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

9/24/2026

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

PRESENT (IN-PERSON)	Bill Browning, Marissa Willson, John Carey, David Howell, Neal Hunter, Steve Sockwell, Caroline Haynes, Bob Benson, Alex Sanders, Josh Handler, Noreen Hannigan, Connor Goolsby
PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)	Lisa Marcellus
ABSENT	Phil Klingelhofer, Elizabeth Gearin
STAFF	Vincent Verweij (DPR), Nick Rogers (CPHD), Aileen Winquist (DES), Leslie Fillmore (Virginia Tech Extension)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Public comments

Hugh Robinson spoke about a lack of response from Parks and Recreation and Manager's Office. He spoke about violations of the integrity of Bluemont Junction Park. Damage to trees, invasive plants, theft of public property. He reported issues to Report-a-Problem, spoke to the Manager's Office, and reported a police report. He invited the commission to visit the site and show the concerns.

Bill Richardson spoke about the Low Residential Study and showed slides from the study with highlights. Bill raised concerns that the limits do not match the tree canopy recommendations set out in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments's recommendations. He also raised concerns that the impervious area limits be based on the lot size.

Bernard Berne asked to initiate the implementation of the native plant standard in the FNRP to expand use and retention of locally and regionally native use plants.

Low Residential Study

Aileen Winquist and Nick Rogers presented on the Low Residential Study

Questions followed:

- How R zone sites are defined, and why some zones have very large lots, beyond their typical sizes.
- Using lot size, and not zoning to define impervious area
- What counts as lot coverage
- Clarification about undersized and oversized lots

- How older lots and redevelopments will be impacted
- Will heights change with building site restrictions
- Using Median Vs. Average to guide the analysis
- A lower “lower” option, or more options broadly
- The frequency of data collection
- Different limits for existing vs new construction
- Impacts to immediate neighbors
- Detaching this study from zoning districts
- Considering setbacks (increasing setbacks or changing)
- Stormwater Utility Fee incentives
- Mechanisms to achieve the goals of the FNRP, while allowing flexibility
- Aligning impervious area and lot coverage
- Setting lower impervious targets than projections that increase impervious area
- How to provide feedback

A letter was proposed to be written by Caroline Haynes to be considered at the October meeting.

Arlington Public Schools Collaboration Update

Bob Benson and Bill Browning spoke about the collaboration between APS and DPR staff. Vincent Verweij assisted in showing examples, and explaining how an existing project is already using this information to plant required replacement trees.

Bob spoke about land transfer and other programs, and how he reached out to School Board members and tying this to community engagements (PTAs and teachers).

Priorities: land transfer, maintenance on APS property.

July minutes and Staff Reports

Vincent spoke about the Crystal City to DCA connector, circuit tree planting, food forest

July minutes were approved unanimously.

Maintenance:

- Windstorms and heavy rainfall have caused downed trees and outages in August and September. Staff and contractors worked to clear streets and coordinated with Dominion Energy to safely remove trees near utilities.
- Circuit tree maintenance: Contractors completed Ballston, and are working on Clarendon. Arlington/East Falls Church is next. The tree crew has been occupied with storm response, and is still finishing up Radnor/Fort Myer Heights.

Planning:

Long-term planning

- Low Residential Study: Several meetings were held with stakeholders to receive feedback on the project.

Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)

- In review:
    - Staff met with the applicant for 3033 Wilson Boulevard. Most review comments have been addressed, and the project is expected to meet the required canopy coverage and street tree requirements through proposed plantings.
    - 1320 N Courthouse Rd. The comments have not been addressed. The project still lacks the required street trees along N Troy St and is not close to meeting the 25% MWCOG canopy target, with only 13% currently proposed.
    - Staff attended a meeting with the applicant for the River House Landbay S project. Most of the discussion focused on soil volume calculations and the methodology used to calculate preserved canopy credit. The applicant will update the required information and verify that the site can meet the Sector Plan's canopy coverage targets. Additional discussions may be necessary with DES and DPR due to conflicts between the proposed streetscape improvements and stormwater infrastructure.
- Approved
    - Staff conducted a tree protection removal inspection for project near Arlington Career Center with Whiting-Turner company. Based on the inspection, the project was substantially completed and met approval to have the protection fencing removed.

DES

- Staff attended the Bus Stop Guidelines Revision Team Kick-Off meeting with DES Transit Planning and Operations and others. This meeting introduced who will be contributing to the revisions and setting up deadlines for reviews amongst the review team and the remaining transit team at different stages.
- Staff attended a meeting with DES Transportation Planning and others from DES Transportation regarding the kickoff project BK50 ABT: Shifting ABT East of NFATC Gate with VDOT. DES requested input on VDOT’s proposed adjustment to the trail alignment along Arlington Boulevard. The adjustment could require unnecessary removal of existing trees that are not currently proposed for removal. DES also noted that it remains unclear whether VDOT would allow tree plantings as part of any associated landscaping.

Given these concerns, there is currently no support for proceeding with the proposed trail adjustment.

- Staff had a meeting with DES Engineering, and DES Transportation Planning to discuss Soil Profile Rebuilding. During this meeting, the process of SPR was explained, and the pros and cons of SPR compared to replacing a plantable space with planting soil was discussed. DES came to the conclusion that they need to create a detail for SPR that they can use for cost calculating purposes and for plans going forward.
- Staff met with DES staff to discuss potential locations for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the Barcroft Sports & Fitness Center, including potential impacts to existing trees and landscaping.

Parks

- Staff joined the 30% Construction Document Core Team Review for the Bluemont Park Bridges Replacement Project. Significant tree impacts are expected due to the realignment of the stream.
- Staff met with the consultant to discuss open comments for Thrifton Park. There are a significant number of trees within the park, and tree preservation mitigation measures will be needed due to the proposed trail.
- Staff worked to get storage of private construction materials removed from Hillside park, which was damaging soils and plants. Remediation analysis is underway.
- Staff joined Parks and Recreation Development (PDD) staff at 4030 16th Street S to review the proposed Douglas Park expansion and demolition of an existing single-family home. The site visit focused on identifying trees that may be impacted by demolition activities and evaluating how the project will achieve the required 20% canopy coverage.
- Staff joined the Arlington Junction Park warranty walk and determined that the two trees will need to be replaced. The tree conservation fence around the large cottonwood tree will be removed within the next few weeks.
- Staff met to discuss the proposed landscape project at Parkhurst Park. Forestry's comments focused on reducing tree impacts associated with the proposed large 1–3-gallon pots within the structural and critical root zones.

By-right projects

- Staff are reviewing an exception request to tree canopy requirements for the Signature Theater along S Four Mile Run Drive. Staff do not currently support the exception request, and it is being reviewed by the DES director.

Federal

- Staff attended a meeting for the CC22 C2DCA Multimodal project with DES Engineering to provide clarification on comments. He made mention that comments will be forwarded to the contractors performing the work for review. This is the multimodal connection to DCA. There will be very high tree impact, but almost

exclusively on non-County land (WMATA, NPS, and MWAA, primarily). Staff is working to ensure those entities have given approval, and the permit is in compliance with County requirements.

Tree Planting:

- Fall 2026 tree planting was sent to the contractor
- Spring 2027 is complete
- Staff are gathering data on whether a circuit tree planting program would improve efficiency with planting and watering. A program change will be presented to the Commission if sufficient benefit is identified.
- Staff are working with the Urban Agriculture coordinator to draft a design for a potential food forest in Bon Air Park. Initial scoping includes analysis of floodplain impacts, operations, and feasibility. If no major hurdles are identified, this will be presented to the Commission.
- 8 trees were picked up from a vendor for the Tree Stewards training, this weekend.

Other:

- Chloe Kienzle was selected as the best fit for the Tree Planting Coordinator position, and joined the team in August
- Walton Duckett retired from the Tree crew in September. The position will be posted soon.
- Staff attended the Tree Symposium, and learned about Maryland forestry history, LiDAR inventories, veteran trees, health benefits of natural spaces and trees, planting trees on school grounds, and insurance conflicts with trees on private property.
- Staff reviewed a specimen tree application at 6603 Little Falls Rd, for a *Carpinus caroliniana* The tree meets minimum requirements, and a recommendation for adoption will be prepared for the board's consideration.

Natural Resources:

Deer management: all exclosures surveyed; started the random determined browse plots with Allie Freed and Barcroft done. Will do sharpshooting this winter, in contacts with the state to get all the permits.

Fall restoration planting has started.

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

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

Bob Benson spoke about the Kensington site plan, which is now meeting requirements

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria have begun a training class for 2026. Since a class was not held in 2025, there was a lot of interest. The class is large (34 people).

Habitat-improvement work continues at Fort Scott Park, Dominion Hills, and Brandymore Castle.

Tree Stewards will be volunteering to assist at the County's Free Tree Distribution in October. Tree Stewards will give out planting and tree-care instructions and answering questions as residents pick up the trees they ordered.

Tree Stewards have also been conducting public tree walks near libraries in Arlington. A recent one in Shirlington was said to be a big success, and more are planned.

Volunteers continue to help at the Arlington Native Tree & Plant Nursery on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

In addition, Tree Stewards have been working with EcoAction Arlington on its Tree Planting and Equity Programs. See Tree Canopy Report for details.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

Tree Stewards assisted EcoAction in its latest Tree Planting cycle. Six volunteers performed over 44 home visits to residents who wanted advice on which species of tree to plant, or whether their properties were appropriate for trees. The volunteers sent home visit reports back to EcoAction that were intended to aid in application-review process. This year it has required 3 (as opposed to 2) review sessions (which include 2 representatives from the FNRC) to get through the applications due to poor input from the applications and omission of Tree Steward reports. EcoAction worked to correct some of these problems so reviews are more efficient now.

EcoAction is expanding the opportunity for clients to request a Tree Steward home visit from application-period-only to all year round. The idea is to hold prospective applicants' interest until the application period does open. More Tree Stewards are being recruited to join the list of volunteers performing this service.

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

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 (Kinner Ingram)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Leslie sent out an item on the most hated invasive plants.

New business

Josh Handler suggested discussing the item brought up by Hugh Robinson during public comment.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 **PM**.