

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

03/26/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:03 **PM** on **03/26/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Caroline Haynes, David Howell, John Carey, Jenn Hazen, Phil Klingelhofer, Robert Benson, Josh Handler, Steve Sockwell, Noreen Hannigan

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Nia Bagley

ABSENT Alex Sanders, Bill Browning, Neal Hunter, Lisa Marcellus, Connor Goolsby

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR), Quanika Stover (DPR), Steven Bernheisel (APS), Leslie Filmore (Virginia Tech Extension)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Vincent Verweij introduced Quanika Stover, Urban Forester.

Public comments

Sarah Muros spoke about the Virginia Hospital Center site along S Carlin Springs Rd. She spoke about the community's preference to remove the surface parking lot. She also spoke about the connection to 5th Rd S. Also communicated the light impact of the building. She claimed tree canopy rules were not being followed.

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

Jane Rudolph and Kisha Holland presented on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Discussion followed on:

- Funding for teen programs
- Clarification about the gymnastics program cut
- Do fee reductions affect the revenue projections?
- Similar programs to gymnastics, and whether Barcroft community center will remain open
- Reusing wood and the coordination with the woodshop
- Percentage of the overall budget
- Coverage with circuit tree maintenance program, as we have a frozen position.
- How much invasive management funding covers
- How does the 40% tree canopy goal affect budget decisions
- CIP presentation for the commission

- Tree watering
- Treating natural spaces as capital infrastructure

A letter was discussed, and approved unanimously to be finalized over email, to meet the deadline for submission to the County Board.

Adopting FNRC Charter Update – Caroline Haynes

The Commission discussed changes to the Charter including:

1. Changing working with Arlington Public Schools to “collaborating”
2. Oversee grants and administration of the Tree Canopy Fund.
3. A change to expand collaboration with APS
4. Discussion to make 40% tree canopy goal number a more prominent part of the Charter

A motion was made to adopt with changes and approved unanimously

Follow-up on Transportation Plan – John Carey

John Carey spoke about the transportation plan. Discussion followed on:

- What the priorities are for the program
- Taking away space from cars for nature and other modes of transportation
- Reusing parking lots

The Commission will wait to hear back from the program.

Walgreens Site Plan Letter

Bob Benson spoke about the Walgreens Site Plan. Discussion followed on:

- Smaller canopy trees changed
- Smaller bus shelters. Vincent Verweij shared more updated images, which showed improved tree planting along Langston Blvd
- Adding larger canopy trees along the I-66 edge.
- Removing dropoff zones to create tree planting areas
- Keeping the plaza natural, and removing the statue to create more space

A letter was approved unanimously.

February minutes and Staff Reports

The minutes were approved unanimously

Vincent discussed the Deer program and Arbor Day

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

We had a good discussion with Kris Krider, CPHD, and Paul Roman, DES, about different ways to resolve possible conflicts between bird friendly glass requirements in the Green Building Incentive Program and the transparency requirements in the County's retail plan. The discussion also focused on some of the research in other jurisdictions about avoiding bird strikes (such as the multi-year DC City Wildlife project), as well as some of the data on bird strikes on single-detached homes, and strategies to avoid them. The discussion also touched briefly on adaptive reuse of existing office buildings, but it was noted that in the few existing projects in Arlington, there is little disturbance to the landscaping and exteriors of the buildings, so consequently, little opportunity to weigh in on possible changes.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No PRC actions to report on since there's been no meeting since February.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

I circulated to the commission the link to take the PSMP survey. Data from the statistically valid survey will be kept separate from the general public survey, but both will be available for review soon. One slide from the survey was used in the DPR Budget work session with the County Board (attached). Note the Nature and Outdoor Programs were ranked second highest (just after Fitness and Wellness) on the statistically valid survey.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

Nia Bagley spoke about the Waverly Ridge Site Plan, which had a changed date for the Site Plan Review Commission.

David Howell reported on:

- VHC Behavioral Wellness Center. Located on south Carlin Springs Rd, this proposed facility would serve as the hub for addiction and behavioral health care under the Virginia Hospital Center system in Arlington. A public meeting was scheduled for Monday, March 16 but was postponed due to inclement weather. The public meeting, when rescheduled, will precede a customary engagement process, including on-line survey, SPRC meetings, commission meetings, PC and CB hearings.
- 1401 Langston Blvd (Marriott site). A Long Range Planning Committee meeting was held on March 18 for this important site at the north end of Rosslyn and next to Key Bridge. The site had a project approval several years ago but the developer sold the property to a new group, so the process will begin again. This meeting was a Tier 1 GLUP meeting, to determine if a special GLUP study is necessary and a second LRPC to review that. Once that stage is completed there will be SPRC meetings for the actual proposed structures, open space and other aspects.

- 2000 15th St (Alexan). The second SPRC was held on Monday, March 23, for this project, which is an office building tear-down and replacement with a residential building. The proposed structure will have a courtyard on the south exposure, between west and east wings. A public pathway that exists now will be redesigned to be more efficient (grade and distance) and more natural in features and plantings. Recommendations were made on structural soil cells for street trees, bird-friendly glass locations and heights, use of the roof of the west wing, which will be vegetated and serve stormwater management functions, and courtyard design.

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

The Advisory Group for “Arlington’s Transportation Future” met on March 11.

County Staff presented an update of the priorities and existing vulnerabilities for pedestrians, the bicycle network, and transit networks.

For example, the analysis of “critical sidewalk links” showed “us the areas where pedestrian access is most important.” Similarly, the analysis of the bike network shows gaps, such as limited access to Aurora Hills Library and Community Center, and Virginia Highlands Park.

The analysis “will provide a foundation to build on,” said project manager Kristin Calkins.

The full presentation is here:

https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/transportation/transpofuture/arlington-transportation-future_advisory-group-meeting-11_presentation.pdf

We’ll see how these general priorities translate into concrete strategies and actions.

At the meeting, each of the Commission representatives also had an opportunity to present their Commissions’ suggested strategies for the 23 draft “policies” presented earlier.

I dutifully repeated (yet again) the FNRC’s two top strategies:

— Repurposing some of the space now devoted to cars by using it instead for people, nature, and alternative forms of transportation, such as biking.

☐ Achieving significant increases in safe, reliable, and accessible transit, walking, and biking. Giving people more (and more desirable) travel alternatives will then make it possible to use more of the currently paved surfaces for nature and people, and to reduce vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT).

I emphasized that the messaging around these strategies should hammer home the idea that such changes will increase freedom for everyone (especially by providing more safe, reliable options for non-car travel)— which would actually include more freedom for drivers in the form of reduced traffic congestion and of roads that are safer, less stressful and more attractive.

But there wasn’t any substantive response or discussion.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (TSAA) are having discussions with EcoAction Arlington about new changes to the Tree Canopy Program. With the anticipated closing later this year of the White House Native Tree Nursery in Luray, VA, Tree Stewards were taken by surprise when a new vendor was selected and a new process was implemented that will affect the opportunity for TSAA volunteers provide quality control over the selection of trees for planting in Arlington. TSAA and EcoAction are working on a way to improve understanding between the two organizations in the future.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

In an effort to improve the lines of communication with volunteers supporting the Tree Canopy Program, Elenor Hodges and Kisha Sogunro with EcoAction Arlington are proposing to hold a regular tree planting information session prior to each planting season. The objective is to make sure that there is an open line of communication between volunteers, partner organizations and the administrators supporting the program.

The need for more direct communication became apparent when the previous supplier of trees, White House Natives, notified the contractor for the Tree Canopy Program, Davey Trees, that they would be closing this Spring. Davey Trees identified a new supplier, Still Pond Nursery in Millington, MD, but the news took everyone by surprise, especially given the previous long and productive relationship with White House Natives.

We will share this with FNRC members once we have a meeting time.

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

ARMN has convened a team of volunteers to begin surveying school properties. The team will be trained by Vincent V. and Jennifer S., and the goal is to identify places to plant trees and to treat invasives on school properties.

At our last chapter meeting on 1 March, ARMN honored Cliff Fairweather for his decades of service to the community. Cliff has trained virtually every ARMN member and many know him through his work as a naturalist and director of the Long Branch Nature Center.

ARMN is also starting plans to lead members of the public in walks in Arlington parks to participate in the City Nature Challenge in late April.

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 School is finalizing street tree planting.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Nothing new to report

New business

Caroline Haynes suggested an overview of approved state bills in April, the Green Building Incentive Program. Josh Handler requested an update on the leaf blower program. Noreen spoke about the National Park Service Vista Clearing program.

Meeting adjourned at **9:09 PM**.