

**Urban Forestry Commission**  
**December 18, 2014**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Attendance**

Dean Amel  
Nora Palmatier  
Steve Campbell  
Scott Brinitzer  
Ed Hilz  
Kelly Criswell  
Mikaila Milton  
Caroline Haynes  
Elisha Rubin

**State and County Staff**

Jamie Bartalon, DPR  
Vincent Verweij, DPR  
Rachel Jackson, DPR  
Jim Meikle, APS

**Public Comment** – There was no public comment.

**Review of 2014 UFC Work Plan and Development of 2015 Plan**

The UFC reviewed items in the 2014 Work Plan and discussed changes to be incorporated into the 2015 Plan. The following changes/updates were proposed:

- Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) – The narrative for the UFMP should be reworded to clarify that, while an update to the UFMP could proceed concurrently with an update to the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP), it is not necessary to wait until the revised PSMP is adopted in order to adopt an updated UFMP.
- Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) – The need to fill a vacant (third) UFC slot on the Natural Resources Joint Advisory Committee (NRJAG) will be added to the NRMP narrative.
- Tree Canopy Fund (TCF) – The recommendation to focus more on providing canopy trees through the TCF will be deleted, since this change was instituted in 2014. A statement will be added to clarify that implementation of the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program is contingent on the receipt of adequate funding from developers through the Site Plan approval process to meet tree replacement requirements.
- Planning Process – Recommendations will be added to incorporate soil volume requirements and maximization of the number of street trees per block into Site Plan conditions. The reference to discourage the use of tree grates will be deleted, since current practices already prohibit the use of grates in nearly all circumstances.
- Planning for Public Facilities – A statement will be added that the UFC will participate actively in public facility planning processes.
- Budget Recommendations – Date will be changed to reflect recommendations concerning the FY 2016 budget process. Funding for the acquisition of natural areas will be added to the list of other funding recommendations.

- Control of Invasive Plants – A reference will be added to recommend the incorporation of invasive plant control into Neighborhood Conservation projects.
- Outreach and Education – Reference to Virginia Tech’s Link to Education About Forestry (LEAF) program will be deleted.
- Cooperation with Arlington Public Schools (APS) – A statement will be added to work with APS on the maintenance of trees on school grounds.

Dean Amel will circulate a draft 2015 UFC Work Plan to commission members, incorporating the revisions noted above. He will also circulate a draft 2014 UFC Report for commission member review and comment. The 2015 UFC Work Plan and 2014 UFC Report will be considered for adoption at the January 22, 2015 UFC meeting.

### **Discussion and UFC Letter on 2025 Clarendon Boulevard Site Plan (Wendy’s)**

The UFC reviewed a draft letter to the County Board, commenting on the proposed Site Plan for the development of the current Wendy’s site in the Courthouse area, at 2025 Clarendon Boulevard. The commission is concerned that the proposed building extends over the sidewalk, beginning just above the second story along Wilson Boulevard and just above the third story along the Clarendon Boulevard side of the building. The UFC’s primary objection to the proposed plan is that it could set a precedent for allowing buildings to overhang street trees, reducing potential canopy and compromising viability and canopy benefits.

During discussion of the draft letter, the commission decided to omit a recommendation to plant narrow cultivars of street trees near the building overhang. It was felt that such a recommendation may be interpreted as commission support of building overhangs if narrow cultivars of street trees are planted. The draft letter was approved as amended.

### **Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Requirements Update and Discussion – Vincent Verweij, DPR**

Vincent Verweij (DPR) updated the commission on some recent changes to the County’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Guidance manual. In order to encourage the preservation of existing trees during development projects, the guidance manual has been revised to provide double tree canopy credit for trees that are to be preserved, provided that adequate tree protection measures are incorporated into plans and implemented during construction. The list of approved trees for project plantings was also revised to eliminate some potentially invasive species and add alternative species to replace them.

Mr. Verweij shared the recent changes in an e-mail to local arborists and Landscape Architects who are often involved in producing Landscape Conservation Plans to meet Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance tree canopy requirements. The e-mail also included a “Tree Canopy Requirement Checklist” that summarizes plan submission requirements and contains links to other pertinent documents and details.

An overview of the plan submission process for residential development projects was provided to the commission. Mr. Verweij also summarized the contents of the “Tree Canopy Requirement Checklist”, and directed commission members to the applicable websites that provide information on Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance requirements and plan submission documents. The County’s Tree Replacement Formula, for trees removed from the County right-of-way, was also described. Mr. Verweij explained that residents need to receive County approval in order to remove trees from an RPA, and that trees need to be replaced according to the County’s Tree Replacement Formula.

Scott Brinitzer asked whether property owners can clear-cut lots without going through the permitting process if the clearing is not associated with development. Vincent Verweij responded that residents could technically remove trees without a development permit; however, if stump grinding or other activities were found to constitute over 2,500 square feet of land disturbance, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance requirements and penalties for non-compliance would apply.

Mr. Verweij also outlined tree canopy and tree replacement requirements associated with Site Plan developments. In addition to meeting Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance tree canopy requirements, all trees removed as part of a Site Plan development project must be replaced according to the County Tree Replacement Formula. If site constraints prevent the full number of required replacement trees from being planted on site, developers must contribute \$2,400 per tree to the County’s Tree Canopy Fund for each tree that could not be planted.

Dean Amel asked whether Arlington has the authority to require more tree preservation or canopy coverage on development projects than what is currently being required. Vincent Verweij and Jamie Bartalon responded that Arlington does have the authority to raise the 20-year tree canopy coverage requirement from 20% to 25% within the County’s least dense (R-20) zoning district. However, since R-20 zoning districts cover only 1.5% of the County, staff recommends waiting to consider increasing canopy coverage requirements (to 25% in R-20 zoning districts) until the next time that further amendments to Arlington’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance are undertaken.

Caroline Haynes asked whether staff has held briefings for developers on tree canopy coverage, tree preservation and tree replacement requirements. Staff responded that group briefings for developers on this topic have not been held. Staff and the commission discussed that it may be possible to include a discussion of tree canopy/tree preservation within any permitting process briefings that CPHD staff provide to individual developers. Kelly Criswell noted that there was a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* on the value of preserving mature trees.

Scott Brinitzer commented that he meets one-on-one with his developer clients to discuss the planning process and plan submission requirements. His clients find this very helpful. Mr. Brinitzer offered his assistance to help staff work with developers early in the process to stress the benefits of preserving trees and the value of designing projects from the beginning so that trees can be saved.

Steve Campbell asked whether it is realistic to expect that 20% canopy coverage can be achieved on residential development sites that maximize the size of new homes. Vincent Verweij commented that canopy coverage requirements can usually be met, since developers can't exceed maximum lot coverage requirements. Scott Brinitzer noted that recent changes to County code specify when patios are to be included in lot coverage calculations. In some cases, this will impact lot coverage calculations and areas available for tree planting.

Vincent Verweij informed the commission that staff is discussing whether changes to tree planting requirements in RPA's should be made which would permit the planting of a larger number of smaller caliper trees, rather than a smaller number of larger, balled-and-burlaped trees.

Nora Palmatier asked staff whether advising residents to communicate tree preservation concerns directly to developers is a good approach. She often gets questions from residents, asking "What can I do?". Staff agreed that a good first step is for residents to inform the developer directly of the neighborhood's desire to preserve existing trees. Vincent Verweij noted that residents can also check the County website to see if a building permit has been submitted. Rachel Jackson added that residents may also contact her and Mr. Verweij with any questions or concerns about specific development projects.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the November 20, 2014 UFC meeting were approved as submitted.

### **Staff Reports**

- Jamie Bartalon announced that Kurt Louis has been hired as the new Division Chief for DPR's Parks and Natural Resources Division. Kurt was formerly a Park Manager for the division, and has been a DPR employee for about 25 years. He will attend the January 22 UFC meeting.
- Jamie Bartalon distributed the latest UFC roster received from the County Board Office. It was noted that some e-mail addresses and appointment information for members were outdated. Commission members were asked to make any corrections on a copy of the roster, or e-mail Jamie with updated information so that corrections can be made.
- Vincent Verweij shared information with the commission on how to access maps of RPA's; lists and maps of Champion, Notable and Specimen Trees; and, Site Plan projects on the County website.
- Vincent Verweij reported on a recent seminar that he attended on "Biophilic Cities". Information can be accessed at "[biophiliccities.org](http://biophiliccities.org)". Localities can apply for certification as a Biophilic City through this program, which recognizes locations that "bring nature into cities".

- Vincent Verweij reported that about 50 volunteers participated in a very successful tree planting event at Butler Holmes Park on December 6. Casey Trees sponsored the event, provided 27 trees that were planted in the park, and recruited/coordinated volunteers for the planting. UFC members Nora Palmatier and Steve Campbell participated in the event, as did Rachel Jackson and Vincent Verweij.
- Rachel Jackson reported that repairs to a sewer line at Fairlington Community Center are likely to impact a couple of trees. A 12-inch DBH maple will need to be removed, and a relatively small white pine tree may also be impacted. Ms. Jackson is working with the County's Department of Environmental Services to minimize tree impacts from the project and replace trees according to the County Tree Replacement Formula.
- Rachel Jackson will send UFC members a link to a website that features an audio interpretation of what tree rings would sound like if played on a phonograph.

### **Commission Member Reports**

**Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group** – Caroline Haynes' NRJAG report is attached.

**Park and Recreation Commission** – Caroline Haynes' Park and Recreation Commission report is attached.

**Planning Activities** – No report.

**Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC)** – Ed Hilz's Public Facilities Review Committee report is attached.

**Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2)** – No report.

**Tree Stewards** – Nora Palmatier's Tree Steward report is attached.

**Tree Canopy Fund** – Nora Palmatier's Tree Canopy Fund report is attached.

**Thomas Jefferson Working Group** – Nora Palmatier's Thomas Jefferson Working Group report is attached.

**Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC)** – Ed Hilz's Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee report is attached.

**Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable** – Nora Palmatier's Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable report is attached.

**Virginia Department of Forestry** – No report.

**Arlington Public Schools (APS)** – Jim Meikle reported that a preliminary proposal to install an emergency/fire access “road” through a portion of Fort Reynolds Park as part of the Abingdon Elementary School renovation plan is being reconsidered. It seems likely that the need for routing access through the park can be avoided with a slight reconfiguration to the front of the school building.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)** – No report.

### **New Business:**

#### **Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS)**

Steve Campbell updated the commission on concepts presented at a recent WRAPS meeting. Four concept plans were presented. The concept plan preferred by the developer proposes to incorporate open space between their two buildings. It does not indicate where the fire station would be located.

Mr. Campbell commented that it would be difficult to incorporate a successful tree planting plan in open space between buildings. It was also noted that open space on Arlington Public School property would be available only during school hours, and would be sub-standard size for a playing field.

Dean Amel asked whether it is now a good time for the UFC to provide comments on proposed concepts. Caroline Haynes noted that the Park and Recreation Commission has already submitted a comment letter.

The commission agreed to submit a letter commenting on the impact that the developer’s preferred plan will have on tree planting and the successful establishment of tree canopy. Steve Campbell will draft a letter and circulate it to UFC members for review.

#### **FY 2016 Budget Update**

Dean Amel summarized information on the FY 2016 budget provided by the County Manager to commission chairs at a meeting earlier in the evening. While residential real estate assessments are predicted to increase by about 6%, commercial real estate values are expected to remain the same. Arlington County government is predicting that it will experience about a \$5 million shortfall if County services are to remain constant. Arlington County Schools is predicting a \$23 million shortfall.

It was reported that it seems unlikely that the County Board will choose to raise real estate taxes at a time when residential assessments are predicted to increase by 6%. The County manager also informed commission chairs that a County hiring “slow-down” will continue. The slow-down currently permits departments to fill 25% of their vacant positions each quarter.

It was also reported that Mary Hynes will serve as County Board Chair in 2015. It is expected that she will promote discussions on the use of public land. Commission members feel that land acquisition should also be included in such discussions.

“Re-Oak Barcroft”

Scott Brinitzer announced that he is working with the Barcroft community on a neighborhood challenge to plant oak trees. Residents may purchase trees for \$25 dollars each from a local nursery. If 100 oaks are purchased and planted by Barcroft residents, Mr. Brinitzer’s business will make a donation to Barcroft House.

## **Attachments to December 18, 2014 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:**

### **Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Caroline Haynes**

Management of Natural Areas: Lyndell Core, one of the park area managers, spoke to the group about challenges of managing natural areas in our parks. One of the biggest issues is communicating with citizens about the conflicting demands of exactly how those areas should be managed. It was noted that the individual management plans, recently completed for the Natural Resources Conservation Areas, are in the process of being adopted by the park management teams.

Annual Progress Report: NRMP progress report to the board (attached).

### **Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes**

Public Spaces Master Plan: Irena Lazic, who has been brought on by DPR to manage the process, was introduced to the commission. Irena recently relocated from Hartford, Connecticut where she worked on their public spaces master plan. Irena outlined the anticipated schedule, which includes bringing on a consultant to assist with surveys, data collection, outreach, etc. Irena is working on compiling the various pieces of information such as current inventories, usage, GIS maps, etc. so that we will be ready to go when the consultant is brought on board, hopefully in late February/March.

Western Area Rosslyn Planning Study: Concerns were raised about the potential loss of Rosslyn Highlands Park, especially given the most recent presentations at the WRAPS meeting. The commission sent the attached letter to the Board. (*UFC may want to consider sending a letter also.*)

PL4PG Siting Guidelines: I reported on PRC participation in the Long Range Planning Committee review of the siting guidelines. There was particular concern raised about an amendment that was offered during Planning Commission consideration that would broaden the PSMP to include an analysis of potential affordable housing sites. Attached is the letter sent to the Board.

Annual Report to Board: PRC letter attached.

Abingdon School: The potential loss of park land and mature trees with the expansion of Abingdon School was reviewed.



## **Public Facilities Review Committee – Ed Hilz**

On December 17, the PFRC held its third meeting regarding the renovation and expansion of Abingdon Elementary School. The following is a link to the PFRC website where you can access the Agenda and a Report that was prepared for the meeting:

<http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/planning-commission/public-facilities-review-committee-pfrc/>

PowerPoint presentations were made at the meeting on the Transportation Study by the Toole Design Group, the transportation and traffic consultants, and Hord Coplan Macht, the building design consultants. I will let you know when the PowerPoint presentations have been posted to the PFRC website.

Some of the conceptual plans presented at the meeting create a driveway for emergency vehicles from 31st Street South to the east side of the school. Fire truck access to the east side of the building is necessary to comply with Code requirements. Depending on the route of the driveway, it could impact Fort Reynolds Park and the tree canopy on the property, including the second largest chestnut oak in the County and a white oak which is the second highest valued tree on the site. Vincent Verweij also attended the meeting and was very helpful in explaining the impact of the driveway on the site's limited tree canopy. This driveway could also be shifted away from Fort Reynolds Park to the vacated Dominion property which is on the other side of the current asphalt walkway across from Fort Reynolds Park. Recently, another emergency vehicle route to the east side of the building that runs along the south side of the building has been proposed and is being evaluated. If that route is acceptable, then access from 31st Street would not be needed.

The tree inventory for the site is being compiled by Davey Trees and should be available at the Jan 21 PFRC meeting.

## **Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier**

The next training class starts Feb. 3 and is now half full. If you wish to attend or send someone, have them get an application and register now. Available at [www.TreeStewards.org](http://www.TreeStewards.org). We will have a joint Fairfax-Arl-Alex TS continuing education program Jan. 6 at Westover Library, 7 – 9 PM. Jim McGlone “Why It’s Better to Plant a Seed”.

## **Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier**

Planting for fall is nearly complete. There may be a question of extra trees due to folks moving/refusal. I suggested ACE check with the experienced neighborhood coordinators for suggestions on new locations, and if they can't use them, contact Patrick Wegeng who may. In January, I move UFC have a discussion on Tree Distribution coordination with TCF. It has been better this year and we can review ways to strengthen for next year.

### **Thomas Jefferson Working Group – Nora Palmatier**

There was a working meeting on Dec. 2 with the County Board for which the working group submitted a 4 page report, available at link below. The final conclusion was that a school could be built on the site, but it was still up in the air if it should be. If it was decided to build, most think a school located to the west of middle school, primarily on paved area used for parking is best – but there are quite a few vocal opponents who do get letters to the editor in the Sun Gazette. It has been informative (depressing?) listening to the variety of comments focusing on one small aspect of the project that affects them as opposed to the large scale issues.

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/12/TJWGPreliminaryReport120114revised.pdf> .

My view is that placing a school in this location will be less detrimental to the county's urban tree canopy than additions at the other two schools would be, based purely on satellite photos.

The fact that someone at APS authorized a contractor to survey trees near the proposed site did create a stir. The contractor nailed metal tags to the trees which created many comments on local list serves as park users/dog walkers couldn't help but see them and thought APS was assuming they could go ahead before TJWG was finished. I saw this was mentioned on ArlNow and brought up at the recent budget meeting with County Manager and Schools Superintendent.

UFC should seek guidance on whether to recommend such tagging not be used or if it's too minor an issue. At the recent TS state symposium Barbara White of VADOF was quite vocal against one of the TS groups using a similar design based on her experience.

### **Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee – Ed Hilz**

On December 11, the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee held its Fall Funding Session. It holds two funding session a year when it recommends capital improvement projects to the County Board for approval. For a project to qualify for funding consideration, the NCAC staff works with neighborhood representatives and County staff to determine the scope and cost of a project . Qualified neighborhood projects are then awarded points based on several criteria. Projects with the higher points are considered for funding. The NCAC allocates \$3M for each of the four funding sessions in a two-year CIP bond cycle. The number of projects recommended in each funding session is limited by this allocation. If qualified projects are not recommended, they are considered at the next funding session.

At the Fall Funding Session, the NCAC recommended projects from five neighborhoods: Columbia Heights, Waycroft-Woodlawn, Cherrydale, Douglas Park, and Madison Manor.

Descriptions of the projects are available at <http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/12/FINAL-Fall-Funding-Booklet-2014.pdf>.

**Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier**

Planning meeting is January 5 so if interested in assisting, contact me for details. Suggestion on topics for the shorter roundtables and November Conference greatly appreciated.