

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

02/26/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:02 PM** on **02/26/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) David Howell, Caroline Haynes, Steven Sockwell, Robert Benson, Jenn Hazen, Bill Browning, John Carey, Lisa Marcellus, Noreen Hannigan, Connor Goolsby, Josh Handler, Neal Hunter

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Phil Klingelhofer, Nia Bagley

ABSENT Alex Sanders, Elizabeth Gearin

STAFF

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments

No public comment.

Biophilic Arlington Presentation – David Howell

David Howell presented on Biophilic Arlington. Some discussion followed on how to use the website, and how to thread the terms into discussions about development and legislation.

Biophilic Arlington Website review – Vincent Verweij

Vincent Verweij, Urban Forest Manager, showed the Biophilic Arlington website and its contents.

NOVA Parks/Dominion MOU – Anh Phan

Justin Wilson, Executive Director of NOVA Parks, spoke about NOVA Parks, focusing on the W&OD trail and the Memorandum of Understanding with Dominion Energy on tree maintenance.

Discussion followed on:

1. Replacement of canopy trees with understory trees.
2. Concern about potential impact to trees in Arlington
3. Will Arlington lose 11 Acres of trees, along the W&OD trail?
4. What are the criteria for removal?
5. Criteria for clearing areas
6. Request for final version of the MOU
7. Legal permissions for Dominion's actions and practices
8. Accountability

9. Inventory of existing trees.
10. Size of replanted trees to ensure conflict is minimal in the future
11. Will this become a legal agreement in the long term?

Justin Wilson said he would share the full MOU with the commission.

Waverly Ridge Site Plan letter

Bill Browning spoke about the Site Plan Review Process. The commission discussed how to phrase the letter in context of requirements and targets.

Expanding Stormwater Credit for Trees

A discussion was held about providing more credit for trees in stormwater credits.

January minutes and Staff Reports

Minutes were approved unanimously with an edit to remove “eleven” from the Tree Stewards Report.

Vincent Verweij highlighted the Leckey Gardens project in the staff reports.

Forestry:

Maintenance:

- Tree crews continued to assist with snow clearing, including during a short snow event the weekend of February 22
- Circuit maintenance: Staff are monitoring work in Bluemont, finalizing inventory of Ballston and Quincy Park. The tree is working on Radnor/Ft Meyer Heights.
- Staff reviewed the communication going out to neighborhoods before circuit maintenance for clarity and plain language.

Planning:

Long-term planning

- Low Residential Study: Staff are working with GIS data to find a good way to represent plantable space on lots

Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)

- In review:
 - Leckey Gardens: The applicant continued to insist tree conservation was possible for Tree 13 on the site. Staff drafted language with failsafes to investigate root zones, and set higher penalties if the tree declines.
 - Staff reviewed the application for 2001 N Adams Street. The project falls within the Langston Sector Plan area and must achieve a minimum 35% canopy coverage target, supported by adequate soil volume and sufficient street trees. While the proposal includes a new park, the design should be revised to function as a true park space rather than resembling a parking lot.
 - 2601 Columbia Pike: Off-site tree impact is substantial, and the applicant should either reduce the LOD or plan to replace the off-site trees based on the required tree

replacement amount and an agreement with the adjacent property owner. Soil volume totals were not included in the application and are required.

DES

- Tree planting along Columbia Pike will start in the next few weeks.
- The Biosolids project at the Water Pollution Control Plant is starting. This project will have some limited tree impact, and staff is working to minimize this impact.
- Staff reviewed the ANCC Trail Connector project. Most comments were resolved; however, Transportation must finalize the APS tree replacement location and provide an agreement confirming the total quantities.
- Staff attended a site visit with DES Engineering, and their contractor, for a project on Walter Reed Dr to discuss soil specs and conflicts between tree protection fencing and resident access to the sidewalk.

Parks

- Staff joined a virtual meeting for the Upper Bluemont Park Tennis Courts Renovation. Tree preservation, landscaping, and soil profile requirements were discussed with the contractor.
- Staff reviewed the current drainage issue at Edison Park. The issue will be resolved by adding mulch to the path and possibly installing logs to prevent the mulch from washing into the stream. No tree impacts are expected.
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By-right projects

- Staff are taking on the single-family home projects from the vacant position left by recently retired staff.
- Staff met with staff from engineers to discuss open comments related to a couple of projects, particularly 2401 N Potomac St. The engineer will try to adjust their limits to reduce impacts on trees.

Federal

- The Long Bridge connection started tree removal along the Mt. Vernon Trail, and Long Bridge Park. Staff met to discuss tree conservation, including the conservation of a champion redbud.

Tree Planting:

- The Spring 2026 tree planting quote has been received, and tree planting should start soon.
- Public Relations staff helped design a door hanger for tree planting in front of single family homes. This door hanger will allow people to opt out of tree planting if they know of an unknown conflict, such as an unidentified utility.

Outreach/volunteering:

- Tree Stewards were asked for assistance to prune trees at Virginia Highlands

Other:

- Staff is continuing to monitor legislation at the state level
- Jose Portuhondo attended a training in Reston on Protecting Birds and Urban Nature in Northern Virginia. This was a great opportunity to explore different approaches and methods for conserving the region's natural areas.

Natural Resources:

Professional sharpshooting operations began in February and will continue in to March. Weather had a significant effect on the operations.

Invasive plant treatment for Spring will resume next week, also slightly delayed by snow cover.

Staff partnered with DES to do another live stake installation, this year in a feeder stream at Bluemont Park, in the hopes that vegetation will take and reduce stream bank erosion there.

Native Plant Nursery workdays resume in March

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The next quarterly NRJAG meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 2. We will be focusing on possible conflicts with the retail plan (glass transparency) with bird friendly glass as well as possible design opportunities for the adaptive reuse of buildings.

The County Board work session on the Department of Parks and Recreation FY 27 budget is scheduled for March 5. Under the proposed budget, there are four positions from the Parks and Natural Resources Division that will be frozen for the coming year, including one forester position. One-time funding (as opposed to base budget funding) is included for invasive species management (\$100,000), deer management (\$71,000) and for the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (\$86,900) (funding that FNRC has advocated for in the past). Resourcewews for the Tree Canopy Fund is designated from the Stormwater Management Fund.

As opposed to previous practice, the County Board is not taking any testimony from commission chairs at these work sessions, and instead is scheduling a separate work session with all commissions for April 8. DPR Director Jane Rudolph is planning to provide a budget briefing at our March 26 FNRC meeting.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

- A summary of the first community engagement held in the fall 2025 is now available on the [project website](#).
- A statistically valid needs assessment survey is currently underway, and staff hopes to reach the target of at least 800 completed surveys in the upcoming weeks.
- Residents who were not randomly selected to participate in the statistically valid survey will have an opportunity to take a similar online engagement on the [PSMP Refresh webpage](#). This additional engagement opportunity will be shared with the community when ready to launch.
- More information about the statistically valid survey, a [FAQ document](#) has been posted on the project website.
- The next next PSMP-IAC meeting will be held in late spring as part of the 2nd round of community engagements when staff will share the results of the statistically valid survey among other PSMP Refresh items.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

Nia Bagley spoke about bird-friendly glass. Vincent Verweij shared links from the American Bird Conservancy, and David Howell spoke about the height limits on bird-friendly glass.

Steve Sockwell: I attended an SPRC, the first of two planned meetings, this past Monday (Feb. 23rd.) The subject was a planned 22 story residential building at 4420 Fairfax Drive. There's now a 5 story office building onsite; the applicant wants to demolish it and build a 302 unit residential building. Additionally, the project would have 5000 feet of ground floor retail.

The Committee really didn't discuss many issues of interest to us. Landscaping is on the agenda for the next SPRC. Two items did come up. The building will abut a planned Metro elevator and the applicant proposes a large hard surface public plaza around the elevator. I suggested we consider green space, rather than impervious hardscape. The developer said that drainage was an issue and they're using the hardscape plus a French drain to deal with that. I'll revisit the issue upon seeing more detailed plans. Also, a couple of Planning Commissioner members (Tenley Peterson and Nia Bagley) recommended the use of bird-friendly glass and the developer seemed receptive.

In general, this is one of those sites where we don't have much opportunity to make it more green. The site is relatively small and the footprint of the building takes up most of the ground area. Also the Ballston Sector Plan is old (dating from 1980) and doesn't have tree canopy goals and hence is not much help. Nevertheless, I intend to push for more green planting once we get into the landscaping discussion.

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

John Carey spoke about the report sent around about reducing spaces for cars and increasing spaces for other transportation features and nature. A discussion was suggested for March' meeting

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Volunteers from Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (TSAA) recently participated in a session with EcoAction and Urban Forestry to review over 100 applications for this Spring's Tree Planting Program. During that meeting, Tree Stewards and Urban Forestry staff were surprised to learn that White House Native Tree Nursery in Luray, VA, which has been supplying good-quality trees for Arlington's Tree Canopy planting programs for several years, will be closing in a few months. Tree Stewards have visited the Luray nursery prior to each Spring and Fall planting to inspect and select each tree and has had an excellent and trusted working relationship with staff there, so this was very sad news.

FNRC Hair Carolyn Haynes reached out to EcoAction staff for additional information. EcoAction said that Davey Trees is responsible for selecting a vendor. Although White House is still open at this time, Davey has contracted with Still Pond Nursery to buy trees from its Millington, MD, location (on the Eastern Shore). EcoAction said they have asked if Tree Stewards can come in person to select trees for the

Spring planting, but have not received confirmation at this writing. <https://spnsinc.com/wholesale-plant-nursery-millington-md/>

Sue Kim, County Natural Resources Technician, has invited Tree Stewards to help cut and plant live native tree and shrub stakes to mitigate erosion along a drainage area in Bluemont Park on Feb. 26.

Habitat-restoration and invasive-removal work for February includes sites at Dominion Hills along Four Mile Run, Fort Scott, and Lacey Woods.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

See Tree Stewards report above.

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

No update

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

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

Lisa Marcellus spoke about a ban on signage on medians. C2E2 asked for FNRC's thoughts. Discussion followed on traffic risks, benefiting establishment politicians, charging the owner of the signs, designating spots for signs.

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

Steven Bernheisel spoke about some trees that were impacted by the snow storm on school property.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

No update

New business

Bob Benson spoke about legislative updates, particularly HB549.

Meeting adjourned at **9:30**.