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

9/25/25

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

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)	Phil Klingelhofer, Caroline Haynes, Bill Browning, Steve Sockwell, Bob Benson, John Carey, Noreen Hannigan, Jenn Hazen, Neal Hunter, Lisa Marcellus, Nia Bagley, Josh Handler, David Howell
ABSENT	Elizabeth Gearin
STAFF	Vincent Verweij (DPR), Chloe Kienzle (DPR), Anh Phan (NOVA Parks), Steven Bernheisel (APS)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Introductions

Neal Hunter was welcomed as an official FNRC member

Public comments

Sue Campbell presented on the 601 S Carlin Springs Rd development project. Sue expressed concerns about impacts to the Resource Protection Area and scenic easement. Sue also spoke about the spring on the site and the proximity to schools, noise issues, and safety issues.

NOVA Parks Update – Anh Phan

Anh presented on NOVA Parks and the impacts from Dominion Energy's tree removal.

Questions followed about:

1. The size of lines installed and justification for cutting trees near these lines.
2. Environmental impact statement requirement from Dominion
3. Legal action
4. Pollinator meadow creation and maintenance
5. Best ways to advocate for this issue
6. Placing signs along the Trail
7. Potential impact to tree canopy of Arlington

Stormwater tree planting – Chloe Kienzle

Chloe presented on the program to plant additional 115 trees above our typical 900 trees.

Questions and comments followed on:

1. Tree equity score public visibility – visible on www.treeequityscore.org
2. Note about EJScreen still being used.
3. Appreciation for mini forest concept
4. Appreciation of talking to residents about trees
5. Appreciation for trees planting in Rocky Run
6. History of the program and stormwater fund
7. Species selection
8. Kentucky Coffeetree as a choice for planting

Response to FNRC recommendations for tree preservation improvements – Vincent Verweij

Vincent presented on the responses to FNRC recommendations.

Comments followed on:

1. Applying existing standards differently
2. Interpretation and application of rules
3. Guidance from the board
4. Letter on notification to neighbors
5. DPR/UF empowerment explicitly in the ordinance
6. Ordinance terms up for interpretation
7. Trees as Green Infrastructure BMPs
8. Upstream stormwater capture
9. Residential clear cutting
10. Proactive developer conservation planning
11. Broader citizen assistance on enforcement
12. FOIA requests for plans

Commissioner Benson suggested following up with the board liaison to understand next steps, and presented a distillation of ideas, which will be shared with the commission.

Chair Haynes suggested following up on this at the October meeting, including the letter on neighbor notification. Commissioner Benson suggested adding a requirement to notify the civic associations impacted.

Commissioner Hannigan spoke about the actions around conserving a tree on 4026 18th Rd N

Adding ARMN as a Commission Member Report – Caroline Haynes

Commissioners Browning and Klingelhofer will start reporting on this organization.

Commissioner Howell recommended that a justification is needed to add any standing organization report, and suggested that in this case it would be that this organization's voluntary activities implement, or help implement, many county programs and goals in the FNRP. Non-county organizations' activities may only be included in the standing reports section if their regular activity helps execute the mission of County offices.

July minutes

The minutes were approved unanimously with Commissioner Benson abstaining, as they were absent for the July meeting.

Staff Reports

Vincent Verweij reported on circuit tree maintenance, tree watering, Riverhouse, and 601 S Carlin Springs Rd

Forestry:

Maintenance:

- Circuit Tree Maintenance: Tree crew finished Foxcroft Heights and couple more trees in Columbia Forest + Columbia Heights. Contractor is working on Ashton Heights. Lyon Park and Boulevard Manor are next, with Dominion Hills starting inventory.

Planning:

Long-term planning

- Staff is continuing to work on the Low Residential Study, attending open houses, and answering questions from the public. Staff helped answer questions from the County Board during the session on September 16.

Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)

- In review:
    - Staff reviewed the multiple phases of the River House project (Landbay S, C, and N). Although the applicant claims sufficient canopy coverage, the breakdown needs to be clearer. Bioretention areas are still being proposed within planting strips, which conflicts with county standards.
    - Staff participated in a project meeting for 601 S Carlin Springs Rd. DPR believes the plan can easily achieve the required 30% canopy coverage set by MWCOG. The applicant should prioritize this goal and provide greater clarity on how canopy is being calculated.
    - Staff reviewed the plans for 4420 Fairfax Dr (SPLA25-00021). While most comments were addressed, the site still falls short of meeting MWCOG canopy targets. Given available space, there is strong potential to increase the on-site canopy, and this should be prioritized.
    - Staff reviewed the project at 1401 Wilson Blvd (SPLN25-00009), SP #429. The proposed site does not meet the 15% tree canopy requirement outlined in the Rosslyn Sector Plan. Additional street trees should be proposed, and the plaza should aim to provide at least 40% canopy coverage.
- Approved
    - Staff are working on Barcroft Apartments, including preconstruction meetings for one of the first phases of renovation, and reviewing landscape plans. No major issues are currently identified.

- Staff met on Village of Shirlington to discuss the proposed tree impacts and measures to protect onsite trees. Some trees will be replaced with larger, higher-quality trees and appropriate soil volumes.

DES

- Staff participated in the Annual Maintenance Meeting at Ballston Pond. Approximately 95 trees are scheduled for replacement in the fall. Some potential SPR (Soil profile rebuilding) is being requested by the contractor to improve soil conditions in select areas.
- Staff walked the trees planted for the Army National Cemetery section of Columbia Pike. Some trees did not survive the planting, but the watering program the contractor (E&F) has in place was very successful, given the amount of survival (approx. 90%).
- Clark Bell road extension, and the East Falls Church metro bus station started construction for their scope. Both had significant tree impact, but will replace all trees within the project

Parks

- Staff reviewed the overall proposal for the pre-construction installation of irrigation at Arlington Junction Park. The intent of this meeting was to determine the appropriate distance for the tree conservation area.

By-right projects

- Staff are following up on a tree violation at 1235 N Taylor Street, where trees were removed before permit approval.

Tree Planting:

- Staff are scouting locations for Spring 2026 plantings
- Staff are continuing to close out tree planting requests.
- Staff conducted a site visit to determine suitability for a volunteer project location. Barcroft Park is the likely location.
- Staff are working with Davey Trees to finalize tree species for Fall 2025. This will likely start November 1.
- Additional funding from the Stormwater fund will allow for tree planting that will add an additional 115 trees to parks and along streets, prioritizing tree equity areas.
- Staff is working with Davey Trees to address missed recorded waterings during August. Davey will be adding extra waterings in the Spring to make up for this, and address the issue with their staff.
- Staff is working with our Tree Stewards volunteers to check trees for survival an additional time this year, as the drought and the skipped waterings may have increased the need for in-warranty replacements.

Other:

- Staff attended the tree summit on Wednesday. We learned about improving ecosystems, urban wastewood reuse, tree equity, selecting trees for climate change in urban areas, and conservation easements.

- Staff attended a presentation on trees on schoolyards, by the Trust for Public Land, which had some great ideas on increasing canopy and wood use on public school yards.
- Staff reviewed a specimen tree application at S Queen St. The application will be sent to the County Board for review
- Luis Rivera started on the tree crew, replacing long-term member Frank Vaughn.
- The department of Technology Services is assisting forestry in transitioning payments for the tree canopy fund and other items from check to electronic bank transfer, which should reduce staff time spent on these payments, and increase transparency.
- The notable tree ceremony will be held on October 1, after 1:30 PM, in the County Board Room

Natural Resources:

Deer management program: have wrapped up the building of deer exclosures and vegetative surveys to form baselines for those plots, similar to what is done for NPS; Continue to place the browse survey points (over 200) in our parks that is similar to what Fairfax County does; Have been in contact with the State, Hunters 4 the Hungry, and private meat processor to establish a process for meat donation and testing; Are in contact with Arlington Food Assistance so they can use whatever deer meat is harvested. We are in an outbreak of Hemorrhagic Disease that is spread by biting midges and causes deer mortality on a seasonal basis (when the midges are flying). A deer was tested in Fairfax and the assumption is that additional deer in Arlington that are being picked in Arlington are also due to that (the State no longer asks for testing and assume we are in the region of the outbreak). Are in contact with AWLA to get additional information
Staff and volunteers are wrapping up sampling for Oobius agrili, a parasitic wasp we have released the previous 2 years as a bio-control for emerald ash borer. Possible samples are being sent to APHIS to confirm if they have become established in Arlington.
Planning for Fall restoration plantings is underway. An 'open house' was held at the native plant nursery, and staff is working with volunteer groups and others. Based on previous years, we expect to plant about 5,000 plants this coming season.

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

<u>Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)</u>

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for November 3.

<u>Park and Recreation Commission (Neal Hunter)</u>

<u>Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)</u>

The kick-off meeting for the update of the Public Spaces Master Plan is being held tonight, Sept. 24, followed by a public engagement meeting. This update is being characterized as a refresh, since so many of the recommendations in the current plan are still being implemented. There will be another statistically valid survey circulated to be able to compare data with the original survey. The refresh is expected to focus on a few key areas including a needs assessment, updated inventory, level of service, benchmarking, and a review of land acquisition. There will be multiple opportunities for public engagement throughout the process.

<u>Planning Activities/SPRC (Steve Sockwell, Caroline Haynes, David Howell, Bob Benson)</u>

Nia Bagley spoke about changes in the planning commission roster.

Caroline Haynes:

Low Residential Housing Study
This study is kicking off with a wide-range of public engagement opportunities, all of which can be found on the webpage. Staff presented to the County Board at the September meeting, emphasizing the focus on improving the storm-water system and increasing tree canopy. 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.

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

Commissioner Carey asked for comments during the meeting for the Transportation Plan update to consider before the next FNRC meeting. Chair Haynes mentioned shade and upstream stormwater control as a critical component. Commissioner Carey followed up about the safety benefit of trees. Commissioner Handler asked about reducing street widths. Commissioner Benson spoke about the conflict of trees Vs. bike path.

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Arlington County Parks & Recreation is conducting its annual native tree-giveaway, and Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria will be assisting staff at the two pickup dates (Oct. 18 and 21). Tree Stewards will dispense advise to homeowners on proper planting techniques and care & maintenance to ensure tree survival. In addition, Tree Stewards will have educational materials to share and make themselves available to anyone who wants to ask questions about trees. (The pre-order registration period for a free tree closed Sept. 12.)

In other news, Tree Stewards have been participating in volunteer work at the County's native plant nursery on Tuesdays, and habitat restoration work is ongoing in parks including Fort Scott, Dominion Hills, Brandymore Castle, Grandma's Creek, and Douglas Park.

Tree Stewards are also conducting tree walks at some of the county's libraries. Ninety people signed up for the Sept. 13 walk near the Central Library in Quincy Park (60 of whom were wait-listed). More walks near libraries will take place soon. Check the Events calendar for your library and join in a walk.

And the results of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Survey, conducted by a team of Tree Stewards at the request of Arlington County's Urban Forest Manager, were released. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the effectiveness of the Ordinance, which requires new residential

development to have tree canopy coverage of 20% after 20 years. The team was given a list of 90 randomly selected residential sites that had been developed in 2018, 81 of which they were able to gain access to and include in their data. To summarize, it showed that 74% of the trees that remained on properties during construction were still present 5 years after development, and 65% of trees required to be planted (toward the 20% coverage goal) were present 5 years after development. Surveyors also found that some properties had additional trees that had not been stipulated in their landscape plans. Note that property owners are not required to follow the Ordinance once development is complete. To quote the Conclusion in the Survey, "These data indicate that the requirements of the Ordinance are not being adhered to after development of the properties, as stipulated on the Plans, but that additional planting by homeowners exceed, on average, the Ordinance requirement of trees with the potential to provide twenty percent canopy coverage."

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

With Kate Donohue needing to step down as chair of the Tree Canopy Fund Committee, we are regrouping and working to determine next steps. Various individuals on the committee have provided extensive comments, but there was no strong consensus on next steps and there are a number of questions to be addressed, including the key question of sustainable funding for the program.

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) met in joint session with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) on Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025.

Of interest to the FNRC, Mr. Kevin O'Brien, Washington Area Bicyclist Association (Virginia Organizer) talked about Dominion Power's cutting of trees along the W&OD Trail. He provided some background and talked about the rally that was held in Vienna recently. He said the rally was an outreach effort to inform the community of Dominion's plans (as opposed to being a protest per se). Committee members had questions as to why and what has happened now to prompt Dominion to do this, and the need to provide public feedback. I gave a recap of the briefing the FNRC received earlier this year, and I provided the link to the recording of that FNRC meeting. The chair of the BAC said our groups share an interest in doing what they can to preserve the trees on the W&OD, so I said she and members of the BAC (and PAC) are welcome to listen on any future FNRC meetings where the Dominion issue will be discussed, and that I will liaise with the BAC as best I can.

Ms. Christine Sherman Baker, Vision Zero Program Manager (DES), spoke to the committees on updates to the Multimodal Safety Engineering Toolbox (on the County's website https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/transportation/documents/vision-zero/2025-mm-safety-toolbox-update-_final.pdf).

Mr. Christopher Leyen, Acting Legislative Liaison with Arlington County, said his office is soliciting the groups' priorities for the upcoming 2026 General Assembly legislative package.

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

Commissioner Handler spoke about 601 S Carlin Springs Rd site plan, including dark sky lighting, bird-safe glass. The commissioner also spoke about outreach issues for the comprehensive plan.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.