

Urban Forestry Commission
March 26, 2015
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Ed Hilz
Caroline Haynes
Elisha Rubin
Phil Klingelhofer
Paul Campanella
Kelly Criswell
Steve Campbell
Mikaila Milton

State and County Staff

Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR
Rachel Jackson, DPR
Margaret Tulloch Rhodes, CPHD
Jim McGlone, VDOF

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum Update – Margaret Tulloch Rhodes, CPHD

Margaret Tulloch Rhodes (CPHD) provided an update on recommendations for the Draft Courthouse Square Sector Plan Addendum. A resident working group and staff were charged with providing recommendations for a plan that addresses five key areas: circulation, open space, buildings, cultural resources and sustainability.

Key components of the draft concept plan include:

- A network of inter-connected open spaces with a centrally located civic square as the primary gathering place.
- An underground garage to accommodate parking needs.
- Centrally located Metro access.
- Shared streets (15th St. N. and 14th St. N.) that are diverse and walkable, designed primarily for pedestrians and bicycles, but also able to accommodate vehicles when needed.
- A pedestrian promenade between Wilson Blvd. and 14th St. N.
- Space to accommodate a farmers' market, possibly with stalls or enclosed within a civic/cultural building.
- A civic building anchoring the south edge of the central square, which may house County, civic, cultural and/or market uses.

The “central square” open space area, which is approximately two acres in size, will be located on the site of the current surface parking lot, and will have underground parking beneath it. It

will be designed to accommodate a variety of uses, gatherings and activities, with two distinct areas: a “memorial grove” area at the north end surrounding the two existing memorial trees; and, a lawn area that extends from the memorial grove to the southern end of the square that will serve as a central gathering area. DPR will lead a future planning process to determine the final design of the “central square” area.

Previous recommendations from the Urban Forestry Commission for preserving the two memorial trees, planting additional trees, and providing adequate soil volume for tree planting (especially above the underground parking garage) have been incorporated into staff recommendations. The draft plan also moves underground parking slightly further away from the memorial trees than was shown on previous plans, and recommends that plaques for the memorial trees should be retained on site.

Staff presentations to commissions on the draft sector plan addendum recommendations will continue through April. A community open house and presentations to civic associations will occur in May. The Planning Commission and Transportation Commission are expected to comment on the draft plan in June or July, prior to issuing a Request to Advertise (RTA) at a County Board meeting.

Dean Amel suggested that the UFC may submit comments recommending that excavation for underground parking should be avoided beneath the memorial trees, and that additional open space should be incorporated south of the central square if final plans don't include the construction of a civic building at that location. He recommended submitting comments closer to the submission of a final draft plan.

Ed Hilz asked whether the project will be funded by the County. Ms. Tulloch Rhodes explained that part of the improvements to public spaces will likely be funded through the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and some funding is likely to be provided by developers through Site Plan Condition contributions. Steve Campbell asked whether a rain garden will be incorporated within the site. Ms. Tulloch Rhodes noted that a stormwater mitigation feature of some type (possibly a rain garden) may be installed towards the southern end of the site.

Review of Draft Changes to Application Form for Designation of Specimen, Heritage and Memorial Trees – Vincent Verweij, DPR

Vincent Verweij reviewed draft changes to the nomination form for Specimen, Heritage and Memorial Trees, which incorporate previous UFC member input, as well as staff recommendations. Mr. Verweij proposes changing the title of the nomination form from, “Arlington County Memorial, Heritage, Specimen and Street Tree Nomination Form” to, “Arlington County Special Tree Protection Nomination Form” in order emphasize tree protection and help avoid confusion with other types of tree recognition programs.

The revised form will emphasize that property owner consent is required for designation. All categories of designation on the original form will be retained on the revised form, since they are

contained within the ordinance. The revised form will also require nominators to attach a photo of the tree.

The description of each category of nomination will be combined under the same heading with the qualifying criteria for that category on the back (page 2) of the form. Dean Amel suggested that the qualifying criteria for Specimen Trees should be reworded to clarify that a tree may qualify for Specimen Tree status if it rates at least 65% of the score of the smallest tree of that species on the Virginia State List of Big Trees.

Ed Hilz recommended that a link to the County Tree and Shrub Ordinance should be included in Section E of the nomination form. He also noted that the heading, “What Does This Mean for My Tree(s)?” is confusing. Commission members discussed alternative headings. It was agreed that the heading should be changed to, “How Does Designation Protect Trees?”

Mr. Verweij will incorporate suggested changes into the revised nomination form, route it through DPR leadership for review, and post the final form on the County’s website.

Potential Support for Strengthening Invasive Plant Regulations

Jamie Bartalon and Dean Amel informed the commission that they were contacted by a property owner in Albemarle County, Virginia, who offered support for DPR’s and the UFC’s petitions to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to strengthen Virginia’s Noxious Weeds/Invasive Plant Regulations. The current VDACS regulations became effective on January 29, 2015.

Mr. Roderick Walker owns approximately 1,500 acres of forested land that he manages in Albemarle County. He has invested heavily in invasive plant control measures on his property, and submitted a letter of support for DPR’s and the UFC’s petitions through the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall. His letter also supports using the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR’s) invasive plant list as the basis for Virginia’s Noxious Weeds list. Additional comments will be accepted through the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall until March 30, 2015. The Virginia Board of Agriculture may then consider the issue at its May 21, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Walker also shared information he obtained from VDACS, indicating that the definition of “Noxious Weeds” in state code specifies that plants must be “not widely disseminated”. As a result, VDACS does not have authority to expand the Noxious Weeds list to include the most common invasive plants without an amendment to the state code by the General assembly. Mr. Walker indicated that he will work to help gather support for legislative action that would strengthen invasive plant regulations if a bill is introduced.

Dean Amel added that allies outside of the northern Virginia area, such as Mr. Walker, will be needed in order for any legislative changes to be approved. Caroline Haynes agreed, and suggested that it would be advantageous to gather additional support throughout the state.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the February 26, 2015 UFC meeting were approved with edits provided by Karen Kumm Morris and one typographical correction.

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon reminded UFC members that this year's Arbor Day ceremony will be held on April 20, 10 am, at Long Branch Elementary School. Jim McGlone added that there is a possibility that Barbara White may attend the ceremony.
- Jamie Bartalon also informed UFC members that this year's Notable Tree Award presentation will take place at the beginning of the County Board's recessed meeting on April 21. The meeting begins at 3 pm. This year, 8 Notable Trees will receive plaques and 8 will receive certificates.
- Rachel Jackson reported on the following projects:
 - Oakgrove Park – Trees for this project were planted today (March 26, 2015). The park is scheduled to re-open in June.
 - Virginia Highlands Park – Some trees will be pruned in order to accommodate new lighting that is to be installed on courts.
 - Fairlington Community Center – A small tree will be transplanted from a parking lot island in order to construct an accessible parking space that is required. A replacement tree will be planted in the reconfigured island.
 - Arlington Arts Center – An art installation will be hung from a tree in a manner that will not harm the tree. A preliminary evaluation of other trees on site indicated that some trees may need to be removed due to their poor (potentially hazardous) conditions.
- Vincent Verweij informed the commission that he has performed an analysis of "forest patch cover" in Arlington by civic association. This was inspired by an analysis of forest patch cover in Baltimore, although their distribution of forest patches is very different than Arlington's. Mr. Verweij's analysis includes a map of % forest patches by civic association, as well as a map showing the difference between total canopy and "patch" canopy.

Ed Hilz noted that Mr. Verweij offered to provide each Neighborhood Conservation Program representative with a map and an analysis of tree canopy in their civic association. Mr. Hilz and Mr. Klingelhofer both added that the maps and analyses they received for their civic associations were very helpful.

- Nora Palmatier asked staff whether DPR has a policy for removing invasive tree species. Vincent Verweij and Jamie Bartalon informed the commission that there is no overall

policy governing the removal of invasive trees, and that factors such as the tree's size, location, and context within the neighborhood may all influence removal decisions.

- Ed Hilz asked DPR staff (Jamie Bartalon, Rachel Jackson and Vincent Verweij) whether they have been involved in the assessment of several County facilities that APS has requested the County make available for interim use as shared spaces for APS classrooms and student use. Mr. Hilz noted that the Fairlington Community Center is one of the facilities on the APS list of potential sites for shared use. Caroline Haynes added that the APS request was for quick turn-around use of County facilities to help address enrollment growth, outside of the Community Facility Study process. DPR staff in attendance have not been involved in the County's response to APS's request.

Commission Member Reports

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

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

Planning Activities – A Site Plan Review Committee report by Steve Campbell is attached. Caroline Haynes added that, during a discussion of the Pentagon City PDSP it was reported that open space planning for the area would occur at a later time.

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

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

Community Facilities Study – Nora Palmatier's Community Facilities Study report is attached. Ms. Palmatier also reported that an inventory of parks and open space has been requested before a needs assessment has been completed.

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

Tree Canopy Fund – No report.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – Phil Klingelhofer'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 – Jim McGlone reported that VDOF has reorganized geographic coverage areas for its foresters, adding additional counties without additional staffing. Culpepper, Rappahannock and Madison Counties have been added to the area covered by Mr. McGlone and his colleagues. The additional coverage may impact Mr. McGlone’s ability to regularly attend UFC meetings.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – No report.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – No report.

Other Updates -

- Dean Amel informed the commission that he was contacted by a reporter from WMAL Radio to comment on tree impacts associated with the expansion of Arlington National Cemetery.
- Mr. Amel also reported that he submitted the UFC’s budget input letter to the County Board on the proposed FY 2016 budget, and provided comments at the commission chair budget input meeting with the County Board.

New Business – No New Business was discussed.

Attachments to March 26, 2015 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Caroline Haynes

Representatives from the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia provided information on a public outreach campaign to keep cats indoors. They focused on the dangers to the health of the cats, but also to the enormous damage that free roaming cats inflict on our native birds and small mammal populations.

Alonso Abugattas reported on progress with the native plant nursery and efforts to propagate native plants for restoration projects within Arlington. Volunteers are being recruited to help run the nursery.

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes

The following individuals were appointed ex officio members to the PRC:

Jim Meikle, APS Director of Maintenance Services

Jim Feaster, NCAC liaison

Pam Silberstein, APS Advisory Council on Facilities and Capital Programs

Kim Haun reported on the Urban Agriculture work plan, which includes the opening of an additional community garden along the Four Mile Run trail (currently covered in invasive species), transfer of management of the farmer's markets to individual market managers and a tool checkout at Arlington Central Library.

Bill Thomas Award nominations were considered and will be announced at the April 21 carry over County Board Meeting.

Jen McDonnell, DES, reported on the public outreach campaign to encourage pet owners to bag and trash pet waste. She focused on the current impacts of pet waste on our stormwater quality, health impacts for humans and pets, and efforts to address this growing pollutant.

Site Plan Review Committee – Steve Campbell

672 Flats - The first SPRC meeting took place for this project earlier this month. This project was not well received due to the large building footprint. There is almost no open space on the property. They are requesting additional density (.94 FAR) for providing LEED-Silver, on site affordable housing units, and a contribution to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund. From a UFC perspective the only trees are those along the streets, planted in standard 5' x 12' tree pits, which would provide inadequate soil volume. Red Maples were planted as the street trees species at 650 Glebe Road, just across Carlin Springs Rd., last year. This species is not very urban tolerant and this is a very urban area.

The only open space actually on the property is along an alley on the west side of the development. There are five stormwater planters and patios proposed in front of apartments.

Immediately inside the curb there is proposed an approx. 5' wide planting strip that proposes some ornamental cherry trees. The alley is a 12' wide travel lane, so is too narrow to plant this species. Also, the property immediately across the alley (Townes of Ballston) desires plantings that will effectively provide a screen for them. Upright-growing cultivars, deciduous and evergreen, would be more appropriate.

Several nearby properties expressed the concern that the lack of open space proposed at 672 Flats will create pressure on their own private open spaces (for example trespassing by dog walkers).

Note: The Townes of Ballston also have concerns about damage to their local street trees and their own trees immediately across the alley due to the construction activities related to the 672 Flats project. During the 650 Glebe project last year, two of their street trees along Carlin Springs Rd were physically damaged (one was removed) by construction vehicles. The lower branches of their mature street trees on adjacent Tazewell St were killed by idling construction vehicles. This homeowners association has been caring for these trees, watering them for more than 25 years. This issue was not discussed at the first meeting but will be raised.

If you wish to look at the meeting presentation slides and developer drawings please go to: <http://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/670-n-glebe-road-672-flats/> Look under 'Documents and Plans'. The open area along the alley and street tree drawings, as well as proposed planting information can be seen on pages L.1 thru L.4 of 'Drawings Part 2'.

Public Facilities Review Committee – Ed Hilz

On March 18, the PFRC held its sixth 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, the Report, and the PowerPoint Presentation for that meeting.

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

Most of the discussion focused on how the 116 parking spaces required by zoning could be met. The consultants presented revised parking plans (see Slides 18-21 of the Presentation). In the end, the PFRC supported the parking plan shown on Slide 20. This plan will reduce the green space between the edge of the main parking lot and the Courtbridge II Condominium Association and slightly increase the size of the play field. The breakdown of the 116 parking spaces is: 68 main parking lot, 15 parking lot adjacent to play field, 15 Fairlington Villages Condo parking lot, 11 Transportation Demand Management (employees using public transit, walking, biking, carpooling, and other options that reduce the demand for vehicular travel), and 7 on street,

The School Board is expected to vote on the schematic building design on May 7. The County Board will consider the Abingdon site plan either Sep 19 or 24.

Community Facilities Study – Nora Palmatier

For the next 2 months, data on everything (demographics, economics, schools, current facilities and lands, etc.) is being presented and it is fascinating to hear. March 11 presentation on housing supply had info that in 2014 for Single Family Detached there were 103 demolitions of house, and 131 new houses built – usually small house on lot demolished, more than 1 built on same parcel. In addition to that, Single Family Residential Additions and Alterations from 2010 to 2014, the **annual average for additions was 336,270 square feet** or approximately 1,000 SF per permit. I spoke with the Planning Division staff who compiled the data, and they clarified some might have been non-permeable before as old garage, driveway, patio etc., but both agreed it was a fascinating finding when talking about less space for trees. Nothing we didn't know from driving through Arlington, but distressing to hear the numbers. Slides 32 and 33 of the document if you wish to see. [Meeting documents and summaries.](#)

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier

Current class of 22 graduates April 14 – all are invited to the party at Fairlington Community Center, 7 – 9 PM, pot luck. Board members are stepping up and recruiting for a new president. I'll continue on TS Board, and will still link TS on UFC, as does Steve Campbell and Kelly Criswell now.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee – Phil Klingelhofer

On March 12, the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) held its monthly meeting, with two major items on the agenda:

1. Urban Forestry Presentation – Vincent Verweij, County Forester. Vincent gave an excellent overview of Arlington's urban forest and the various programs within the county. A copy of his well-received presentation is attached.
2. Update on the Facilities Study Committee – Ginger Brown, Vice-Chair. Ginger provided an overview of the Facilities Study process and timeline and she answered questions from the group. To a question I posed regarding whether the Facilities Study Committee would be use the present day value of park and open space land as an integral part of the decision process, she assured us that the Committee was very well aware of this issue and the need to factor in those costs. I am certain this point needs to be made again and again. I have attached notes taken by an NCAC member during the first three meetings.

The following is a link to the Facilities Study Committee webpage, where you can access the meeting information, minutes, and more:

<http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/community-facilities-study/>

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier

Next NoVa Urban Forestry Roundtable is Wednesday, May 27 at Merrifield Nursery, Fair Oaks. Topic is what goes on in life of tree before we see it. Planning to get a nursery grower to present

how they get seeds into liners, then into containers, then to nurseries so everyone understands how it's currently done. Then how specifications for contracts to supply plants are created and best practices, then how to judge quality... In process and should be fascinating.