
**MEETING MINUTES OF THE HYBRID
ARLINGTON COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

September 23, 2025

The **Park and Recreation Commission** convened its meeting at **7:00 p.m.** on **Tuesday, September 23, 2025.**

PRESENT (IN-PERSON)

PRC Chair, Commissioner Jill Barker
Commissioner Erika Allen
Commissioner Andrew Damitio
Commissioner David Earley
Commissioner Daniel Garay
Commissioner Adam Rasmussen
Commissioner Melissa Riggio
PRC Vice Chair, Gary Shinnars
At-large Commissioner Hamilton Humes, Sports Commission

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)

Commissioner Nelson Dimpter, participated virtually from Virginia (via Microsoft Teams) due a personal matter that prevented their physical attendance.

Commissioner Alex Sanders, participated virtually from California (via Microsoft Teams) due a personal matter that prevented their physical attendance.

At-large Commissioner Nia Bagley, Planning Commission
At-large Commissioner Gerald Brandt, Arlington Public Schools

ABSENT

Commissioner Claire Pascocello
Commissioner William Way

STAFF

Marco Rivero, DPR, PRC Staff Liaison
Bethany Heim, DPR

PUBLIC COMMENTERS

Nicholas Giacobbe

OTHER ATTENDEES

Peter O'Schanick

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- [Link to Teams Recording](#)
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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

Chair's Introduction and Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes

- *Commission consideration of the August 26 minutes.*
 - The August 26 minutes were adopted as prepared with no objections.

Public Comment

** Park and Recreation Commission public comment is open to all with a 3-minute limit per person.*

- **Public Commenter #1: Nicholas Giacobbe**, spoke about the park naming process for the 23rd and Eads Street public space, and discussed the existing maintenance concerns regarding the site (rat populations) and questions regarding the use of County resources for this public space.

23rd and Eads Park, Public Space Naming – Follow-Up Discussion

- *PRC Vote on Proposed Name*

Bethany Heim, DPR provided a follow-up presentation and discussion for the 23rd and Eads Park naming process. Ms. Heim also provided a site history and overview of the new public space effort. Regarding the potential public space naming options, four options have been discussed since the PRC last reviewed this item in May 2025. The names included, (1) 23rd Street Plaza (2) Firehouse Plaza (3) Pride Plaza and (4) Restaurant Row Plaza. The Historical Affairs Landmark Review Board (HALRB) detailed support for both “23rd Street Plaza” and “23rd Street South Plaza”.

PRC discussion included but was not limited to the voting/selection process for potential names within the community engagement process. Discussion regarding park naming conventions within the Crystal City area was provided. Questions about the existing park tree canopy and the new park design were explained further. Ms. Heim also discussed the extent of public outreach for this public space naming effort, including work done with the Aurora Highlands Civic Association and the National Landing Business Improvement District (BID).

A motion to support the name “Restaurant Row Plaza” was provided by Commissioner Damitio and seconded by Commissioner Earley. The discussion included familiarity with the area businesses and familiarity with the site. Name association and familiarity with area activities were also discussed as potential support for this area. Ms. Heim mentioned that the park will be facing South Eads Street, and the park sign will be facing that street as well, so that may add another potential issue regarding wayfinding and how people perceive where the park is located.

PRC Chair Barker discussed to support two potential name options “23rd Street Plaza” and “Restaurant Row Plaza” with a preference of “Restaurant Row Plaza” because it is more descriptive of where the public space is located. A formal motion was not made on this option.

The PRC recommended that the County Board adopt the name “Restaurant Row Plaza” for the 23rd and Eads public space area, with Commissioner Damitio moving to approve the recommendation, seconded by PRC Commissioner Earley. The vote was **8-0 (of those attending in-person and virtually at the time of adoption)**.

- [Presentation Link](#)

Staff Reports

Mr. Rivero provided the staff reports ahead of time to the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC). Mr. Rivero also reiterated that the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) Refresh community open house will be held the following evening, Wednesday, September 24 from 7-8:30 p.m. (at Lubber Run Community Center, Oak Room). As a reminder that this effort will consist of a needs assessment, including review and update of the level of service (LOS) analysis, benchmarking, a statistically valid community survey, review of land acquisition approach and priorities, and extensive community engagement.

Commission Member Reports

Additional items discussed during this section included:

- Vision Zero External Stakeholders Group (ESG)
 - Commissioner Allen detailed a lot of great feedback has been received to date, especially in preparation for the Vision Zero ESG kickoff on October 7.
- Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC)
 - Commissioner Earley detailed he would like to participate as the PRC member on this committee. *Mr. Rivero will reach out to associated County staff to coordinate this further.*

Other Business

- Letters to the County Board
 - 23rd and Eads Park Naming
 - PRC Chair Barker will be drafting the letter to the County Board.
 - DPR Invasive Species Plant Control
 - PRC Chair Barker detailed the contents of the draft letter that was shared with the PRC prior to the September PRC meeting, and the draft letter language will be shared with the Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (NRJAG) for their consideration prior to finalization and distribution. The PRC agrees this should be developed and presented forward to the NRJAG.
 - PRC Vice Chair Shinnars shared his experiences regarding invasive species control measures (including but not limited to herbicide spray implementation and manual removal of invasive species), the continued work of park stewards, how it affects native species and wildlife, as well as potential measures that may be implemented further by County staff (currently two County staff who work on these measures directly, as well as their coordination with volunteers and park stewards). Funding for invasive species removal needs to be increased and a greater number of dedicated County staff is needed to implement and expand upon these measures.
 - PRC Chair Barker explained that DPR Director, Jane Rudolph and a representative from the Arlington Community Foundation (ACF) will be visiting

- the PRC during its November meeting to discuss further funding options for various park initiatives (including for the aforementioned measures).
- The PRC discussion included evaluating the current contractors who work for invasive species removal (including the quality of their work) on 520+ acres of County land (there are different contractors that are used by the County's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Department of Environmental Services (DES)). There is a potential need for additional County staff (a staff team) who may oversee contractor work on the ground. A suggestion provided was to contact the Nature Conservancy on their work/approaches on invasive species control measures. Removal of invasive species within the parks improve the quality of the various parks and its uses (playing fields, casual use spaces, and other native plants/species that exist).
 - A potential recommendation to have yearly operations/new program funding (over \$1 Million a year) would need to be articulated further for why it is necessary to provide these measures to expand upon this work. Where would the funding be located (Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), yearly operations/maintenance, etc.)? The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP) has recommendations that speak to these measures, but implementation of the recommendations provided require additional monetary resources.
 - *Potential future meeting topic for the PRC could be County staff presenting on contracting services (for invasive species removal) and other related activities.*
 - The next NRJAG meeting is Monday, November 3.
- Future PRC Meeting Topics
 - PRC Chair Barker detailed potential future meeting topics and the general interest for new topics within the commission.
 - County maintenance service contracting is a new topic.
 - Water fountains/water systems in parks.
 - Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) procedures. This may be provided as part of a larger Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) measure.
 - Park activation through private vendors, on-going use, and special events.

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

The PRC moved **8-0 (of those attending in-person and virtually at the time of adoption)** to adopt the name "Restaurant Row Plaza" for the 23rd and Eads public space area.

Meeting adjourned at **8:41 p.m.**