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

10/23/25

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

PRESENT (IN PERSON)	Caroline Haynes, David Howell, Bill Browning, Bob Benson, Jenn Hazen, John Carey, Steve Sockwell, Lisa Marcellus, Neal Hunter, Noreen Hannigan, Alex Sanders
PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)	Josh Handler, Nia Bagley
ABSENT	Phil Klingelhofer, Elizabeth Gearin
STAFF	Vincent Verweij (DPR), Jennifer Fioretti (CMO), Steven Bernheisel (APS)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments

Bill Richardson gave a handout about lot coverage and spoke about Phase 1 of the Low Residential Study process. Bill asked to expand the charge to include building footprint.

Anne Bodine spoke about the Low Residential study, and the perspective of the Arlington Tree Action Group on the issue.

Jean Henceroth spoke about the Lee Center study.

Leaf Blower Policy – Jennifer Fioretti (noted as Rich Dooley on the agenda)

Jennifer Fioretti, Assistant County Manager for Climate Policy, introduced herself and her office and presented on the Leaf Blower Policy.

Discussion followed on:

- Comparisons of the impact of two stroke engines with car trips
- Noise ordinance and noise pollution
- Focusing on more than just leaf blowers
- Pollution created by blowing asphalt
- Changing consumer preferences. Get people to avoid blowing leaves
- Phase-in time
- Influence from landscaping companies
- A letter from the commission. Multiple letters proposed
- Experience from Parks and Recreation's adoption.

- Timing for ordinance changes.
- Leave the Leaves
- Context with leaf pickup services
- Using a gas-powered generator to charge blowers.

The commission voted to write a letter to support the process. Josh Handler offered to write the letter.

Tree Canopy Fund update from working group – Caroline Haynes

Caroline Haynes spoke about the results of the working group, which was not able to fully complete the series of events but still produced summaries and recommendations.

Discussion followed about:

- Exclusion of the tree giveaway numbers
- Options proposed from Tree Canopy Fund subcommittee
- Consistency of funding
- Providing feedback on this program

Overview of Urban Forestry Website – Vincent Verweij

Vincent Verweij presented on all components of the Urban Forestry website.

Follow-up to FNRC recommendations for tree preservation improvements

Bob Benson spoke about the recommendations, and the 7 themes that came out of the responses. Bob suggested working on individual items, and getting feedback from County Board members on best steps forward.

Discussion followed on:

- How to move forward
- Checking with the County Board Liaison
- Impact on neighboring trees and Specimen trees.

Letter about notification to neighbors

The letter was approved unanimously.

Alex Sanders was introduced as a new member of the FNRC.

July minutes and Staff Reports

Minutes were approved unanimously, with Lisa Marcellus abstaining.

For staff reports, Vincent reported on Lyon Park's circuit tree maintenance and the MAC-ISA conference.

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for November 3.

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The kick-off meeting for the update of the Public Spaces Master Plan was held on Sept. 24, followed by a public engagement meeting. Staff provided an overview of the "refresh" noting that this will not be a complete rewrite, but instead will focus on a few key issues areas that need updating including: a needs assessment, updated inventory, level of service, benchmarking, and a review of land acquisition. Apparently it has become more difficult to get responses on surveys, but staff and consultants are hoping to get an adequate number of responses to be able to compare with the previous statistically valid survey.

Planning Activities/SPRC

Comprehensive Plan Review: David Howell/Caroline Haynes.

David Howell spoke about the Comprehensive Plan, and asked the commission to weigh in on the survey, and continue to support the Harmony with Nature priority.

Low Residential Housing Study: Caroline Haynes/David Howell

The first public engagement session was held at Lubber Run Community center on Monday evening. I did not stay for the entire event, but it appeared that more staff were in attendance than were members of the public (and several FNRC members were in attendance). Additional public engagement opportunities can be found on the webpage. The display board and discussions with staff focused on impervious surfaces and the need to reduce the impacts of stormwater, along with ensuring residential properties have room for canopy trees.

The first Long Range Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for October 29. I plan to represent FNRC in that process, with David Howell as the alternate. Given the importance of this study to the commission, all commissioners are encouraged to participate in the public engagement process and we will plan to have regular updates at our meetings.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

John Carey spoke about the request from the Group to look at a list of priorities and provide feedback by December.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria (as well as ARMN) volunteers turned out in big numbers to assist Arlington County staff on its Free-Tree Giveaway distribution days. Approximately 500 trees were handed out to county residents to plant in their yards. Volunteers distributed tree-care information and engaged with each homeowner picking up a tree to review correct planting techniques and other tree-care (and tree-appreciation) information. Almost everyone who came to collect a tree was unfamiliar with correct planting and care techniques, but all listened to the Tree Stewards' instructions eagerly and expressed genuine appreciation for all the new information they learned. Volunteers, hopefully, saved hundreds of trees from being planted like volcano-mulched telephone poles (and that's not hyperbole).

County Natural Resources Technician Sue Kim hosted a group of approximately 30 corporate volunteers for an afternoon of planting approximately 100 trees and dozens of native plants (from the County native nursery) in the wooded area around Bluemont Junction and the pollinator garden next to the bike path. Experienced ARMN and Tree Steward leaders came to help supervise, answer questions, and show volunteers correct invasive-removal, native planting, and deer-cage building techniques. Many of the corporate participants said how much they learned about nature that afternoon.

Sue also organized a planting event with Tree Steward and ARMN volunteers at Lubber Run Park. (I was not at that event, so I cannot say how many native trees and plants were installed, but Sue always brings a lot in her pickup truck.)

Habitat-restoration and tree-planting work continued around the County in places such as Dominion Hills, Fort Scott, and Grandma's Creek, etc.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Canopy Fund working group was not able to complete their study, due to a medical emergency with the group's organizer.

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

Native Bird Conservation and Nest Box Monitoring Program
The Native Bird Conservation and Nest Box Monitoring Program is a project that has made an incredible impact in our community since its start back in 2007. This effort provides vital habitat for Eastern Bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds, boosting their chances of survival and fledging success by nearly 50%.

Thanks to a collaboration with the Virginia Bluebird Society and the dedication of over 70 volunteers from ARMN volunteers and the community, this project has grown from a single abandoned trail at Fort C.F. Smith Park to more than 60 nest boxes across a dozen trails, helping over 1,000 native birds take flight. Along the way, volunteers have taught students and community members about birds, lifecycles, ecosystems, and conservation practices, while also building and repairing boxes to expand the program's reach.

This impactful work has been led for the past 18 years by Alison Davis-Holland, one of ARMN's very first members and the leader who built this program into what it is today. Alison is now transitioning into an

assistant role, but not before ensuring the future of the program is strong. She has worked to establish a new leadership team, with Manoma Sirisena and others stepping up to carry the torch forward.

ARMN Ozone Garden in Partnership with NASA
The ozone bio-indicator garden at the Walter Reed Community Center was installed in 2020 and the team uses it to collect data on the impact of tropospheric or ground level-ozone air pollution on plants, in cooperation with NASA, the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics Science Education, and Arlington County. The garden is part of the international Ozone Bioindicator Garden Network, organized in part by the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, CO. Data on the impact of ozone on plants from this garden are uploaded and merged with data from other gardens in the network.

The network uses genetically identical, ozone-sensitive and ozone-tolerant plants to track the impacts of ground-level ozone—the primary ingredient in smog. Garden plants include snap beans, potatoes, tobacco, cutleaf coneflower, and common milkweed. Selected varieties of these plants are sensitive to ozone, showing telltale leaf stippling, yellowing, and tissue death, while tolerant versions of plants in the garden are relatively unaffected.

Recently activity with the garden has included a presentation for the 55 Plus community at Walter Reed. A visit from the national ozone garden network representative to the ARMN garden, a visit by Barbara and Todd to the Marymount University Ozone Garden, and a trip by Claire Pascocello to the national ozone garden network workshop in Boulder, Colorado.

The Ozone Bio-indicator Garden is located at the Walter Reed Community Center and visitors are always welcome!

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Nature Core Outdoor Explorers program and honor the leadership
For many years now, under slightly different names, this program has been one of ARMN's true bright shining lights. One of its prior Leaders Romana Campos has moved away but Alison Sheahan has continued to head up the program rounding up the troops and coordinating with local communities where there are children without many resources. Many ARMN folks have volunteered with Alison over the years to provide nature based after school learning and mostly fun for people who really need time outdoors with folks who care about them. When asked what means the most to Alison about the program she told me "Joy, Wonder and Hope for kids living in poverty. I think everyone involved (volunteers, staff & kids) discovers these 3 things in the process."

Joy: It is especially meaningful to me that these children --whose daily lives are challenged by hunger and cramped living spaces and other past or current traumas-- are given opportunities for Joy. Joy because that's what happens when kids get to play outside, with caring adults nearby, squealing away in Shadow Tag or "Predator/Prey" games or playing a "Blindman's Bluff" type of game called "Bat & Moth."

Wonder: opportunities for Wonder because we all deserve minds on fire, from small things like seeds under a magnifier to big things like the complexity of food webs in Arlington's streams, gardens and backyards.

Hope: opportunities for Hope because these children deserve a hopeful future on a healthy planet. As the children discover their world and their agency in it, even from the viewpoint of lying on the lawn in a backyard, we seed Hope. I believe that as each generation encourages & teaches the next to deeply know & love this world we will make the best decisions for our future-- and live most happily in the present."

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The **Bicycle Advisory Committee** met jointly with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee on October 8, 2025. Most of the meeting, aside from announcements and updates, was devoted to a discussion with Arlington County DES Deputy Director Hui Wang. The committees had submitted questions to Ms. Wang in advance, so she came to brief the committees on efforts being carried out by County staff and answer the committees' questions. (More detail in the agenda: https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/commissions/documents/bac/october-2025-pac-bac-meeting-agenda.pdf)

Ms. Wang encouraged the committees to participate in public engagement events, submit comments, etc. In some instances, she said State provisions prevent the County from implementing certain initiatives (such as County-wide speed-check cameras). Committee members responded by saying that the committees are not permitted to function as advocacy groups, rather they are advisory groups. They expressed frustration that they are often not informed of projects in advance of public outreach events (some felt like they could help the County formulate better survey questions, etc., if they had advance input) and that their expertise is overlooked when they do submit input.

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)

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Vacant)

No report

New Business

Josh raised the question that the Low Residential Study is not really what was recommended in the FNRP, which was to examine square footage cap in addition to the percentage cap. And Josh raised the question is whether it would achieve what it was originally intended to achieve.

Bob Benson spoke about personal experience with building footprint, and asked for another phase to address building size. Bob suggested to remain vigilant.

David Howell mentioned the future phase of a study in an FNRC letter

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM.