

Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

7:00 p.m., October 28, 2021

Microsoft Teams conference meeting

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Guests: Brooke Alexander, Anne Bodine, Mary Glass

Phil, John, Kate, Kit, Nat, Bill, Caroline, Josh, Evelio, David, Steve, Noreen

Staff: Richard Tucker, Vincent Verweij, Steven Bernheisel, Matt Ladd

Public comments

Mary Glass spoke about action on Forest and Natural Resources Studies and context of budget, along with new initiatives.

Anne Bodine spoke about Missing Middle and affordability. Concerned about more teardown from the plan.

Missing Middle Housing Study – Richard Tucker and Kellie Brown

A letter was proposed to be drafted by Commissioners Handler and Norland

Tree education and Outreach – Brooke Alexander

No action

Deer Study Response – Phil Klingelhofer

A motion was approved to send a letter, written by Commissioner Carey, for review at the November meeting.

Commission Infrastructure (Work Plan, Annual Report, Memberships)

Staff Reports

Maintenance:

- The tree crew is continuing to work on responding to requests from wind storms and regular tree inspections following from those events.

- We are preparing for snow season, and had a training session on snowplow driving for the season. Much of the tree crew helps DES clearing streets during the winter events.
- Greentree, our tree maintenance contractor, is adding staff to their crews, to address a higher contract request load from forestry staff. This will likely continue, as we kick off our preventive pruning project in the winter.

Planning:

(Projects with high impact or high opportunity highlighted in **bold**)

Long-term planning

- Staff is reviewing draft strategic directions for the Forestry and Natural Resources plan.
- The Pentagon City study is advancing, with a significant component on biophilic design and tree canopy targets. Opportunities to comment are still available until October 31 here: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/Land-Use/Pentagon-City-Planning-Study>
- Staff is working on developing draft canopy targets for the Langston Blvd planning area.

Site plans (special exception and by-right)

New and under review:

- **Pen Place** – Staff is reviewing resubmissions of this large site plan. Provide feedback at the following link: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Site-Plan/Pen-Place-2021>
- Courthouse Landmark – designs are being finalized. A street tree strip along Uhle St has a conflict with fire lane requirements that is being worked out.

Approved and/or under construction:

- Metropolitan Park 6/7/8 – Demolition of existing structures and hardscape has started.
- WETA building – An addition to the building is being constructed
- Virginia Hospital Center – Street trees and on-site planting is proceeding.

DES

- Staff is working together to create a reforestation area in the RPA on this project currently home to a parking lot.

Parks

- Thomas Jefferson park's upper field is about to be renovated.
- Bluemont Tennis courts – Staff was presented with alternatives for this site. Significant conservation of existing native trees and planting is proposed in the alternatives. Alternatives will be

shared with the public soon. See the following link for more information:

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Uncategorised/Upper-Bluemont-Project>

- Zitkala Sa park – Trees were planted. The site was walked, and a punchlist created for trees that need to be replaced.
- Bluemont Trail repaving – This should commence in early November, to repave the trail. There is very low tree impact, and no removals needed.

By-right projects

- LDA2.0 projects are coming in slowly. There was a large submission of plans before the LDA2.0 deadline, which is being processed by staff right now.

Schools

- No major updates.

Federal

- A new comfort station is being permitted at the Iwo Jima memorial site. Tree impact is low, and new trees will be planted.

Tree Planting:

- Trees for the fall planting will be inspected at the plant broker's nursery the second week in November. We expect planting to start shortly afterwards.

Personnel:

- The forestry team is excited to start building back the team again, with team members promoting to urban foresters and senior tree maintenance workers, and bringing in new folks to fill vacancies.
- We will be seeing Melissa Gildea promoted to urban forester from her tree planting coordinator position. She will be handling tree planting, while we fill her former position, and she will transition to work on preventive pruning, DES projects, and our outreach programs with notable trees, among other things
- Diego Murcia-Rojas is being promoted from our tree crew, to help kickstart the preventive pruning program, improve maintenance, and handle right-of-way reviews.
- Jose Portuhondo will join us from New York City, and will be starting with single-family home review, parks projects, and site plan review.

Other:

- The specimen blackgum at 4508 6th Street South went into severe decline recently, and was approved for removal after review by staff.

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Jen Soles, PNR Natural Resources Specialist, provided an update on the recently adopted authority granted to local jurisdictions to enact bamboo ordinances and the steps that would need to be taken in Arlington before such an ordinance might be considered. I provided a recap of an effort within the Plant Nova Natives campaign to create model weed ordinance language to allow native plant landscapes, and the resulting resolution adopted by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission to support this effort. Fairfax County and Herndon have taken action to expand the use of native plants in the landscape.

We also heard a presentation from Park Area Manager Lyndell Core on Arlington's plan to transition away from gas powered landscaping equipment toward electric and battery powered landscaping tools.

Public Spaces Master plan Implementation Advisory Group

The October meeting focused on an extensive field utilization study that staff has been working on to clarify and optimize the use of existing athletic fields, per recommendations in the PSMP.

Park and Recreation Commission (David Howell)

The 10/26 meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission had—unusually—only one agenda item. This was a presentation on the Landbay-C development in Crystal City. That project had been approved by the County Board in June, but there were still questions about the linear trapezoidal water feature in the plaza between the two buildings on the site. For various reasons, the applicant is now seeking an administrative change, which can be approved by staff without CB consideration, to convert most of the plaza space to curving pathways lined with plantings and boulders, and limiting the water feature to a splash fountain at the west end. The slides and video can be found on the PRC web page.

Planning Activities Notification (Steve Sockwell)

Marbella apartments: This is a large redevelopment of two existing APAH properties located at 1300 and 1305 N. Pierce Street in Radnor-Ft. Myer Heights. The County Board already provided additional exceptions for increased density (up to 12 stories) since all of the new units will be dedicated affordable housing. Interestingly, there was some pushback by Planning Commissioners to the loss of some units as a result of the modifications made by the applicant to respond to neighbors concerns about the large mass of the building, by stepping back the facade of the buildings to better taper to the surrounding neighbors. There is

significant tree canopy on site, including several really large oaks and some tree canopy fund trees, most of which will be removed with the proposed building design. One modification to the original plan calls for increasing tree plantings on the northern side of the complex to create a wider and more densely planted buffer.

Langston Blvd. Planning (Caroline Haynes):

No updates

Tree Stewards (Kate Donohue)

Tree Stewards have been busy with tree-planting activities in the area, including an all-day event in Arlington with a crew of volunteers at Brandmore Castle coming up on Nov. 13.

Tree Steward volunteers manned two "Tree Giveaways" (Oct. 23 and Oct. 26) where residents picked up the free trees they had ordered online. Tree Stewards were on site to hand out planting and care information and answer questions about specific species.

Tree Stewards will be holding a session on "How to Do A Tree Walk" for Master Naturalists on Saturday, Nov. 6, in the Westover area. Nora Palmatier is leading the event.

New Member Training will begin in January 2022. The application period is open until Dec. 31, 2021.

Tree Canopy Fund (Kate Donohue)

No report

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) met on Monday, Oct. 4, 2021.

An election was held for a new Chair Person to replace Elizabeth Kiker, who is facing an extended recovery period from an injury. Elizabeth will remain on the committee, but no longer be Chair. The new Chair is Cynthia Powell (formerly Vice Chair). A new Vice Chair has not been determined. (No one has volunteered yet.)

Topics discussed included:

Vision Zero and how that is being considered in school zones

Automating pedestrian crossing signals. The committee was not happy that the County changed its covid-period automatic settings (no touching of buttons) back to manual ("beg button") settings without consulting with either the Pedestrian Adv. Committee or the Bicycle Adv.

Committee or asking for public input. The BAC wants more information on how the county decides what policies are handled as "operational decisions" vs. seeking public input.

The BAC would like there to be signage indicating a phone number to call around construction sites when people encounter problems being able to walk or bike through the zone.

Questions as to how trail lighting is maintained -- discussion about which trails the county monitors/maintains vs. which ones are monitored by National Park Service or NOVA Parks. Members had concerns that requests to Dominion for repairs don't get addressed and whether the County is paying Dominion for services that aren't being rendered. Some members were asking Leah Gerber (County Rep.) whether the County should refuse to pay Dominion when lights aren't repaired, but Leah wasn't sure how those costs could be singled out and withheld from Dominion under the work agreement.

Discussion about the inequities in bike paths and bike lanes between affluent neighborhoods and less affluent neighborhoods. Members have noticed that the bike lanes on the roads in South Arlington are in much poorer condition than in North Arlington, and that South Arlington doesn't have many "Comfortable Routes" to publicize. There was talk of organizing some recon rides and approaching the County about creating equity for bikers in areas of South Arlington.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vacant)

No report

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (Phil Klingelhofer)

No meeting was held.

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Shawn Norton)

No report

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jim McGlone)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Jim Meikle)

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Kirsten Ann Conrad)

No report

9:00 PM New Business

Commissioners Haynes and Sockwell mentioned they attended the Pen Place tour.

Commissioner Handler asked about invasive plant treatment on Nova Parks property, bike trail expansion, and Arlington Blvd beautification funding.

Next Meeting: **November 18, 2021**