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

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:00 PM** on **December 18, 2025**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON)	Josh Handler, Phil Klingelhofer, Connor Goolsby, Caroline Haynes, Noreen Hannigan, Steve Sockwell, David Howell, Neal Hunter, Jenn Hazen, Alex Sanders
PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)	Lisa Marcellus (Medical), Bill Browning (Personal)
ABSENT	John Carey, Bob Benson, Elizabeth Gearin
STAFF	Vincent Verweij (DPR), Andrew Benjamin (DPR), Ryan Delaney (DPR), Steven Bernheisel (APS)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, commissioners, and Staff

Caroline Haynes introduced Connor Goolsby.

Vincent Verweij introduced Andrew Benjamin.

Ryan Delaney introduced himself.

Public Comments

Susan Land spoke about tree removal in Lyon Park by Arlington County, and asked for the County to provide a full accounting of the reasoning for removal.

County Board member JD Spain

The Board Member was unable to attend.

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust – Alan Rowsome

Alan Rowsome presented on the overview of organization, Arlington specific work, NVCT Strategic Plan, Heart of the Potomac Campaign, Upcoming Events

Discussion followed on:

- Issues with comprehensive plan and prospective easements and compliance.
- Specific high value interests and discussions with civic associations
- Combined conservation, value, economy of scale

- Conserving lawn space and what must be done to increase conservation value
- Funding for purchase of the land and speed of purchase or easement
- Communication to property owners
- Success working with developers on small lots
- Outreach to the County Board on tax benefits for conservation
- Interest from elected officials
- Hybrid tax assessments, where unbuilt space is not taxed as higher as built area

Forestry and Natural Resources Plan Annual Implementation Update – Ryan Delaney

Ryan Delaney presented on FNRP implementation.

A discussion followed on:

- Context with Comp plan
- Projects being delayed by upcoming budget shortfall
- Invasive removals in the NPS or VDOT

2025 Year-end Report and 2026 Work Plan – Caroline Haynes

Discussion:

- Adding the Comprehensive Plan to the Work Plan

Motion made by David Howell, seconded by Steve Sockwell. All voted yes, except for absent. Bill Browning abstained.

Invasive Plant Treatment Letter – Caroline Haynes

Motion made by Josh Handler, seconded by Steve Sockwell. All voted yes, except for absent. Bill Browning abstained.

November Minutes and Staff Reports

Minutes were approved unanimously, except for absent, and Connor Goolsby was not present.

Vincent Verweij focused on new Urban Forester, hiring of Tree planting coordinator, Leckey Gardens Site Plan, and some tree vandalism at N Courthouse Rd and Arlington Blvd.

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)

Commissioner Howell spoke about the 3 Urban Parks project, and updating the parks projects website.

Planning Activities/SPRC
Comprehensive Plan Review: David Howell/Caroline Haynes
Low Residential Housing Study: Caroline Haynes/David Howell
River House: Caroline Haynes/Steve Sockwell
Walgreens/Lyon Village: Bob Benson/David Howell
Inn of Rosslyn: Caroline Haynes
Leckey Gardens: Bob Benson/Jenn Hazen
Waverly Ridge: Bill Browning/David Howell

No reports

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

The Advisory Committee to the new Transportation Plan met yesterday to discuss the Commissions' feedback on the draft transportation plan priorities.

I described the FNRC's concern that the 23 priorities were vague and nebulous (a concern shared by many of the other Commission representatives) and our strong disappointment that the priorities did not include our top recommendation, namely that Arlington should:

Create a transportation system with more space for people and nature, and less space for cars, with firm, measurable goals for reducing both vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and the total area of paved surfaces now earmarked for cars.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

A large volunteer party of Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria showed up at Barcroft Park in early December to plant 100 small trees and shrubs for Arlington's Dept. of Urban Forestry. With such a good volunteer turnout, the work was finished in half the time allocated.

Other volunteer events (to clear invasives and/or restore habitat) have either taken place or will take place in December at Brandymore Castle, Dominion Hills, Fort Scott, and Lacey Woods. In addition, Jen Soles led volunteers in installing a new deer exclosure on the site of Gulf Branch Nature Center.

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

EcoAction's Tree Canopy Program is currently open for applications. Arlington residents can apply for a free tree (planted by Davey Tree Service) through Jan. 14 -- https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/community-programs/tree-program-overview/). EcoAction is

enlisting Tree Stewards to do home visits for home owners who need advice on selecting the right tree for the right place as they apply for Tree Canopy Program trees.

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 (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

APS staff met with commissioner Bob Benson to discuss improvements on APS properties

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

Leslie joined and introduced herself, but had no report.

New Business

Commissioner Josh Handler spoke about Langston Blvd developments.

The Zelkova tree removed in Lyon Park was discussed, including:

1. The communication with the neighborhood.
2. Tree conservation on public and private property
3. Other options proposed by the community

11th St and Vermont landscape plan and compliance with promises to the community. Commissioner Handler asked about an auditor report, and asked for a presentation on this report.

Meeting adjourned at **9:12 PM**.