of the County's native plant (and tree) nursery for Tree Stewards on May 12 from 4:15-6:15 pm, and FNRC Commissioners are invited. The tour of the nursery will also include a Tree Walk around Barcroft Park. The nursery is in Shirlington. Sue and volunteers propagate thousands of plants, trees, and shrubs from seed (gathered in the wild), and they are used in the County's habitat-restoration efforts in County parks. If you would like to join us, or if you have questions, let me know.

In other news, the ARMN Park Steward at Upton Hill Park reported that one year after installing almost 200 native trees (paid for by TSAA and planted by TSAA and ARMN volunteers), 91% of them are surviving. Of the 10 species used, persimmon, indigo bush, and silky dogwood did the best, but all did very well.

Tree Stewards have launched their "Neighbor Visit" program for 2026. Tree Steward volunteers will go to residents' homes to answer questions about their trees (with the disclaimer that they are not professional arborists). Anyone is welcome to request a

visit: https://07161569224209384003.googlegroups.com/attach/733b6df026e7e/Neighbor%20Visit%20launch%20email.pdf?part=0.1&view=1&vt=ANaJVrHjymEZaKK9w7rb7ZKKbuqyqqU-p86-S03Pz43lkvONyNtmru82bpe1sN_tOEaIXfq5nP31n40jzbchNJf7JM0MrFAYr5QgXKT_yNAvZRe9_xmPRIk

Tree Stewards who have been involved with EcoAction's tree-and-shrub-planting programs (formerly Tree Canopy Fund) were invited to visit Davey Trees' local staging area in Woodbridge to see some of the trees that have been selected for planting this spring. See separate Tree Planting report.

Jennifer Soles, Arlington County Natural Resources Specialist, asked for TSAA and ARMN volunteers to help with an "early-detection-rapid-response sweep" along Four Mile Run to seek out the highly invasive plant, Incised Fumewort, during April. Several clumps of the plant were found, dug out, and placed in the trash, but Jen said there was less than last year, so she is encouraged that the annual sweeps are helping

Jen Soles also shared that National Capital PRISM is holding Weed Warrior training in May and invited Tree Stewards (and anyone) to participate. (Note: Weed Warrior training is required to work on National Park Service (NPS) property, and NPS needs volunteers.) <https://secure.everyaction.com/dMHc41zcN0aFtI32Tl6iYw2>

Tree Stewards have continued invasive removals and habitat-restoration events (which has includes planting of native trees and shrubs provided by the Arlington County Native Nursery) have been ongoing in Dominion Hills, Fort Scott, Brandymore Castle, and Grandma's Creek.

And don't forget that City Nature Challenge (citizen science bioblitz) will take place between April 24-27. Anyone can make observations in nature and upload them to iNaturalist to participate in this friendly world-wide competition. [City Nature Challenge](#)

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

The following is an update on EcoAction Arlington's work on this year's tree- and shrub-planting programs:

Planting of 114 native trees and shrubs (by Davey Trees) for the Spring 2026 Tree Canopy and Tree Equity Programs is getting underway now. In addition, the application period for the Fall 2026 cycle should open soon. <https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/community-programs/tree-program-overview/tree-canopy-program-tpp/> Applications will be due some time in June. The applications-review sessions (which 2 FNRC Commissioners are asked to participate in) should be taking place some time in August.

Two of us Tree Stewards and a Tree Ambassador (a Tree Steward working part-time for EcoAction) joined a staff member of EcoAction to visit Davey Trees' staging site in Woodbridge to look at the trees from the new nursery in Maryland. Although some of the trees were larger than expected, they were in very good condition. Davey staff said they have had a good experience with the vendor, so they feel we should continue to get the same level of quality we got from the now-closed White House Native Nursery. Tree Stewards, however, will no longer be invited to tag trees in the field due to the travel distance involved.

Lastly, EcoAction staff held a Zoom meeting with a group of interested Tree Stewards, some FNRC commissioners (namely Caroline Haynes, David Howell, Jacob Zielinsky, and me), and Vincent Verweij to review the history of the Tree Canopy program, explain who does what, and where funding is coming from. We also received updates on how they conduct the spring and fall application and planting cycles, and details on how warranties are handled (and whether there should be a different system than having Davey staff inspect their own work), etc. They also covered the differences in how they run the Tree Planting Program for large and medium-sized trees (formerly the Tree Canopy Fund Program) and the Tree Canopy Equity Program for all-sized trees and shrubs.

The number of applications was down this cycle. However, EcoAction is optimistic that they are reaching more residents in the Equity neighborhoods now. They report growing enthusiasm for the program there and are doing more educational outreach, etc. EcoAction shared its proposed Fall 2026 species list and we discussed whether it included enough variety (especially for large and mid-sized trees) to attract more applicants, and EcoAction said they would consider expanding the list of species (assuming the vendor can supply them).

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

ARMN members supported Jennifer Soles (DPR) in sweeping for incised fumewort (*Corydalis incisa*) to keep that particular invasive from becoming established in the county.

ARMN and DPR collaboration in habitat rehabilitation has always been good. Consistent recent reporting from Park Stewards suggests that recent progress in rehabilitating our parks could not have happened without the support of Sue Kim and Jen Soles. While assembling this month's ARMN report to the FNRC, Park Stewards report:

- Sue and Jen are instrumental in providing materials and supervising volunteers. Sue has provided plants and deer caging for Lubber Run, Woodlawn, Dominion Hills, Mary Carlin, Cherry Valley among others. Sue and Jen occasionally join regular park stewards' regular workdays, they are accomplished volunteer managers.

- Many Park Stewards appreciate Sue's efforts to treat difficult to control invasives with herbicides. A Park Steward leader notes that "the county is addressing lesser celandine in most parks."
- Finally, almost all Park Stewards can attest that Jen answers questions "on issues ranging from 'can we use paper bags for garlic mustard,' to helping to arrange corporate group habitat restoration work."

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

No report

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Lisa Marcellus)

No report

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

Steven mentioned Arbor Day, held at Jamestown Elementary school.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Leslie thanked the commission for their work on APS properties

New business

Ahn Phan mentioned NOVA Parks' all staff meeting, and the start of their strategic planning process next year.

Caroline Haynes spoke about an informational session before each planting season by EcoAction Arlington

Josh Handler spoke about gas-powered leaf blowers and suggested opposing the three year phaseout, and recommended a shorter phaseout. Bill Browning asked about its relevance to the Commission. Bob Benson spoke about the impact on our natural environment.

Josh Handler spoke about the Virginia Hospital Center, and how the Commission can be involved.

Noreen Hannigan spoke about the tour of Arlington Native Plant Nursery and spotted lanternfly.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 **PM**.