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

3/27/25

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:00 PM** on 3/27/25.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) **Caroline Haynes, Elizabeth Gearin, David Howell, Robert Benson, Phil Klingelhofer, John Carey, Noreen Hannigan, Josh Handler, Neal Hunter, Bill Browning**

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)

ABSENT **Steve Sockwell, Lisa Marcellus**

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR), Christin Jolicoeur (DES), Steve Bernheisel (APS), Aileen Winkvist (DES), Ty Asfaw (DES), Lily Whitesell (DES)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Public Comment

No public comment

Budget Letter – Caroline Haynes

The letter was approved unanimously, with 3 members absent. Commissioner Handler joined the meeting after the vote.

DPR/APS collaboration – Bob Benson

Commissioner Benson provided background for 13 ideas to consider.

Vincent Verweij suggested changing “Tree inventory” to “Plantable space inventory”

Commissioner Howell suggested:

1. Move last line of Item 1 to separate line
2. Change “does not enable” in Point 6 to “Enables them”
3. In number 7 under Barriers, rethink language to make it a little less aggressive. David Howell will send an edit.
4. Number 4 for Land Conveyance, suggest moving last sentence to number 3.
5. Item 15 under opportunities, since FNRC is not an advisory to the School Board. Consider rewriting. Get rid of “consistent with recent letter”, add “raise issue”
6. Minor edits to tense
7. Number 8 on Page 4: Change the Italic final sentence. “The approach is supported by APS staff as a viable option”

Commissioner Hannigan suggested:

1. Make introduction to letter shorter, have the exposition live in the white paper.
2. First paragraph, add benefits of trees and invasives control to surrounding properties, including parks.
3. Second page of white paper, first full paragraph, mentions history of maintenance and planting on APS property, which should be taken out.
4. Essential pruning of small trees, not large ones.
5. "additional locations are already known to be good", known by whom?
6. Change "landscaping" to "landscaping and gardening activities"

Commissioner Gearin suggested:

1. Before "the purpose of this analysis", instead "this analysis was undertaken in ****, after adopted FNRP"

Commissioner Browning suggested:

1. Avoid volunteer delegation, as it might create North/South disparities.
2. How is the 10% of the natural lands used programmed?

Commissioner Carey suggested:

1. Prioritization. Through discussion, suggested to set priorities through cover letter recommendations.

Commissioner Hunter suggested:

1. Add context to natural land on APS property

The revised version, incorporating the above edits, was approved unanimously, with 2 absent members.

Transportation Plan Comments – David Howell

Commissioner Howell provided background.

Commissioner Hannigan suggested what was missing was people getting to stores and getting groceries. Commissioner Carey suggested adding "less space for cars and more for people". Commissioner Hunter suggested that the plan needs to be flexible to address future goals.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Updates – Aileen Winqvist

Aileen Winqvist and Christin Jolicoeur provided updates for the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.

A discussion followed on the impact and benefits of these changes, and what legal tools the County gets from these changes.

Commissioner Hannigan asked whether this changes the ability to levy penalties? Remains the same. Commissioner Gearin asked about conservation landscaping, and how it would be reviewed and required to be reviewed. This is tied to the deed.

Commissioner Benson asked about process: do commissions get opportunity to review Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Redlines for review. Currently, redline is being reviewed from DEQ. It will be posted after DEQ review.

Gulf Branch Stream Restoration – Caroline Haynes

Ty Asfaw and Lily Whitesell discussed the Gulf Branch Stream Restoration project. The project is now at 100% design. Four Green streets projects are included.

Commissioner Benson discussed a chart he and several others have created for ideas on improving stormwater around the project. Suggested that the other projects be done soon in context with the Gulf Branch project. Suggested a letter to recommend these projects as soon as possible.

Commissioner Carey and Chair Haynes suggested a letter may not be necessary.

Commissioner Carey suggested there are other issues on private property impacting the stream, too.

Lily spoke about next steps, starting with discussions with DPR. The speed of progress depends on the scope of the projects.

Minutes

February minutes were not shared yet. They will be shared before the April meeting for review.

Staff Reports

Forestry:

Maintenance:

- Tree maintenance requests remain high, and have not taken the historically typical dip in the winter. We attribute this to higher wind events, and likely ongoing impacts from climate change.
- Circuit maintenance: staff is ramping up circuit maintenance, moving to Barcroft, Alcova Heights, and Penrose, while finishing up Crystal City and Aurora Highlands

Planning:

Long-term planning

- Staff are working on Low Residential Study analysis.

Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)

- In review:
 - Barcroft: staff met with DES inspectors to address an LDA and Tree Conservation violation at Barcroft apartments project RA-. Two white oaks were injured, and at least one within the structural root zone. The work is on hold until DES and DPR-UF can agree on a direction to give the applicant.
 - Staff joined the applicant of the Shirlington streetscape improvement project. Better tree preservation measures were illustrated. The applicant stated that the application resubmission will take place within the spring.

- Staff joined the internal planning meeting to discuss the comment of the Buchanan Street Apartments concept plans (SPLC25-00002). The major comments included the lack of sufficient street trees and to comply with the 20% canopy cover.
- Staff reviewed the 2500 Wilson Blvd project (SPLA24-00034). Plans were rejected due to conflicts of the electrical vaults and the low soil volume for the onsite trees.
- Staff joined two planning meetings with the applicants for active review project at 1501 Arlington Blvd project and the 1310 N Meade Post Review Meeting. There are open questions about Tree Canopy Fund payments, which staff are working with the applicant on.
- Staff met the Landscape consultant of the River House project to review the open comments. Most of the questions focused on canopy cover requirements, tree preservation credit and Pentagon Sector Plan guidelines.
- Approved
 - Staff worked on 2050 Bell Street. Plans were rejected due to low soil volume being proposed and the elevate curb around the sidewalk that could limit water from eating the tree pit.

DES

- Staff has been working with DES and Ardent construction to do root excavation at Carlin Springs Road and N Greenbrier street. This excavation had to be expanded when large roots were discovered under the sidewalk for the entire LOD.
- Staff finished inspections of Tributary A Donaldson Run stream restoration today. This repair is nearly closed.
- Staff is reviewing two outfall projects with significant tree impact. One is in Glen Carlyn Park watershed behind the old hospital site off Carlin Springs Rd, and one is along Gulf Branch Trail behind the pump station. In both cases the access road and staging will remove more trees than the actual work.
- Staff met with DES to make a final spring list for Davey for Columbia Pike Segment A and F planting.
- DES is using air excavation to identify root locations on several projects, and are adapting designs in the field, where appropriate.

Parks

- Staff reviewed the plans of the Alcovia Heights pedestrian bridge. The comments focused on the area of work that did not include soil conservation and could cause significant tree impact if not resolved.
- Staff joined the initial preconstruction meeting for the Walter Reed Outdoor Pickleball Court. Work is intended to start on March 17.

By-right projects

- Staff addressed a tree violation where County Street trees at 2029 N Kenmore St (under LDAP22-00156) were impacted by a change in the limit of disturbance performed by the contractor. The tree was removed without the written permission of the County Urban Forester.
- Staff worked on saving Specimen Trees being impacted by the development of 2400 N Lincoln St. The issue is still being addressed.

- Staff met to discuss a NOVA Parks project that will impact several parks. In particular, there will be encroachment and a change in aesthetics along with significant tree loss along the stream at Bon Air park, at the Pavilion.

Federal

- Tree removal will occur on NPS property for railroad expansion, near Long Bridge Park. All permits are approved, and work is anticipated to start on March 27.
- Staff worked with the planning department to provide feedback for the new Amtrak Crystal City High- Level Platform project

Tree Planting:

- Watering maps were completed for newly planted trees
- Staff resumed identifying tree planting locations for Fall 2025 season.
- Staff met with Davey Tree to discuss the upcoming planting season.

Outreach/volunteering:

- Arbor Day will be on April 11, at 9:15, at Abingdon Elementary School
- Staff met with Tree Stewards to discuss the structural pruning program, to get feedback, and to discuss the new reporting forms.
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Other:

- Urban forest manager Vincent Verweij is in jury duty until at least March 31, and has been delegating work to staff.

Natural Resources:

Deer drone surveys were done, and we should be expecting the report back in the next couple of weeks; the protocols for both the deer exclosures and Decalesta browse surveys were completed; these will be sent to our GIS folks to come with random places to place them (likely around 400 for the Decalesta and 6 for the deer exclosures (all with extras in case the first random results are unworkable); First meetings with NOVA Parks have also taken place to discuss browse surveys and possible sharp shooting; Next week our native plant nursery volunteer days will be commencing on Tuesdays from 2-4pm.

Commissioner Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Park and Recreation Commission (Neal Hunter)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC (Steve Sockwell, Caroline Haynes, David Howell, Bob Benson)

Chair Haynes and Commissioner Benson spoke about Hotel Pentagon, and whether to send a letter.

Steve Sockwell: I'll be attending the SPRC tonight (March 27), so don't actually have any details to report. However, I do want to provide some background since this is a major project. The proposal is actually an amendment of a site plan that was approved in 2012, but never built. The project is in Rosslyn, directly across from Gateway Park at Key Bridge, and is a 2.3 A. site that currently has two office buildings. The proposal is to demolish the office buildings and construct three tall (23, 27 and 29 stories) residential buildings.

From an architectural standpoint the applicant is claiming to incorporate broad biophilic themes in the design of the buildings that capture the spirit of the hydrology of the Potomac River (the waves, the gorge, etc.) I'd like the applicant to be more specific in how the design does this. The project is governed by the Rosslyn Sector Plan. The sector plan, among other details, discourages blank walls at street level. During a public comment period I also made several comments encouraging more green walls. In the SPRC renderings the applicant seems to have indeed incorporated more green walls. Also, I would also like to see a more ostentatiously green transition to Gateway Park in building design of the North Tower. Unfortunately the sector plan doesn't call for provision of public spaces on the site and the applicant isn't offering any, so that somewhat limits our input. There is however a nice design for a private green rooftop garden area at the sixth floor level and we will comment about that. The next SPRC meeting will cover landscaping, etc. and will meet sometime in May.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards had some interesting tree plantings this month. The County nursery obtained 18 blight-resistant chestnut seeds from the American Chestnut Foundation and gave them to Brandymore Castle. (The Tree Steward/Park Steward for that site said there had been naturally occurring chestnuts on the hill in the past, but they eventually died.) Volunteers (under the direction of Sue Kim, County DNR), set the seeds into the ground and laid down protection against squirrels, et al., then caged each one. At Upton Hill, 200+ bare-root whips were planted and caged in a multi-day, multi-team effort over the course of several days. Also, at Grandma's Creek, trees and live stakes were planted and caged. Less glamorous but necessary work controlling invasives took place at Lacey Woods and Dominion Hills. At Dominion Hills, a team, using fence material provided by the County, caged almost a dozen small native tree saplings that revealed themselves after invasives were removed from the area.

On a different note, Tree Steward several members have expressed interest in putting together training in tree mapping to enable them to map their parks and properties and better understand what species are occurring.

Tree Canopy Fund (Vacant)

No report

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

Mr. Mark Schwartz (Arlington County Manager) was the special guest. Mr. Schwartz was there to address issues that the two committees had raised in recent letters, but the meeting took on a more conversational style. Mr. Schwartz told the groups that his job is to keep an overview, not make decisions on details. He said it would be more helpful to him if they would tell him what standards the County is failing to meet, trends observed, and criteria that should be being applied, as opposed to pointing out details on specific projects. He did address subjects such as last winter's snow removal and said that he agreed that plow drivers need to be re-trained on some procedures, especially on not pushing snow into bad places at intersections and sidewalks. He also believes that expecting commercial building owners to clear their own sidewalks of snow is unrealistic and he wishes that rule would be changed. He explained that the County simply does not have the equipment to clear all bike lanes, and that when the weather stays cold, like it did last winter, thawing and refreezing of ice on bike lanes is impossible to eliminate. Other topics included sidewalk infrastructure (lack of sidewalks, sidewalks that don't connect), and vehicles parked in bike lanes. Mr. Schwartz said the County doesn't have enough staff to write tickets but he is hoping to get future authorization to use cameras to monitor parking, stop sign, and other violations.

Next, Mr. Mike Hanna (BAC member) and Ms. Pam Van Hine (PAC member) updated the committees on the Master Transportation Plan advisory group's efforts. They went over the Draft Vision and many members objected to the wording. Many thought the Vision sounded too status-quo (not "transformative," i.e., away from cars and moving towards "active" transportation (walking or human-powered conveyances)). In general, members wanted stronger language around safety for all modes of travel, reducing energy use and volume of traffic, affordability, and promoting health and biophilia.

Ms. Mary Dallao (Walk Arlington/Bike Arlington) encouraged members to attend the April and May County Board meetings where Walk Month and Bike Month Proclamations will be read. She said it attendance would show that there is support for these clean modes of transportation. Bike To Work Day will be held on Thursday, May 15. Registration is open on the Bike Arlington website.

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)

Drew Elementary is having trees planted through a VDOF grant, in collaboration with Arlington Tree Connection.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Vacant)

No report. Kirsten Conrad retired this month.

New Business:

For future planning letters, an agenda item will be added to consider letters.

A Tree canopy fund workgroup will be formed to discuss changes to the Tree Canopy Fund.

There is a new C2E2 liaison, Lisa Marcellus.

Meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM.