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

3/28/2024

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at 7:01 **PM** on 3/28/24.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Phil Klingelhofer, Kate Donohue, Noreen Hannigan, Bob Benson, Caroline Haynes, David Howell, John Carey, Steve Sockwell

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Gary Shinnars, Josh Handler, Melody Mobley, Bill Browning

ABSENT Mikaila Milton

STAFF Vincent Verweij, Kisha Holland, Meghan Lawler, Jennifer Fioretti, John Marlin

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Public Comment

Anne Bodine spoke about lot coverage and the CPHD plan. She expressed gratitude for commissioner involvement and the letter sent to the County Board.

Susan Land representing the Arlington Tree Action Group, spoke about tree planting and conservation on by-right developments. Congratulated the Commission on work on lot coverage. Asked to set caps to lot coverage.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Jennifer Fioretti introduced staff and presented on the FY25 budget.

A discussion followed on:

1. Past one-time funding
2. Coordination with capital projects
3. Invasive plant being one-time funding only, and to make this permanent in the future
4. Whether invasive plant budget can be spent over 2 years, and whether funds can be carried over
5. How maintenance vehicle rentals fit into this
6. Nature center funding and what would bring more attention to nature centers. How can Master Naturalists get more opportunities at the nature centers.
7. Adopting fee for public use, increasing the birthday party charge, or adopting a donation option to keep nature centers open.
8. Registration process for programs
9. Native plant nursery funding

John Carey spoke about the draft that was shared. Suggested was to add language on ongoing funding for invasive plant treatment. A discussion followed on:

1. Cutting land acquisition in the letter, addressing it in the Capital improvement letter instead. A suggestion was to note it in the letter as an upcoming request.
2. Revising language to provide suggestions to keep nature centers open for more days. Suggesting adjusting fee schedules, for example birthday parties. A discussion followed on the value of charging fees.
3. Consider channeling funding from APS programs to nature centers
4. Valuing the service based on how many additional volunteer hours could be supported by having the centers available. Use the Virginia Department of Forestry Volunteer in kind rate of \$31.80
5. Adding optional donations to tax forms.

The letter based on this discussion was moved by Commissioner Sockwell, seconded by Commissioner Howell. Discussion followed on:

1. The capital improvement program item will be reduced in scope.
2. Combine the FNRP and Nature Center items.

The letter was voted upon, with Commissioner Haynes opposing on the basis of the capital improvement program inclusion, and all others supporting. The letter passed.

Lot Coverage

A discussion included:

1. CPHD letter follow up for lot coverage review, using the one already sent.

Bob Benson volunteered to draft a letter.

The letter should include:

1. Fee increases for permits to pay for lost positions.
2. Could they pay for a consultant?
3. Inter-departmental collaboration
4. What is the goal/substance of the study?

Motion to draft and send a letter by Commissioner Haynes, seconded by Commissioner Hannigan

The letter passed unanimously

Capital Improvement Plan

A letter was suggested, using the two paragraphs from the previous budget draft. A letter will be considered after a presentation.

601 South Carlin Springs Road Medical Site

Commissioner Howell described the history and potential uses of the site. A public flyer was shared: https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/departments/images/vhc-health-rehab-facility-flyer_mar2024.pdf

A discussion followed on actions. Some concerns were raised about the speed of the development, and what is happening with the remainder of the land. Asking to make the center biophilic. Opportunity for SPRC inclusion. The Certification of Public Need includes items on biophilic design. It was suggested to speak to the commission liaison. Suggested AWLA wanted the site.

Parks review subcommittee

The Chair suggested making this a commissioner reports. David reported on the park status of projects in planning, and the parks projects page was shared:

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Parks-Status>

Thrifton Hill, Gateway Park, Douglas Park, and Lacey Woods Park were discussed. Concerns were raised particularly about Bluemont Park, and why parks need to be rebuilt in the same way they have been in.

The subcommittee will provide a written report to the commission going forward.

Commissioner Howell also described projects by the stormwater team.

Commissioner Haynes described other efforts in the region.

Commissioner Howell mentioned an Open house on Gateway Park on April 11.

February Minutes and Commission Infrastructure

The minutes were voted upon and approved unanimously, with Commissioners Donohue and Sockwell abstaining for not having been present.

The chair asked for volunteers for notable tree reviews. Melody Mobley and Noreen Hannigan volunteered.

Staff Reports

Vincent highlighted tree canopy report, circuit maintenance, tree list updates.

Commissioner Benson asked about the Master Transportation Plan update.

Commissioner Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

We had an informal check in on budget items as well as inquiries about the Virginia Hospital project at the 601 S Carlin Springs site adjacent to Glen Carlyn Park (also a topic on the agenda for Thursday's FNRC meeting).

Park and Recreation Commission (Gary Shinnors)

No report

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

The next PSMP-IAC meeting is scheduled for April 17. Noreen Hannigan has been appointed FNRC alternate to the PSMP-IAC.

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

Caroline Haynes: Biophilic Working Group: Several Planning Commission members have supported our efforts to create a more robust County Biophilic webpage, for use as a resource for staff, developers, commissioners and others. Nothing definitive yet, but we will continue to work with staff to see if we can move this forward.

Bob Benson: Site Plan review -- Block W (Crystal City)

This project at the southern end of Crystal City was discussed at an LRPC meeting last fall and an SRPC meeting on March 14th (see the attached written comments that were provided in February via the county's public comment portal). The county and the developer are striving to meet the open space requirements of the Crystal City Master Plan and the tree canopy expectations of the FNRP; currently the plan falls about 4000 square feet short of the 38K sf target of the master plan. David and I have raised various issues, including consideration of a taller building with a smaller footprint, a stepped-back building facade, adequately planted and maintained street trees to create a green ribbon type of walkway, a green roof, and bird-friendly glass. There will be another SPRC meeting this spring, and then the plans will be offered to commissions for comment.

Lot Coverage

At the February 28 Long Range Planning Committee meeting, the Director of the Department of Community Planning Housing and Development gave a presentation of their 2024 workplan. DCPHD has not included a lot coverage study in its 2024 workplan. Their primary (but not sole) rationale is a lack of staff resources. The LRPC did not discuss the issue on Feb 28, other than in Q&A commentary with the CPHD Director.

There is a lot of community support for a study, including a 16 civic association group, FNRC's February 23rd letter, and the F&NR Plan. I suggested at the meeting that perhaps resource efficiencies could be had by incorporating lot coverage analysis into other planned, related studies. Steve suggested in a follow-up note that it might be worthwhile to chat with LRPC Chair Patel. David noted the imperative to allocate sufficient staff for core work and training, recognizing the great value of human capital.

Since the LRPC meeting, multiple civic association representatives have talked with County Board members. They also have met with the Civic Federation. Among their recommendations is that the county fund a position to lead a lot coverage study and policy development. The County Board has recently discussed the lot coverage issue at work planning sessions.

Public Facilities Review Commission (Kate Donohue)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Inclement weather thwarted some Tree Steward work this month. Regular work parties at Haley Park and Gulf Branch were rained out, as was a big planting event with Marymount students, Arlington County staff, and TS volunteers at Fort Barnard. (The Fort Barnard event has been rescheduled for April 20.)

Other events went ahead, including regular work at Lacey Woods, Fort Scott, and Four Mile Run in Dominion Hills (and probably others I'm missing). In addition, on March 6, Arlington County's Otis Marechaux and TS volunteers planted pawpaws at Zachary Taylor Park.

Tree Stewards were also invited to participate in an Arlington Natural Resources staff-led effort to find and remove the invasive plant Incised Fumewort along Four Mile Run through Bluemont, Bon Air, etc. The "seek-and-destroy" events (which were held last year as well) were carried out on 3 dates in mid-March, and volunteer turnout was good.

A delegation of Tree Stewards also traveled to White House Native Tree Nursery in Luray, VA, on March 21, to pick trees for the Tree Canopy Fund. It was the Thursday that the forest fires were raging on nearby Massanutten Mountain. The air was quite heavy with smoke (enough that we pulled out our face masks). (Not to steal Kate Donohue's thunder.)

A task force of Tree Stewards who have been studying the potential impact of solar panel installation as the world transitions to clean power shared a draft one-page information document with TS members and asked for their comments. The task was prompted by the state of Virginia directing Dominion Power to provide 100% electricity from renewable sources by 2045 and by Arlington County's Community Energy Plan to require 100% renewable energy by 2035. At least one Tree Steward had the experience of a Dominion contractor knocking on his door in November and urging him to convert to solar. When the TS said something like "But I'd have to cut down my trees for that," the contractor seemed unconcerned and said well, yeah, but that's what people do (ho hum). When other Tree Stewards heard about this, they got concerned that Dominion's sales reps could talk a lot of unsuspecting homeowners into cutting down their trees without exploring their options. The draft document is intended to educate homeowners on possible options that could minimize cutting down trees or heavy pruning, etc. When it is finalized, I assume I will be able to share it with the Commission.

Tree Canopy Fund (Kate Donohue)

On March 21, Tree Stewards and staff from EcoAction Arlington braved the wildfire smoke and traveled to White House Natives in Luray to select 160+ trees for the Tree Canopy Fund plantings this spring. I was not able to attend, but I understand that those extra Covid masks were much appreciated!

Bicycle Advisory Committee (Noreen Hannigan)

The Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) held a joint meeting with the Pedestrian Advisory Committee on Wednesday, March 13, 2024. The meeting was a hybrid session attended by some members who met in person beforehand at the Crystal City Metro and walked to the Long Bridge Aquatic Center and virtual attendees who did not participate on the walk. Those who walked used the opportunity to note road-safety and connectivity issues along with way. When they arrived at the Long Bridge Center, they were joined (via Teams) by the VDOT team conducting the Rt. 1 Multimodal Improvements Study and County liaisons. The groups received a presentation from VDOT and went over questions. According to VDOT's

presentation, recommendations for design should include 250 canopy trees and 160,000 sq. ft. of green space. Questions posed to VDOT staff mostly concerned the speed study, lane protections, future bike connectivity (for example to Army-Navy Drive and S. 12th St.), length of traffic light phases & signal actualization, etc.

I was not able to attend the meeting, but listened to the recording online.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

A May 30 date was set for the urban forestry roundtable.

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ArNac) (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

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

No report

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

No report

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Kirsten Conrad)

No report

New Business:

Commissioner Mobley mentioned the upcoming EcoAction Arlington's Ecoextravaganza event.

Commissioner Howell mentioned the report by the AIRE team, which included the FNRP.

Commissioner Benson spoke about the grant for Grandma's Creek improvement. Vincent will share the link with the commission: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/About-Arlington/Newsroom/Articles/2024/Grandma%E2%80%99s-Creek-Receives-National-Fish-and-Wildlife-Foundation-Grant>

Commissioner Handler asked about getting more discussion on natural landscaping and the natural trails project, and asked for lists of approved planting to be a future agenda topic.

Commissioner Shinnars suggested looking at the PRC letter for language to support the budget letter.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.