

Park and Recreation Commission Charter
Adopted PRC September 24, 2024
Adopted CB February 25, 2025

Introduction: The Park and Recreation Commission is established as an advisory body of the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia ("County Board") by adoption of this Charter on September 24, 2024.

Park and recreation services, public spaces and natural resources make a vital contribution to the personal health and wellbeing of people, to the economic wellbeing of the community, to environmental quality and sustainability and improve the quality of family and community life. The mission of the Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is to provide dynamic affordable programming and attractive public spaces while maintaining, enhancing, and protecting the County's natural resources to promote biodiversity, sustainability, and a healthy and active community.

It is the policy of Arlington County to provide high-quality park and recreational services and facilities in a manner that is guided by citizen input and participation and assures equitable distribution and availability of both programs and public spaces across all ages, abilities, income levels, and interests. The maintenance, acquisition, enhancement and programming of Arlington County's park, recreation, and natural and public space resources benefit from the thoughtful review and oversight from the citizens whose lives and neighborhoods are touched by such resources. The involvement of interested and knowledgeable citizen representatives is of great importance in assessing, evaluating and meeting community park, recreation and public space needs and desires.

Mission: The Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) shall have such powers as are delegated to it by the County Board. Such delegation shall include those powers necessary to carry out the purposes and duties enumerated in this Charter, and such additional powers as required for the PRC to perform its functions effectively and efficiently in compliance with this Charter.

The PRC shall advise the County Board, and in that capacity may make studies, develop recommendations, conduct public meetings and educational programs, hold hearings, prepare reports, and appear before public bodies in furthering the objectives stated above.

Governing Documents: Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP), Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP), Biophilic Cities Resolution, Climate Resolution, Equity Resolution, park master plans, area, sector and other applicable plans as they relate to public space, parks, public lands, public facilities and County programs that are pertinent to the provision of recreation and biophilic opportunities.

Function and Scope: The Commission's primary responsibilities shall be to provide the Board with advice and recommendations concerning park and recreation planning, programming, and budgetary matters, natural resource enhancement and protection and enhancement of public spaces. The Commission shall also administer the Bill Thomas Park Volunteer Award, and make recommendations concerning parks and facilities naming, as well as other major park recognition awards.

The scope of PRC responsibilities includes:

1. Review and revision of the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP). The PSMP is a required and standing element of the County's overall comprehensive plan. The Commission will monitor the implementation of PSMP elements annually and review the PSMP every five years. The Commission shall serve as the lead in the five-year reviews and ten-year updates of the PSMP, in cooperation with other commissions as appropriate.
2. Hold public meetings, hearings, review, analyze, and make recommendations with respect to all park master plans and issue formal findings on proposed plans.
3. Review, analyze, and make recommendations with respect to County land use and development plans that have implications for public space, park and recreation resources, and biophilia. The Commission should be represented in planning activities that might impact parks, biophilic and ecosystem health and public space development. These include but are not limited to the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC), the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC), the Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission (ZOCO), and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC). Commission members prioritize ecosystem sustainability during SPRC, LRPC, ZOCO and PFRC meetings including, but not limited to, stormwater management, heat island mitigation, preserving and generating biophilic opportunities, enhancing biodiversity and managing ecosystem health.
4. Review, analyze and comment on the annual DPR operating budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget, and other department budgets that impact parks, natural resources, ecological health and biophilic environments, such as that of the Department of Environmental Services (DES).
5. Review and make recommendations concerning the overall distribution and adequacy of park and recreation facilities and opportunities for all County citizens. Commissioners shall give particular attention to ensuring adequate programs and facilities to serve people within the County having special or unmet needs.
6. Study and make recommendations with respect to coordination, efficiency, and quality of park and recreation facilities, programs and services serving the County, including rules and practices for their safe conduct.
7. Make recommendations on innovative programs, changes in existing parks and recreation programs and activities to better serve the public.
8. Make recommendations with respect to improved cooperation among DPR and Arlington Public Schools, public and private agencies, and improved utilization of publicly owned or operated buildings, public space and other facilities in the interest of more effective collaboration to achieve County biophilic design and environmental sustainability goals.

9. Make recommendations with respect to more effective integrated planning and programming with other public services, including family and social services, drug abuse, pre-delinquency programs, transportation, housing, zoning and land use, and environmental improvements.
10. Coordinate and liaison with other Commissions directly related to the DPR (e.g. Sports and Forestry and Natural Resources Commissions) and with other commissions in the County whose areas of jurisdiction, authority and interest touch on or relate to the park, recreation, and natural and public space matters, such as the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2), , Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ArNAC), Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC), Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), Arlington Commission for the Arts, and the Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission (FAAC).
11. Take notice of and interact with other organizations and groups such as the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks), the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT), the National Park Service (NPS), and other Federal, local, state and regional groups, both public and private (e.g. EcoAction Arlington, Friends of Arlington Parks, Arlington Regional Master Naturalists, Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria, Arlington County Civic Federation, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service).
12. Carry on such additional projects and activities as the Commission may from time to time undertake or the Board direct, consistent with the overall objectives of the Commission.

Membership: The Park and Recreation Commission shall be composed of 15 persons, representing a diverse mix of individuals with a range of expertise related to the PRC mission, as well as representing a geographic and demographic mix of citizens.

Members will be appointed for two-year terms, and with reappointment, shall be permitted to serve no more than six (6) consecutive years, unless the Board deems otherwise. All members serve at the pleasure of the Board. The Commission may appoint additional members, ex-officio, to the Commission to represent other commissions (e.g. Sports, Forestry and Natural Resources, Neighborhood Conservation) and County government (e.g. Arlington Schools) that have an interest in park, recreation, natural resources, and related matters. Such members shall have no vote.

A member of the PRC who fails to attend three (3) meetings in a single year without notice or explanation to the chair, or staff, may be removed or asked to resign by the County Board. The County Board, after consultation with the Chair, shall notify the member if such an action is warranted.

If a member is removed or resigns, the County Board may appoint a replacement to serve out the remainder of that departing member's term.

Financial Disclosure: Members of the Park and Recreation Commission shall be required to fill out a Virginia Financial Disclosure Statement form once a year.

Chair, Vice Chair: The County Board shall designate a Chair to lead the PRC with the chairperson to be appointed annually by the Board. An additional member may be designated by the County Board to serve as Vice Chair when the Chair is unavailable.

Committee Membership: The Commission, with approval by the County Board may create standing and ad hoc committees as needed to successfully carry out these responsibilities. The Chair shall appoint committee leadership. Committee membership may include persons who are not on the PRC. Committees must:

- Have a charter adopted by the PRC that defines the scope, goals, sunset date, membership requirements, and meeting procedures.
- Adhere to all legal requirements, including the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and open meetings laws.
- Present research findings, recommendations, and other reports to the PRC.

Staff Liaison: The County Manager shall appoint a member of the staff from DPR to serve as liaison to the PRC.

Meetings: The PRC will meet as needed to adequately fulfill its role and responsibilities outlined in this charter.

All meetings will comply with Virginia Open Meeting requirements and the Freedom of Information Act. All meetings of the full PRC will be advertised on the County Board's website, with meeting time and location, and are open to the public. Appropriate materials, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes will be made available to the public in a timely manner through publication on the Commission website. The Advisory Group Handbook provides additional information on the conduct of meetings as well as communication protocols that should guide all members in their advisory group work.

Reporting to the Board: The PRC will provide recommendations to the County Board about policy, planning, programming and budgetary matters related to parks, recreation and natural resources. In addition, the PRC will provide recommendations with respect to parks and facilities naming, including benches and other recognition features, and major park recognition awards. The PRC will at a minimum submit an annual report to the County Board after consultation with the Board Liaison. The PRC may, from time to time, be asked to provide comment at a regular Board meeting or Board work session.

Update of this Charter: The PRC shall review this charter every five (5) years to assure that it meets current laws and policies. Proposed changes must be adopted by a majority vote of the PRC and processed through the Staff Liaison, department leadership and County Manager's Office for approval by the County Board.