
**MEETING MINUTES OF THE HYBRID
ARLINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

1/25/24

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:00 PM** on 1/25/24.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Gary Shinnars, Caroline Haynes, Mikaila Milton, David Howell, Bill Browning, Steve Sockwell, Kate Donohue, Josh Handler, Noreen Hannigan, Bob Benson, Nia Bagley, Phil Klingelhofer

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) John Carey, for medical reasons

ABSENT Melody Mobley

STAFF Vincent Verweij, Steven Bernheisel (APS), Rachael Tolman

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Public Comment

Anne Bodine spoke about lot coverage issues with large lots in R-6 zoning. Steve Sockwell asked if it was brought to Zoning Commission's attention. Anne offered to show the properties to commissioners. Caroline Haynes mentioned the recommendation in the FNRP. Josh Handler spoke about lot coverage, and asked how many there are. Mikaila Milton mentioned the stormwater utility program.

Dr. Bernie Berne spoke about deficiencies on the Goodwill site, and concerns about the letter from the FNRC. Also spoke about lack of biophilic components.

Nature Center Update

Rachael Tolman presented on Nature Centers. Caroline Haynes asked about requested programs, and whether they get filled. These programs are ad hoc, and are often met. There was a question about individual visits vs. unique visits. Mikaila Milton asked if volunteer hours are reduced because of shorter open hours, and if they use Volunteer Arlington. Response for volunteers appears to be lower. Some of the continuity of volunteering was lost with the pandemic. Staff turnover. Caroline Haynes asked about where fees go. Summer camp fees go to general fund, other funds go to nature center. Revenue is used for improvements and/or activities. Noreen Hannigan suggested the loss of volunteers might be because of the ARMN class going online. Caroline Haynes asked about the APS programs, whether it's just first graders. Nature centers are working towards a 4th grade program.

Standard Site Plan Conditions with Biophilic Checklist

Caroline Haynes spoke about the site plan conditions and biophilic checklist. Program will be iterative in approach. Mikaila Milton asked about tradeoffs in site plans on lot coverage to create more space for trees. David Howell spoke about rearrangement examples in previous projects. Phil Klingelhofer asked

about a basic narrative. Bob Benson mentioned the presence of commissioners at meetings is important. David Howell spoke about supporting staff with community support. Josh Handler referenced Dr. Berne's concerns about plant palettes, and lot coverage issues, and including native plant lists readily available for site plan development. Gary Shinnors mentioned that the PRC would be interested in being engaged on the biophilic checklist, and help by joining on site plan reviews and other efforts.

Review inventory of LRPC SPRC projects in play

Steve presented the projects that were completed in 2023 and are in progress. Steve and David Howell spoke about the LRPC. David Howell spoke about planning Park projects, as well. Steve spoke about SPRC process and how to address issues. Bob asked to continue informing the commission on park projects.

Land acquisition plans and letter

Caroline presented the context. Bob suggested language increasing funding in the letter, and editing 22 acres to 23.

A motion was brought by Bob Benson and seconded. David Howell discussed complimenting the County Manager for their initial suggestion.

The letter passed unanimously.

Goodwill Site Plan Letter

Kate Donohue provided context. Josh suggested adding Dr. Berne's suggestions. Gary Shinnors suggested increasing access to wooded area.

Caroline Haynes made a motion to send a letter with Dr. Berne's edits.

The letter passed unanimously

FNRP Implementation Update

Staff is coordinating internally with DPR and our sister departments (DES and CPHD) on implementation planning. The primary focus is on the Priority Actions and short-term actions in the Implementation Framework. We will be coordinating implementation updates and reporting through NRJAG to keep all three commissions informed of progress. While working on this internal coordination, DPR is advancing several projects that support the FNRP goals, including:

- Continuing our deer management project
- Moving forward with the 2023 Tree Canopy Study
- Continuing to work with CPHD to incorporate FNRP goals into current development review projects (site plans, special GLUP studies, etc.)
- Moving forward with the Natural Surface Trails Study (first online engagement to launch Monday)

Caroline Haynes and Bob Benson asked about lot coverage, and next steps.

Caroline suggested a letter be drafted about lot coverage.

David Howell asked about frequency of FNRP implementation meeting.

December Minutes and Commission Infrastructure

Phil asked for a budget letter to be on the February agenda. The commission discussed priorities. David Howell mentioned CIP funding for natural capital.

December minutes were approved unanimously.

Mike Beckmann resigned from the meeting after the previous meeting.

Staff Reports

Staff discussed reviewing bids for tree canopy report, met with Defensores de la Cuensas to collaborate on programs, started planning the Fort Barnard Tree Planting with Marymount University, Working on Barcroft Apartments, and starting to develop a circuit maintenance program with the tree crew.

Maintenance:

- The second batch of preventive pruning at Fairlington is finalized. The first batch of preventive pruning at Ballston Ct is finalized. Tree inventory at the third batch for Waycroft Woodlawn was completed and sent into the contractor (43 pruning, and 1 removal). A Tree inventory at Ballston Court was completed and sent in for the second section of the first batch (23 pruning, and 0 removals).
- The tree crew has received a trailer for a mini-excavator to add to their fleet. Forestry anticipates receiving the mini-excavator before the end of the fiscal year.
- Staff inventoried the ash trees that will need treatment in 2024.

Planning:

(Projects with high impact or high opportunity highlighted in **bold**)

Long-term planning

- Staff have been researching different methods for multi-trunk tree measurements to determine DBH for tree preservation.

Site plans (special exception and by-right)

- In review:
 - Staff have had meetings this week about the Barcroft development overall and about the landslide area in Barcroft. The landslide area has to be remediated and will result in many trees being removed. Remediation is still being negotiated. The development site is more complex and they are working with historic to retain the most significant buildings and natural resource areas.
 - Staff reviewed the 2011 CRYSTAL DR Project. The project was rejected because the tree preservation plans were missing, and the canopy cover calculations did not reach crystal city sector plan of 17.6%.
- Approved
 - Staff met with the site developer of the project at 1900 Fort Myer Drive to inspect the trees planted onsite. Some of the tree species were incorrect and will need to be replaced with the native and approved species.

DES

- Staff are working on a detailed markup for lighting conduit installation, county-wide to be implemented by DES to conserve street trees. They also had several meetings about soils and

soil specifications with engineers in the engineering bureau. Project-based issues with soils for Columbia Pike segment F were resolved. More systemic issues with specification clarity or missing specifications were broken out by project phase and issue and will be addressed by UF and DES together.

- Staff worked with DES Landscape Architects to clear urban forestry comments from the 4MR dredging and flood control project, the largest remaining piece of which is tree removal across the stream from Troy Park, and replacement planting in the same watershed in parks, and along the 4MR trail under transmission lines, in coordination with Dominion Power. This project is now approved.
- Staff has sent a marked-up document for the Arlington Boulevard Transportation Plan phase 1 to VDOT in hopes of retaining some old trees, including one of the largest Southern Red Oaks in the county.
- Staff worked with DES, along with contractors and their sub to get plantings in at the Headwaters of Donaldson prior to the easement expiration.

Parks

- Staff reviewed the Lacey Woods 30% reviewed material plans. DPR is requesting a full tree preservation plan and tree inventory. It was also not clear whether this project will meet the 40% canopy cover requirement that is recommended by the FNRP.

By-right projects

- Staff met with the county stormwater team and the project engineer and developer for 2415 Shirlington Road. It has been complicated to move forward the repurposing of this historic property, with the stormwater elements and street tree requirements very hard for the developer. It appears that we are close to getting some trees behind the sidewalk with appropriate soil volume. Melissa and someone from the stormwater team may meet the engineer in person in order to reduce review time.

Federal

- Staff is reviewing the Mt. Vernon bike trail for impact on NPS land.

Tree Planting:

- All outstanding requests are now closed.
- Continued to add to the fall 2024 tree list. The current total is 67.
- Continued verifying the cumulative replacement plantings installed this fall. Both southern quadrants remain to be inspected.
- Continued staking and supporting leaning trees as they become apparent or are requested.
- Started the conversation with the tree supplier regarding the ANSI standards for root ball size and depth. We had too many poor quality root balls this season which resulted in extensive staking and knot tying.
- Started the process for 3 volunteer tree plantings this spring. Locations identified but dates still in flux.

Outreach/volunteering:

- The next Tree Stewards Structural Pruning Training session with Jim McGlone will be in the large conference room on Feb. 22 at 6 pm. We appreciate that Jim is still willing to do this after his retirement from the state forest service.
- Staff had a Fort Barnard tree planting meeting with Marymount to finalize the programming for the proposed planting with their grant.

Other:

- Staff assisted with snow removal.

Commissioner Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Jane Rudolph informed us that staff support for NRJAG will be limited to three or four times a year strictly to report on the progress of the implementation of the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, and the name may be changed to FNRP-Implementation Advisory Committee to mirror the PSMP-IAC. The three member commissions (FNRC, PRC and C2E2) are exploring ways to continue collaboration in a different format.

Park and Recreation Commission (Gary Shinnors)

No report. Gary Shinnors is the new liaison, and started this meeting.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

Staff is working on next steps on the consultants report on natural trails.

Planning Activities/SPRC (Steve Sockwell, Caroline Haynes, Kate Donohue, David Howell, Bob Benson)

Caroline Haynes: Biophilic Working Group: I'll be reporting on this during the FNRC meeting. As a review, attached is the summary of our initial meeting in November, as well as some preliminary comments I sent on the NSTA project as an example of weighing in early in the process with comments.

Kate Donohue:

The SPRC met for the second time on January 18. Most of the time at both the first and second SPRC meetings was spent discussing parking and traffic patterns on the site.

This project is unique in that it is a collaboration between Goodwill Industries and AHC, Inc. The new building will host an expanded retail space on the ground floor, with a donation processing center on the second floor. The levels above will be 128 units of affordable housing, including 79 two-bedroom units and 15 three-bedroom units. In addition, there will be a childcare center at the back of the building that will accommodate up to 40 children.

The building takes up much of the land area, but the proposal is an improvement over the current site. The row of parking next to Glebe Rd. will be removed, and trees and other landscaping planted. Although not part of the property, street trees will be planted along the off-ramp from Rte. 50, shading the Arlington Blvd. trail.

Some larger trees at the rear of the property will be preserved, and additional trees planted as part of the play area for the childcare center.

The building itself is all electric, with Energy Star appliances, WaterSense fixtures, EV stations, etc. It also has bird-friendly glass, and the rooftop is solar ready. We recommended that green roof elements be added; the staff is working on their final report, and the project will then go to the Planning Commission and County Board for approval.

Steve Sockwell provided an overview during regular agenda items.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Kate Donohue)

No update

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

The Tree Stewards endeavored to press ahead with regularly scheduled invasive pulls at various parks in January; however, inclement weather and cold caused several of them to be cancelled, including some Martin Luther King Day of Service events. One event that went ahead

Tree Canopy Fund (Kate Donohue)

No report

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) met on Monday, Jan. 8, 2024.

Mary Dallao (BikeArlington & WalkArlington) reminded the committee that BikeArlington is still in the process of revising the Bike Comfort Map of Arlington and encouraged BAC members to provide input. She also said that this revision will take advantage of data (on accident hot spots, etc.) that was not available when the original map was done.

Cynthia Palmer (BAC Chair) led the committee in further discussion (started in the Dec. meeting) on bicycling-related recommendations to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with the intention of taking a vote on the Committee's top ones. There were many questions about which recommendations did (or didn't) rise to the level of CIP inclusion, how funds under the County budget are allocated/administered, etc. After lengthy discussion, some members made the point that the BAC already worked on the Bike Element for the Master Transportation Plan and never learned how the Bike Element was being implemented or whether it is being measured. A group of Committee members decided to meet offline with the chair to further refine the recommendations. Once the recommendations are sorted out, the BAC will move ahead with a letter to the County Supervisor.

Mr. Elwyn Gonzales (Transportation Planner / Staff Liaison to the BAC) followed up on an agenda item from December regarding questions with the "Report A Problem" system. BAC members are dissatisfied with how tickets are closed even when problems aren't fixed. and that there is no way to follow up because users have no contact information or way of knowing where their requests were directed. Mr. Gonzales asked BAC members to provide him with some input that he could look into. After some discussion, it was apparent that the issue wasn't just individual instances, but wide-spread dissatisfaction and a belief that the system is broken and doesn't work for users in general. Members posed questions as to who oversees the system, etc., and they said that someone within the County needs to impose better structure over it and more accountability. Mr. Gonzalez said he would see what he could find out. The agenda item will be taken up again in the future.

Mr. Gonzalez then sought the Committee's input on the Custis Trail Needs Assessment and Priority Improvements Study, which he is leading for the County. He pointed out that the engagement phase is beginning now. Committee members asked for more background on how the study came about and how things will work with VDOT (who has primary jurisdiction over the trail) and the VA Office of

Intermodal Planning and Investment. Mr. Gonzales said he (in his official capacity) applied for a grant to study improvements and was given the green light to head it up. He acknowledged, however, that it is unclear at the moment how roles and responsibilities (and funding) among the stakeholders will work out in the long run. Some committee members expressed skepticism in light of the fact that routine maintenance and improvements aren't currently being done. (Members used the example of broken sound barriers. When trees fall across the trail in storms, someone does come and remove the tree from the path, but the broken fence or barrier is never repaired.) Mr. Gonzalez said the study will be focused on long-term improvements as opposed to ongoing maintenance issues.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vacant)

Vincent Verweij will attend the planning meeting for the Roundtable in February, on behalf of Arlington County.

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ArNac) (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Mikaila Milton)

C2E2 met on Monday January 22. The commission heard a presentation by developer Redbrick on their development of a zero carbon building in the Washington DC "Bridge District". They heard how even a large development is able to use completely electric HVAC equipment, and how they were able to reduce the carbon footprint of the concrete and steel used in the project. The commission also reviewed a summary of federal grants applied for by the AIRE program. They also approved the 2023 annual report which will soon be posted to the County C2E2 web page and approved letters on the Columbia Pike Form Based Code and Goodwill site.

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

Steven Bernheisel spoke about Discovery Elementary being selected for the Arbor Day event this year.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Kirsten Conrad)

No report

New Business:

Bob Benson spoke about his work on legislation. Bob has been going to Richmond about these issues. Josh Handler and Caroline Haynes spoke about bills related to gas-powered leaf blowers and recognizing honeybees as the state pollinator.

Josh Handler spoke about Missing Middle Housing/Extended Housing Option.

Meeting adjourned at 9:26 PM.