

Urban Forestry Commission
April 28, 2016
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Paul Campanella
Phil Klingelhofer
Elisha Rubin
Steve Campbell
Dean Amel
Ed Hilz

State and County Staff

Vincent Verweij, DPR
Ritch Viola, DES

Guests

No guests

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Washington Blvd Trail Update – Richard Viola, DES

Richard Viola presented on the redesigned Washington Blvd Bike Trail. This project was redesigned to accommodate a trail with less impact to trees and the existing natural slope along Washington Blvd. This project starts in Towers Park to 2nd St S. The trail was originally planned to go along the street, impacting more trees. Easements have been collected, and design is finalizing. A curb and gutter to the trail was added to the trail, separating it from the street. This will also allow less excavation, reducing construction, and creating a better trail. The proposed trail will be similar to the path at Arl. Blvd and Courthouse Rd.

Phase 1 was built 6 years ago, ending at Walter Reed Dr. This will be Phase 2 of the project, along the Penrose Neighborhood. The path will connect to existing recent trail developments.

Dean Amel asked about how connections will be created in coordination with the Army Navy Country Club (ANCC). An easement was obtained from ANCC to allow a path on their property.

A barrier to separate bicycle traffic from road traffic will be installed in some areas for safety reasons.

Dean Amel asked about whether the bicycle community had raised concerns about safety at night. Richard explained that the trail is not designed for night use, and additionally, no major concern was expressed.

Much of the concern about conservation of trees and slope came from the apartment buildings adjoining the project, with some trees providing a landscape screen. Original designs removed 198 trees. With the redesign, and staff assistance, this was reduced it to 84, including invasive

species, and some dead trees. Richard showed some images of the impacted trees, which are primarily oak and cherry.

Much of the landscape will need restoration. Invasive plant removal will be part of the plan, and replanting will be part of the final design. Some replacements will go in areas where VDOT denuded areas with the Route 50/Courthouse Rd project.

The planting plan, designed by Christine Simpson, was passed around for review. Planting near preserved trees is minimized, to reduce root impact. There is a need for a 5 ft. buffer from the trail, which restricts planting near the trail. Planting will happen across the entire project.

Some discussion followed on how trees were prioritized over others, such as a Northern Red Oak, saved by trading a White Mulberry instead, for the trail location.

Richard showed pictures of the site. The project is moving forward, and will be submitting for VDOT approval soon. The project aims to start Late Fall, with the replanting to occur in Fall 2017.

Steve Campbell asked: Will watering be supplied? Richard replied that watering and invasive plant control will be included in the project.

Dean asked whether the county board has approved this project. Richard replied that they had not yet, but they will get around to it once the design is finalized.

Dean asked whether there is a need to write a letter? Richard replied that a letter is not yet needed, but may be useful when getting closer to county board approval.

Dean stated this appears to be a much better project than before. No objections or issues were raised.

Disc Golf and Impact to Bluemont Park Forest

Phil Klingelhofer provided background on a Neighborhood Conservation project to restore the woodlands in Bluemont Park, from Carlin Springs Rd, to the West side of Four Mile Run. \$780,000 is proposed to restore the woodlands with invasive removal and planting of native species. This includes a small nature trail, and other minor improvements.

Walking through the area, Phil noticed major disturbance from some of the disc golf course installation.

Some history on the disc golf course was provided. It started with 9 holes without approval process with DPR. The course has been in the park for about 25 years. Marks and targets have been installed. Over time, the space has moved around, and the 9 holes have been moved, with sometimes 4 tees to throw from. An informal group of disc golfers has maintained these over time, and occasionally planted trees, and worked on fighting erosion.

Phil's concern is that the areas are expanding beyond the original limits, and the natural area is being impacted. Erosion, compaction, and branch impact are evident. The neighborhood wants to invest into this natural area, and wants the best project. The damage caused by disc golf installations and practices may negate this project's value.

Phil asked to meet with urban forester Vincent Verweij to assess the damage. Phil, Caroline Haynes, and Vincent met on April 14, 2016, to assess the park.

Vincent's assessment was provided to DPR management staff:

1. Historically, the course has been installed and expanded, with some impact to tree roots, and in some of the older areas, causing the death of trees.
2. Compaction and disturbance is creating dead zones in some of the areas used for targets or tees. Both the installation of the infrastructure, and the use of the course has caused degradation of the soil and tree roots.
3. Given that disc golf requires obstacles and is typically played in a wooded or natural area, there is an interest in keeping the trees healthy. Staff suggests assessing some of the locations of the holes, and looking for alternative locations, as well as better treatment of the soil through mulching or other methods, to prevent future damage to the more natural areas in this park.

A meeting with Lyndell Core, Park Manager, showed some of these issues, as well. Lyndell has suggested exploring a more formal agreement with the Disc Golf group, through an Adopt-a-Park agreement.

Phil suggested to reconfigure the course, where appropriate.

Ed Hilz asked about discussions with the group. Phil responded that no discussions have started yet.

Dean suggested creating vegetative barriers behind the targets.

Phil said some of the money may go to split rail fencing to define the limits.

Dean asked whether this warrant UFC involvement? Phil suggested DPR management needs support from UFC.

Ed mentioned that if NCAC votes on this project, this should be part of the discussion.

Dean stated the UFC should opine on this issue.

Dean suggested Phil draft a letter. A letter not excluding Disc Golf, but reduce impact on trees and natural areas.

Vincent stated an Adopt a Park agreement would give AC some enforcement power.

Phil concerned that an agreement may be seen as an agreement that the current locations are fine.

Dean suggested current layout should be assessed, and future changes be reviewed.

Ed asked to encourage coexistence between the groups.

Dean raised a motion to draft a letter, without a quorum. Encouraged Phil to draft the letter.

Elisha asked whether the restoration will address water flow issues?

Phil responded that regrading may not solve the issues, but reforestation will help. Phil mentioned the asphalt driveway upstream, which may be reshaped to improve drainage.

Dean suggested Elisha to send locations where erosion and water issues are common.

Since a quorum was not present, a formal vote was not performed on the motion, but Phil will begin drafting a letter for a vote next time.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the March 24, 2016 meeting were approved, with one spelling fix.

Staff Reports

Vincent provided updates on the following:

1. The iTree Survey starts in May. Training presentations will be given in the first week of May, followed by scheduling and surveys
2. Arbor Day was held on April 26, at Oakridge Elementary School. It was attended by staff, the entire school (in person, or through live stream), Arlington County board member Jay Fisette, School Board member Barbara Kanninen, and School Superintendent Patrick Murphy. A tree was planted, with poems made by students and residents attached to the trunk.
3. The conversation on the Stratford Middle school project continues, specifically related to the proposed driveway, which may have a high impact on trees on site. Staff and residents will be at a County Board work session on May 14, to discuss the project.
4. A walk of the Glencarlyn Old Growth Forest happened for local residents, led by Vincent, on April 16. Attendance was high, with almost 50 people present.
5. A bill is being proposed by Senator Barbara Favola, on infill and tree loss, related to recent tree losses in the McLean community. This will come before the senate during next year's session. No action is needed yet.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Did not meet in March

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes:

At last night's meeting we received a presentation on the Central Place site plan amendment, scheduled to be considered by the County Board at the April meeting. PRC is planning to send a letter objecting to the encroachment of open space and encouraging an evaluation of the proposed loss of community benefits. The issue of tree pits was also raised with the applicant noting that they were conforming to the Rosslyn Sector Plan guidelines, which we have noted before, may be inadequate to support canopy trees.

We also had an update on the POPS survey data, as well as a presentation from Mike Nardolilli on the history of the C&O canal and W&OD Railroad and how both influenced the development of Arlington. Mike also provided an update on NOVA Parks. The Commission took action on the Bill Thomas Award, which will be presented at the April 19, 2016 carry over County Board meeting.

Steve, Nora and I spoke during Board consideration of the Rosslyn Plaza PDSP. There was a good deal of discussion about open space issues and a motion to increase the size of the plaza, in keeping with the Rosslyn Sector Plan, was made by John Vihstadt and supported by Jay Fisette. Libby Garvey, Katie Cristol and Christian Dorsey opposed the motion.

Nora and I also spoke at the County Board budget work sessions. My comments focused on PRC support for a robust land acquisition policy and funding.

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris:

Mazda Site, Ballston - finished with SPRC mtg. and will go to the PC and CB most likely in June. The project has significant amount of street trees at the major intersection of Ballston (Glebe Road and Wilson Blvd). The plan is proposing 600 cf of amended soil/tree. At SPRC, I asked for more soil volume, up to 1,000 cf given the prominence of the site and the scale of Glebe Road needing large shade trees. We should follow up with a letter to the CB.

Metropolitan Park 6 is moving through SPRC mtg. Not sure when it will come to the PC or CB. But, it has a major opportunity for a double row of street trees along south Eads Street. Will provide these comments at the next SPRC if their agenda permits.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – Ed Hilz and Steve Campbell:

There was no meeting of the Wilson School PFRC in April. The next meeting is scheduled for May 11. The Public Facilities Review Committee did not meet in April regarding the Stratford project.

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) – Alex Sanders:

We heard a presentation from Joan Kelsch and Rich Dooley on a County staff initiative to make substantial revisions to Administrative Regulation 4.4. This is a project that E2C2 has been advocating for some time, and we had a robust discussion on the need to do so, who the

stakeholders in the process might be, and the eventual goal. County staff wants to conduct a full assessment, and is open to alternative approaches to fulfilling the goal of the existing regulation. We then discussed the possible role of E2C2 policy papers to educate new members and to use in discussions with different audiences. While there was consensus around the need to develop them for E2C2 members, there was debate about their use beyond education within the commission. The commission will continue this discussion in later meetings.

Community Facilities Study – Nora Palmatier:
No actionable items on Thomas Jefferson School.

Public Spaces Master Plan – Dean Amel:
The committee has not met in the past month. However, two meetings are scheduled for May. On May 11, we'll discuss public space classification and level-of-service standards. On May 25, we'll discuss proposed strategic directions and an action plan.

Tree Stewards – Steve Campbell:
- The 2016 class has graduated! The fifteen class members will now choose projects in order to satisfy their volunteer requirement- after which they will become 'full-fledged' Tree Stewards.
- Tree Stewards and the Parks Department have enhanced their relationship utilizing the framework of the County's "Adopt-a-Park program. Tree Stewards will coordinate with Parks staff and assist with park maintenance, including the structural pruning of smaller trees and invasive plant removal.
- Tree Stewards sponsored a program April 12th on efforts to restore the American Chestnut to our forests (the presenter was Penny Firth of the American Chestnut Foundation).

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier:
The Tree Canopy Fund is in the process of writing a new RFP for tree planting. Updates to be sent to the UFC soon.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier:
The next Roundtable will be on May 26, with the topic of sustainable SITES accreditation.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – Phil Klingelhofer:
At the April 14, meeting, the following was discussed:

- Approval of Chestnut Hills Park Plaque
- Shirlington Crescent – Four Mile Run Planning Study – Chikwe Njoku, Neighborhood Services Division Chief, Community Planning, Housing and Development
- NCAC Policy Change Overview – Paul Bolejack, Waverly Hills NC Representative

Virginia Department of Forestry – Jim McGlone:
No report

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – Jim Meikle:

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – Kirsten Buhls:

No report.

New Business

A discussion was started on the Blue Ribbon task force. This taskforce was approved by the county board. Significant adverse response happened after its approval. The taskforce was appointed to identifying conflicts between policy goals and to provide clarity on strategic plans, and how this relates to APS, as well.

Dean expressed the concern what the opinions of the panel will be of Urban Forestry. He was concerned no UFC member will be elected. Dean asked whether a letter should be drafted. The board is appointing members by next county board meeting.

Phil suggested a letter is a good idea, because UF issues may not be considered in a streamlining process, which appears to be the goal of this panel.

Steve asked whether UFC should wait to see who they appoint?

Dean stated it may be too late at that point.

Ed asked how will the advisory commissions interact with the blue ribbon panel? Will there be any interaction?

Phil stated that if the recommendations happen in 6 months, that will most likely not be enough time to consider everything.

Dean will draft a letter, waiting for a Quorum at the next meeting

Ed asked whether the Shirlington Crescent project has representation by the UFC? The area is currently somewhat unused, with some trees.

Paul stated Nora was going to take the lead with Paul, but no decision was taken.

Vincent asked if any commissioner seen any of the presentations?

Paul stated not yet.

Vincent had commented from a staff perspective.

The meeting was adjourned.