

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

06/25/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:00 **PM** on **06/25/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Steve Sockwell, David Howell, Caroline Haynes, Jenn Hazen, Neal Hunter, Bob Benson, Connor Goolsby, Josh Handler, Lisa Marcellus, Bill Browning, Alex Sanders

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)

ABSENT Noreen Hannigan, John Carey

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR), Anh Phan (NOVA Parks), Steven Bernheisel (APS), Leslie Filmore (Virginia Tech Extension)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Marissa Willson was re-introduced to the commission.

Public comments

No public comment

Legislative priorities

Caroline spoke about the legislative priorities, and mentioned the listening session created by HB549.

- Urgent:
 - Change HB549's language from "Towns" to "Localities" for allowance of 10 year canopy targets, change the "ceiling" of canopy required, to the "floor" of canopy required.
 - VDOF trees for clean water funding, reduced to ~\$500,000 from ~\$4,000,000
- Ready:
 - Supporting VDOT pollinator program
- Visionary:
 - A study done by VDOF to look at existing development, to see if additional trees could fit on those sites.

Discussion also happened on:

- "Conserve" vs. "preserve"
- Pattern books for development
- Standardization across community needs, development styles, and ecoregions

- allow for other issues to be added later in the year.

The commission voted to send the above priorities through the form. It was moved by Bill Browning, seconded by David Howell, and approved unanimously.

House Bill 549 adoption/ordinance changes

Bob Benson described his letter to recommend changes to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance based on recently approved house bill 549.

Discussion followed on:

- Including the paragraph on adopting 10 year targets, if “Town” was meant to be “locality”. It was suggested to turn this and its preceding paragraph into a footnote.
- Delete “flexibly”
- Remove language involving “inadvertent”
- Attach the bill to the letter, with sections highlighted

Bob Benson moved to send this letter, with the above changes. Seconded by Steve Sockwell. Approved unanimously.

Virginia hospital center

David Howell spoke about this Site plan project. The Site Plan Review Commission was postponed.

Discussion followed about:

- When to provide input
- What will be done with the remaining parking lot
- Integrating decisions about the hospital and the county-owned
- Suggesting preferred outcomes for the whole site
- Parking needs for the hospital

A letter was proposed about the northern, County-owned part of the site, with the following suggestions:

- Parking spaces
- Considering the northern lot as integral to the site plan
- Road and its impact to plantable space
- Options for land, with tree canopy
- The spring on the North parcel

A letter was approved unanimously with the preceding comments

Feedback on Climate Action Plan Advisory Group questions

David Howell spoke about feedback on the Climate Action Plan.

Discussion followed on:

- Recommendation to move quickly
- Operational planning and implementation
- Completing existing action steps related to climate in FNRP
- Making grey and green infrastructure co-equal

Bear presentation

Jenn Hazen presented on living with bears

Discussion followed on:

- Mange
- Range of bears in Arlington
- Management

May minutes and Staff Reports

This was noted incorrectly as the March minutes on the agenda.

Vincent highlighted burn sites, tree-of-heaven, vandalism, and sticky traps causing significant wildlife damage.

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

At the May 4 NRJAG meeting we had a productive discussion focusing on better coordination among the three commissions (FNRC, PRC and C2E2) in various planning processes, especially where our interests overlap. Suggestions were made to improve communication, for example by sharing letters and comments with our counterparts on the other commissions to get a better understanding of the issues of concern to each commission. We also discussed priorities in the upcoming CIP, including natural resilience funding, noting letters from both FNRC and PRC for long-term planning and funding for invasive species management.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The PSMP Implementation Advisory Group will meet on Wednesday, May 27 at Walter Reed Community Center, followed by a community open house from 7-8:30 PM. We anticipate a presentation on the results of the statistically valid survey, as well as an update on the implementation of the existing PSMP. As noted previously, this update will be focusing on a limited scope of issues including inventory update, level of service, needs assessment, land acquisition and consistency with adopted plans.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

No report

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (TSAA) will be holding a Fall 2026 Training Class. The application period is open now, and closes on July 26th. This year it will be done with self-guided readings and videos online, as well as in-person, hands-on sessions on Sunday afternoons. <https://treestewards.org/join-the-treestewards/>

As reported in the Tree Canopy Report, Tree Steward volunteers are performing home visits for County residents who are interested in applying for trees through the EcoAction program. (See Tree Canopy Report.)

Current Tree Stewards continued their education on a tree walk with Jim McGlone at Potomac Overlook Park, a Tree-Mapping webinar, and an in-person talk on water quality studies done at Gulf Branch (Arlington) and Taylor Run (Alexandria).

Habitat-restoration work took place at Dominion Hills and Grandma's Creek. In addition, Tree Stewards assist Sue Kim (Arlington Co. Natural Resources Technician) at the Arlington Native Plant Nursery on Tuesdays.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

The application period for Arlington residents to receive free trees from EcoAction Arlington is open now and will close July 15. Tree Steward volunteers are doing home visits for applicants who request them. Tree Steward and Tree Ambassador (working part-time for EcoA), Ron Rosenberg, got some setback requirements clarified (with Vincent Verweij's input) and posted to EcoAction's website.

<https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/community-programs/tree-program-overview>

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

ARMN participated in this year's City Nature Challenge in late April. The CNC, a global bioblitz, included 754 metropolitan areas in 61 countries. ARMN's submissions were rolled into the DC Metropolitan Area group, which came in #3 for observers and #6 for observations. Nearly 80 ARMN members identified 1,103 species and contribute 6,519 observations this year.

ARMN members began to develop an ARMN "project" to support DPR collaboration with Arlington Public Schools. We collected data on tree planting locations and invasive infestation at three schools (Oakridge, Gunston, and Wakefield). ARMN will review these results in June with staff (schools and county) to discuss next steps in this effort.

ARMN members continued to support the FNRC in its representation on several Site Plan Review Committees (SPRCs)

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)

Grace Hopper: some tree planting will be delayed until the Fall.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Getting lots of calls about Spotted Lanternflies.

New business

Long Range Planning Commission is scheduled for Low Residential Study.

On the RTA on leaf blowers, 3 letters from commissions were noted. Suggested the commission represent this issue at the meeting.

Removal of trees along George Washington Memorial Parkway is continuing. It was asked whether NPS could be invited to the FNRC.

W&OD user hours were expanded to 9 PM

David Howell spoke about his wildlife photo exhibit at Lubber Run Community Center

Caroline asked to make the July meeting virtual, and suggested having an August field trip. The July meeting will be virtual.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 **PM**.