MEETING MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL
ARLINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING ON

11/20/25

The **FORESTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:00 **PM**

PRESENT (IN PERSON)	N/A
PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)	Noreen Hannigan, Caroline Haynes, John Carey, Josh Handler, Phil Klingelhofer, Jenn Hazen, Alex Sanders, Steve Sockwell, David Howell, Steven Bernheisel, Lisa Marcellus, Bob Benson, Nia Bagley
ABSENT	Neal Hunter
STAFF	Vincent Verweij (DPR), Jose Portuhondo (DPR), John Marlin (DPR), Steven Bernheisel (APS)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments
Anne Bodine presented on a project that is being developed next to her home. Anne stated that the construction is very close to her lot, causing the workers to trespass into her lot, due to lack of space. She spoke about many construction projects taking place around her property and the associated noise pollution. There were no onsite trees that were removed, and some tree conservation took place in the back of the property. Anne Called for a limit on lot development to mitigate the concerns of the community.

Deer Management Update – John Marlin

John Marlin presented on the deer management program. Questions followed:

Josh Handler- Asked what type of education will be presented to communities next to the sharpshooting? John responded - It will be the moment that the county can receive information about why deer are being managed and how it will impact parks. People will be able to sign up for further information about the process of deer management. And this includes public engagement.

Jenn Hazen – Asked about if there is research about people using meat- AFAC responded to DPR that they are going based on need and to try to produce the public with some information about how the meat could be cooked. John said the form would be in ground meat.

Caroline Haynes asked about already dead deer? The deer management project does not cover any dead deer found on public or private property, and when called, animal welfare claimed they did not

manage dead deer. Vincent Verweij shared that there is a public page which outlines what to do with dead animals in Arlington County.

Green Building Incentive Policy – Caroline Haynes
The FNRC was not involved in the new Green Building Incentive Policy.

The Green Building Incentive does not focus on tree canopy coverage, but it focuses on other focuses such as energy, dark skies and bird friendly glass.

Motion to write a letter to Green Building Incentive Policy- Motion passed.

Parks and Recreation Commission Letter on Invasive Plants

Caroline Haynes outlined the letter from the PRC to the County Board, which asked for more invasive plant management funding.

The PRC letter was focused on natural capital and as long term prospects and argued this funding should be in capital improvement funding.

Discussion followed on:

- The value of invasive plant treatment
- Treating invasive species management like a capital investment
- Calculating the funds needed accurately
- Concern about writing too many letters to the Board
- Public concern about spraying chemicals- Public engagement can be beneficial.
- Support for the letter
- Balance of funding for park renovations compared to the cost of this program
- Timing of providing input.
- Question about where natural resiliency CIP funding is going if it is not being spent.
- Invasive management should be possible in the county since it is such a small area.
- Spend most of this month writing this letter to submit it next month. This way, the subject remains relevant.

River House Letter

Slipping the Landbay into 3, and they are reaching the canopy coverage targets for 3 of the buildings but not meeting it in one of the proposed buildings.

Building C1- Is not meeting canopy target, the commission will send a letter asking for canopy coverage requirements to not be pushed back to later phases as it will be difficult for them to meet all the requirements.

The applicant is claiming that it is meeting the sector plan requirement, but they must confirm this claim with proper tree preservation and propose landscaping plan.

Leaf Blower Policy Letter

The Commission voted unanimously to pass the Leaf Blower Policy Letter.

2025 Year End Report and 2026 Work Plan

Caroline Haynes spoke about ensuring the work plan follows the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan.

October minutes and Staff Reports

Motion- Passed

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

Bob Benson Noted that 197 trees are being removed due to the Gulf Branch Stream Restoration project.

Gateway tree in Lyon Park - Being removed with circuit maintenance project.

A discussion followed on urban wastewood reuse.

Bob Benson noted- Consider redesigning the access point to minimize impact of the Gulf Branch Stream Restoration project.

Vincent reported on Quanika Stover's promotion to urban forester, who will be managing DES projects starting December.

Making sure that tree conservation is included early in the stage of planning and development.

Progress was made to reduce the overall number of trees being removed at the Gulf Branch Stream Restoration project from over 300 to 197.

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Staff provided an update on the implementation of the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan. FNRC will receive the annual update on FNRP implementation at the December 2015 meeting.

We also discussed the Park and Recreation Commission budget guidance letter on natural capital and invasive species management, and agreed that FNRC and C2E2 would bring this issue to their respective commissions. This is on the FNRC agenda for tonight's meeting.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Staff and consultants are preparing to send out the statistically valid survey to a representative cross section of residents. This data will be compared with that gathered for the PSMP in 2019 to help inform updates to the plan.

Planning Activities/SPRC

Caroline Haynes:

Low Residential Study
A second public engagement session was held at the Trades Building on Nov. 13. Staff have engaged in a wide range of outreach efforts to inform residents of the process and seek feedback on key issues.

Bob Benson:

Jenn and I attended the first Site Plan Review Committee meeting for this project, located at 2031 North Woodrow Street, behind the Lee Heights Shops. The plan is to demolish the existing garden apartments and construct a 10-story residential building with 249 affordable housing units. The first meeting did not address trees and landscaping. The plan calls for street trees on three sides and the conservation of some mature trees along a protected "greenway" on North 20th Road. The surrounding civic associations expressed strong opposition to the building height, saying they would accept a 7-story affordable housing building on that site. Parking, traffic, and pedestrian safety were other major issues. Jenn and I will cover the next SPRC meeting on December 8th, where trees will be discussed.

Non-Legislative Actions Paper

As we discussed last month, I will be talking with Susan Cunningham on December 3rd to get her sense of whether the County Board is interested in following up on this project further and, if so, how to go about that productively. In the meantime, FNRC is following up on some individual items (e.g., Josh's letter about neighborhood notification, Bill and my follow-up on DPR/APS collaboration -- see the next item). I'll report back on what Susan has to say.

DPR/APS Collaboration Ideas Paper

Bill expressed interest in working with me on this. He and I met to strategize. We are starting with a couple new conversations with some key contacts who work closely with schools to get a sense of how best to move forward.

Tree Bill

Del. Patrick Hope intends to reintroduce his tree bill, which would give localities like Arlington flexibility to set more stringent tree replacement standards if they choose to do so (among other expanded powers). His bill is consistent with the FNRC's legislative priorities for the coming session. I'm working with him on this in an individual capacity, along with the lobbying team at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Bill Richardson, President of the Donaldson Run Civic Association. Given the results of the recent election, Patrick is optimistic that a better tree bill than the one that was vetoed by Gov. Youngkin the past two years will make it into law.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

John asked for input on the Transportation Plan. The commission found there was not enough emphasis on trees and natural resources, and wanted to take that back to the planners.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Jen Soles invited Tree Stewards to come to Gulf Branch Park to help build a deer exclosure and plant native plants inside (of the exclosure, that is, not inside the nature center).

Invasive removals and habitat restoration events took place at Grandma's Creek, Fort Scott Park, and Dominion Hills.

Talks are underway to hold a Tree Steward training class for Fall 2026.

And FYI, Kirsten Conrad's vacant position has been filled. The new Extension Agent is named Leslie Fillmore and she should be starting in the next week or two.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

EcoAction is running a Tree Canop**y** Fund planting for Spring 2026. The application period is open now and closes January 14: https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Sustainability/Trees/Plant-Trees/Planting-on-Private-Land/Grants-to-Plant-or-Maintain-Trees-on-Private-Property **Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria** will be helping the program by doing site visits for homeowners who need advice on right-tree-right-place questions, as well as visiting the nursery in Luray to select the trees.

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The **Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)** met on November 3, 2025. The police department had been invited to send a representative to answer committee members' questions, but it turned out no one was available, so that agenda item has been deferred to a later meeting.

Members then returned to the issue that arose in October, namely the impression that the BAC has no role with the County Manager's office and would like to have a way of communicating with the Board. ARLNow ran an article after the October meeting and reported on the Committee's frustrations. (Back in March, County Manager Mark Schwartz appeared at a BAC meeting and told the Committee not to focus on specific recommendations about roads and intersections, etc., but provide bigger-picture input on what standards and policies the County should employ. To get guidance, the BAC then invited DES Deputy Director Hui Wang to talk about what policies the committee should weigh in on. Ms. Wang suggested the BAC track project notices and use Report a Problem on the County's site, attend open-house events, and advocate for changes in certain state laws that are currently tying the County's hands.

While there is talk within the BAC about whether it should give up and disband, some members said they would support more participation in Open House and Public Engagement events. There was also talk of enlisting a representative from the Transportation Commission to join the BAC and help get its input elevated to the Board level. The chairperson proclaimed that the BAC isn't giving up on efforts to be more influential in County matters.

Mr. Mike Hanna, BAC's rep to the Transportation Master Plan subcommittee, updated the group on changes since the last meeting. He said pedestrians would be given priority, and it is still unclear whether bicycles or transit (buses, etc.) will get second vs. third priority. He showed several updated maps and said the County had accepted a good amount of input from the subcommittee.

Mr. Elwyn Gonzales (Transportation staff liaison) was asked to update the BAC on where things stand with improvements to the Custis Trail. He said a lot of issues were raised in the study phase, so it will take time to address them all. He believes that there are plans to repave some sections, but budget is an issue. They have applied to obtain a regional-funding grant and are waiting on a response.

And on a personal note, with the FNRC Chair's approval, I will be resigning as the FNRC's liaison to the BAC at the end of this year, but I gave my assurance to the BAC that I would notify them when I hear of issues that arise involving bicycles and natural-resource projects.

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)

C2E2 is focused on adaptive reuse. Lisa Marcellus said adaptive reuse projects have less information for the public, and the Commission is looking at getting more details.

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

Steve spoke about coordination between APS and the commission.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Fillmore)
No report

New Business

Josh Handler asked about the Comprehensive Plan. David Howell spoke about the current process.

Bob Benson and Josh Handler expressed concern about the end product from this process.

Nia Bagley provided additional context from the Planning Commission.

Bob Benson responded to Anne Bodine's concerns and seeing impacts from current building practices on the landscape. Josh Handler spoke about Low Residential Study in context with development.

Caroline Haynes introduced Connor Goolsby and Ariana Olldashi.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 PM.