

---

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

5/21/25

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:03 PM** on 5/22/25.

**PRESENT (IN-PERSON)** Phil Klingelhofer, Bill Browning, Neal Hunter, Bob Benson, Steve Sockwell, Noreen Hannigan, Josh Handler

**PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)** Steve Bernheisel, Nia Bagley, Jenn Hazen

**ABSENT** Caroline Haynes

**STAFF** Vincent Verweij (DPR), Melissa Gildea (DPR), Jennifer Soles (DPR)

**MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES**

Introductions

*Public comments*

Dr. Bernie Berne spoke about Dominion Energy tree policies. Dr. Berne suggested the policies could create significant meadow areas along the W&OD corridor. Dr. Berne contrasted the W&OD trail expansion with Nova Parks' opposition to tree clearing by Dominion. Dr. Berne suggested planting common milkweed in new planted areas.

*Dominion Energy tree policies*

Gaston Araoz Riveros presented with his coworkers on Dominion Energy tree policies. Justin Stadler spoke about federal requirements for clearance within and outside of their Rights-of-way (ROW). Dominion uses Integrated Vegetation Management which controls non-natives and promotes desirable natives by mechanical, manual, and herbicide methods. They primarily target woody invasives on the federal invasives list. This fall, they will treat all invasives for a 2-year cycle. They are planning pollinator plots in areas where they have cleared heavily in partnership with NOVA parks and maintaining for 2-years with NOVA Parks taking over the maintenance after that time. Deon Wright discussed outreach and signing.

Discussion included (answers provided after the - dash):

- Steve Sockwell asked about:
  - Who is managing the Integrated Vegetation Management program – Supervisor of forestry with forestry coordinators and forestry specialists. Staff patrol the transmission lines and identify hazards, prescribe herbicide. 5 forestry regions, 16 foresters covering Virginia, some of West Virginia and North Carolina.
- Noreen Hannigan asked about whether there is any input requested from the public from their program. – Dominion said they would work with NOVA Parks on an MOU, which will be

communicated with the public. More public communication will be developed beyond this. Dominion is open for feedback.

- Bob Benson asked about
  - The current MOU with NOVA Parks, and why it is being changed. – Recent outages led Dominion to go outside of the spirit of the MOU. The MOU did not explicitly preclude Dominion from removing trees.
  - What changed about the situation that made the trees a hazard now – Compliance issue. Previously, large trees were kept in the ROW, but now compliance is being followed more closely.
- Josh Handler asked about getting a link to the regulations.
- Neal Hunter asked about making the MOUs available online. – Not currently available for the public.
- Phil Klingelhofer spoke about protecting the tree canopy in Arlington County, and making sure any communications is sensitive to these concerns. Noreen Hannigan added that trees provide other ecosystem values to meadows to be recognized and specifically called out exposure of Four Mile Run to erosion and flooding, as well as expose the water to direct sunlight and heat.
- Josh Handler asked about other pockets of right-of-way in the County, and what policies are in place there. - This is managed by the Distribution forestry section of Dominion Energy, not the Transmission section, so they did not have the answer at this meeting.
- Neal Hunter asked about established policies to be shared and published. – Dominion will share policies and NERC compliance.
- Noreen Hannigan asked whether some of this work was driven by increased demand for power from Data Centers. – Unrelated, mostly focused on NERC compliance.

Gaston spoke at the end to close out the discussion and offered to bring the Distribution section to the Commission and answer any questions.

#### *Invasive Plant Program Update – Jennifer Soles*

Jennifer Soles presented on the Invasive plant program.

Arlington County Parks 60% of 543 acres of our natural areas are under management and has been working on this for 20 years, with the last 10 years. She spoke about maintaining progress, and moving to more heavily impacted areas, and how that affected long range planning for invasive species removal. The additional funding has allowed progress beyond maintenance of properties which were previously treated.

Natural Resources Invasive Management is also working on the Early Detection Rapid Response program with plants and insects and supports policies restricting sales of invasive plants. The County Board adopted Forestry and Natural Resources plan informs and supports the direction of the program.

Discussion:

- Steve Sockwell asked about how plants will be labeled invasive when the law to label invasives goes into effect – This is still under discussion.
- Bob Benson spoke about his efforts with the bill passage and warned against just one sign in a store instead of individual signage for each plant.
- Josh Handler thanked Jen, and asked

- How much more funding would get through all the parks sooner. – Consistency is better than spikes. Maintenance will be faster with more funding, but 100% of all land might not be attainable. 85-90% likely with consistent funding.
- How can small parks be added to the list? RIP events can help. People can reach out to the invasives program. Areas with tree risk from vines could be managed by forestry.
- Has the County written letters to nurseries and plant sources to voluntarily add signs to invasive plants? - Not yet. Nurseries have been labeling native plants
- Bob Benson spoke about regional initiatives on tree canopy, and how invasives were mentioned a lot during interviews with this initiative. Bob suggested invasives are a good “bang for the buck”, and asked how more funding can be found for invasive programs. Could it be from the private sector or with other collaborations? – Jen mentioned the potential for an “invasive co-op”, similar to a solar co-op. Bob suggested to get more collaboration with businesses and other partners. – Jen suggested a partnership with VDOT may be in the future.

#### *Tree Canopy Fund payment update – Vincent Verweij*

Vincent spoke about an update to the Tree Canopy Fund. Set up in 2007 for tree planting mitigation when developers could not plant on the developed property. The contribution was \$2400 per tree, but did not change since 2008. TCF has planted 3,800 trees. Tree Stewards did a survey of these trees (last year?) and found that 80% of Tree Canopy are doing well. A market rate adjustment is necessary, with a change to \$4000.

#### *Notable Tree Subcommittee – Vincent Verweij*

Vincent is asking for volunteers from the commission to look at forms to determine which trees should be considered notable. Neal Hunter volunteered. David Howell and Phil Klingelhofer offered to help.

#### *Planning Letters*

#### *April minutes*

Jenn Hazen asked to have her name be noted as “Jenn Hazen” or “Jennifer Hazen” in the April Minutes.

Approved with Steve Sockwell abstaining, as Steve was not present at the April meeting.

#### *Staff Reports*

Vincent mentioned deer and circuit maintenance. Melissa mentioned the Bill Thomas Award and Structural Pruning corps.

## Forestry:

### **Maintenance:**

- With bud break, tree maintenance requests are increasing again. Some wind storms have caused after-hours calls.
- Circuit tree maintenance by contractor is wrapping up in Barcroft, Alcova Heights, and Arlington Heights. Penrose and Glencarlyn should be next. The tree crew is working on Columbia Heights, Arlington View, and Foxcroft Heights.

- Staff met with residents at Parkland Condominium on S Arlington Mill Drive to discuss the Reuse of Wood and Snag Policy. Residents expressed concerns about the debris and logs left by the contractor, which were in compliance with the policy.

### **Planning:**

#### **Long-term planning**

- Staff is working on developing a plan for the Low Density Residential study.

#### **Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)**

- In review:
  - 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 met with the Inn at Rosslyn staff to discuss on-site tree canopy cover. The applicant is revising plans to show appropriate canopy cover
- Approved
  - Staff met with DES inspectors to address an LDA and Tree Preservation violation at Barcroft apartments project RA-. Two white oaks of good sizes 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.

### **DES**

- Staff worked on comments for a complicated project of several blocks at Wilson Boulevard and 10<sup>th</sup> St N. The design on this was originally a sidewalk widening for a couple of blocks. It has changed dramatically in scope and now includes all intersections and roadways, and the undergrounding of all utilities. We were able to clear the Urban Forestry comments, although comments from many other disciplines remain open. We are retaining all but three trees, which were critically injured by a previous project. We were able to get soil volume for the trees as well, although less than usual, given the age of the project. It has been through several 100% cycles and then back due to the scope change.
- Staff went to the Northern Neck with Empire Landscape to tag trees for Army Navy Drive. The trees were too deep in the pots, undersize per specifications, and they didn't have what the material specified. They were potted in pine bark, a medium which creates transplant issues due to soil drying. Staff tagged scarlet oaks after asking Empire if they would modify the planting sequence to remove most of the loose bark and they agreed. While there staff noticed that some oaks had some bark bubbling which had been noticed on Willow Oaks in the county, which may be a fungal canker.
- Staff has been working with DES and Ardent construction to do root excavation at Carlin Spring Road and N Greenbriar street. This excavation had to be expanded when large roots were discovered under the sidewalk for the entire LOD.

### **Parks**

- The Walter Reed Pickleball Facility started construction.
- Jennie Dean Park phase 2 was discussed for the 30% design
- Staff reviewed the plans for Rock Spring Park Pedestrian Bridge Replacements

- Staff reviewed the plans of the Alcova 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.

#### By-right projects

- Staff is working on a tree protection violation at 2029 N Kenmore St, where a small hemlock was removed without permission.

#### Federal

- The Defense Access Road near the air force memorial is completing construction. Trees are being inspected in late April for planting.

#### Tree Planting:

- Watering is commencing for newly planted trees.
- Staff are continuing to identify tree planting locations for Fall 2025 season
- Staff are continuing to respond to tree planting requests.
- Staff assisted with Arbor Day activities. Arbor Day went well, despite delays by some attendees. 2 trees were planted on Abingdon Elementary grounds, and much was learned about the attention span of young kids.
- Staff communicated and confirmed with Commemorative Tree applicants.

#### Outreach/volunteering:

- Staff met with Tree Stewards to discuss the structural pruning program, to get feedback, and to discuss the new reporting forms.

#### Other:

- The tree crew received training from Arbormaster on safety, proper pruning, and operations.
- Frank Vaughn retired from the tree crew. He had been with us since 1998. Hiring his replacement should start soon.

## Natural Resources:

Deer management project: staff is awaiting the drone count that should arrive the end of this month from Steward Green; Waiting on random locations from our GIS folks for the set up of deer browse surveys; working on specifics of deer meat donation (testing, processing, distribution) with both Virginia DWR and our food security staff; Waiting on end of year finds to purchase our GPS platform and deer fencing for deer enclosures.

We also are back to having our weekly volunteer work days at the native plant nursery (Tuesdays from 2-4pm). Have completed testing a new flailing mower with adjustable height levels and distribution of wheel weight that will be used for our meadow mowings. Working with the Virginia Bluebird Society and ARMN on inventories of our bird boxes, repairs, reporting, and maintenance of them in our parks. Planning final plant rescue at Gulf Branch tied to stream project; spring invasive sweeps of parks well underway, and all of 4MR swept by volunteers searching for EDRR fumewort; spring volunteer events well underway, with more than a 1000 native plants planted this week alone.

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

#### Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

At the May 5 quarterly NRJAG meeting, we had presentations by representatives of the City Parks Alliance, the city of Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation, and MIG Consulting on the use of natural infrastructure for stormwater management. They provided some valuable resources for

communities working towards increased reliance on green infrastructure for stormwater management. The Raleigh examples were especially relevant to Arlington. Here is a [link to the meeting recording](#).

#### Park and Recreation Commission (Neal Hunter)

No report

#### Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The May 15 PSMP-IAC meeting covered an overview of the progress to date on implementation of the Public Spaces Master Plan, and a kick-off to the five-year refresh of the plan. Given that the recommendations in the existing plan are still quite relevant, this process is expected to focus on some key updates such as benchmarking, inventory of assets, equity considerations, level of service and land acquisition criteria. The update is expected to take 12-18 months and will include a statistically valid survey to compare with the previous survey.

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

Steve Sockwell:

I attended a SPRC on May 1 for this large project. By way of background, the applicant proposes 3 tall residential towers of 23, 27, and 29 stories on the 2.3 A. plot in Rosslyn, directly across from Gateway Park.

This was the second SPRC meeting. In the first I criticized the applicant for not providing sufficient transition from the green expanse of the park to their buildings. The applicant responded, satisfactorily to my eye, with a concept called “the green thread” The concept is to pull some of the landscaping features of the park over to their side of Langston Blvd. The design features some green plantings on the facade of their building facing the park and a better streetscape design with street trees and other bushes and plants in relatively large, discrete areas surrounded by low concrete walls located between the sidewalk and Langston Blvd. Previously, the applicant had committed to green planting on the facade of the south-facing building along 19th Street, so the new design along Langston Blvd. provides some overall continuity. In general the applicant is stressing a commitment to use of biophilic principles. Specifically, the Rosslyn Sector Plan requires 15% tree canopy coverage; the applicant is providing 18.7% coverage.

Two other minor points outside our venue. In the first SPRC I urged the applicant to consider providing some public space, even though the Sector Plan doesn’t require any, on the grounds that Gateway Park will have a lot of public use and some of the public will be near the project. However, the SPRC Chair disagreed with me because the applicant plans a landscaped garden on the sixth floor for private use that will be visible from the street, enhancing the overall green effect for the public. Since I had no real basis for insisting on public space I didn’t push the point. Lastly, in terms of community controversy, almost all the comments focused on the need for pedestrians to be able to get across Langston Blvd. safely. There is an elevated pedestrian bridge there now; some wanted it retained (removal is planned) others wanted it removed.

Caroline Haynes:

#### River House

After a several month hiatus, the third SPRC meeting on the River House was held on May 19, with the next two meetings scheduled for June and July respectively. The revised submission focuses on three development sections of the Phased Development Site Plan, rather than the entire project. The three sections include lower rise developments of 4-story townhouses, a 7-story multi-family housing structure, and a larger, 7-story mixed use building. The higher density proposed for the site as part of the Pentagon City Sector Plan is essentially being put off to a later date. The shorter buildings result in a larger footprint, which encroaches on the anticipated open space and green ribbon. The larger footprint also encroaches on a proposed 60 foot forested buffer along the western edge of the property, reduced to a 32 buffer in this plan.

Neighbors along Arlington Ridge continue to oppose the taller buildings and increased density that is anticipated in a future site plan process.

#### Shirlington Streetscape

A minor site plan amendment is scheduled to go before the County Board at the June meeting. (Minor site plan amendments are not subject to Planning Commission review.) An information session on May 20 summarized the proposed changes which focus on reduced on-street parking, expanded central plaza and sidewalks for pedestrians and dining space, new lighting and expanded planter boxes for additional landscaping. Most importantly for FNRC is that they are working to maintain the mature trees (mostly willow oaks) that line the streets and the median on Campbell Avenue.

#### Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

#### Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

#### Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (TSAA) were honored to have received the Bill Thomas Award for 2024. Many thanks to Vincent Verweij for nominating TSAA! See this ArlNow article for more details. <https://www.arlingtonva.us/About-Arlington/Newsroom/Articles/2025/2024-Bill-Thomas-Park-Volunteer-Award>

Three Tree Stewards are serving on FNRC's Tree Canopy Fund Sub-committee, which is tasked with making recommendations on future goals and funding for the Tree Canopy Fund program. The Sub-committee held its first meeting on May 20. Recommendations are due to the FNRC by the end of this summer.

In other news, Tree Stewards assisted at giving out tree information and conducting tree walks at Columbia Gardens Cemetery's Spring Fling.

In addition, habitat restoration and invasives management events took place in Fort Scott Park, Dominion Hills (at Four Mile Run), and Grandma's Creek.

#### Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan and David Howell)

The **Tree Canopy Fund Sub-Committee** held its first meeting on May 20, 2025. In attendance were: Chair Kate Donohue (former FNRC and Tree Steward), Eleanor Hodges (EcoAction), Vincent Verweij (Arlington Urban Forester), Aileen Winqvist (County Stormwater DES), Jill Barker (Parks & Rec Commission), Joan McIntyre (C2E2 Commission), David Howell (FNRC), Nora Palmatier (Tree Steward and former FNRC), and Noreen Hannigan (Tree Steward and FNRC).

We discussed the history of the Tree Canopy Fund, its funding sources and how it was funded and administered in the past. We also went over what has worked or not worked and the current funding situation. Many questions came up and there is much to consider. The Sub-Committee brainstormed about future funding sources and the scope of the mission going forward.

The Sub-committee will meet again on June 16 to refine goals and identify available resources.

A report is due to the FNRC by the end of this summer.

#### Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

Mr. Justin Corwin (Safety Program Coordinator, DES) and Mr. Ben Baldwin (DES) briefed the Committee and answered questions on safety upgrades to County vehicles. They said the County has prioritized proactive features that prevent accidents. New features and technologies include side underride guards on certain trucks, 360-degree/over-head view cameras on vehicles such as trash trucks and mulch trucks, side-object detection, and autonomous emergency braking. In addition, electric vehicles are equipped with features that allow them to collect data on speed and unsafe driving habits (such as hard braking, tail gating, lane departures, etc.), which is resulting in savings on repairs and reduction in accidents. These features make drivers more mindful, and they also enable management to identify drivers who exhibit a pattern of unsafe driving habits or and re-train them. On a positive note, data from these technologies can also be used to exonerate County drivers who were not at fault in an accident.

Mr. Brian Shelton (Transportation Planner, DES) briefed the Committee on the work being done on the performance metrics from the 2019 Bike Element of the Master Transportation Plan. Mr. Shelton went over an extensive list of targets (such as reducing crash rates, increasing bike commuting numbers, providing more bike parking at transit stations, and expanding access and use of bike-share bikes).

An announcement was made for Bike To Work Day (which was held on May 15th).

#### Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

The next urban forest roundtable will be held on July 31. More information will be upcoming.

#### 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)

APS is continuing to work with Jennifer Soles on invasive species.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Vacant)

No report

*New Business*

Josh Handler asked about comprehensive plan updates, lot coverage, and updates to landscape requirements, and stormwater utility management fee.

Josh asked for DES to present on the stormwater utility fee, and how it has practically impacted the community.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.