

**Urban Forestry Commission
September 25, 2014
Meeting Summary**

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Steve Campbell
Per Midboe
Mikaila Milton
Kelly Criswell

State and County Staff

Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR
Rachel Jackson, DPR
Margaret Tulloch Rhodes, CPHD
Steven Bernheisel, APS

Guests

Elisha Rubin

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Courthouse Square Planning Update – Margaret Tulloch Rhodes, CPHD

Margaret Tulloch Rhodes, CPHD, provided an update on the planning process for the Courthouse Square area, including a description of the current site, boundaries of the study area and the preferred concept plan. She noted that there has been an extensive public process to gather input on design concepts. A County Board-appointed working group held 11 meetings to help guide the design process. Initial public workshops were held in March and April. Input on three design concepts was solicited at a public workshop on July 23, and an on-line survey was open from July 29 to August 10, resulting in the selection of a preferred concept design.

Members of a staff working group are currently visiting County commissions and committees to gather feedback on the preferred design concept. It is anticipated that a refined concept plan will be presented to the Planning Commission in November, with a County Board work session planned for December. Ultimately, the planning and design process will update the vision outlined in the 1993 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum.

The preferred concept plan includes a large, rectangular, central open space with a lawn area. Two mature trees, the Mother's Tree and the Soldier's Tree, and their associated memorial markers are proposed to be preserved. A pedestrian promenade that will accommodate limited access for vehicles is proposed for the northern segment of North Uhle Street, between Clarendon Boulevard and 15th Street North. The promenade will continue south along the western edge of the central open space. A 12 to 14-story County building (with private mixed use), is proposed to be located on the site currently occupied by the County's Court Square West

building. A civic/cultural building, which may also include a market space, is proposed to be located at the southern end of the open space area.

After a design framework has been approved, more detailed design components, including a planting plan for the central open space, will be incorporated into planning documents.

Steve Campbell noted that access for emergency vehicles along the promenade will need to be considered as tree planting plans are developed. He also noted that plans to preserve the Mother's Tree and Soldier's Tree must include adequate tree protection measures to minimize soil disturbance and impacts to their roots during construction.

Nora Palmatier asked how much land within the planning area is controlled by Arlington County. Ms. Rhodes replied that County properties include the current surface lot, the Court Square West building, a small building in the "Landmark Block" where ASPAN is currently housed, and the property where the AMC Theater is located (although the tenant currently holds a 60-year lease on the property).

The commission will submit a letter to the County Board commenting on the planning process and concept design within the next two to three weeks.

Comments on VDOT's Proposed Tree Removal and Replacement Protocol

The commission reviewed a draft letter written by Dean Amel to provide input on VDOT's proposed tree removal and replacement protocol. Comments are due to VDOT by September 29, and should be submitted through a VDOT website that was designed for this purpose.

The draft letter stresses the need for VDOT to consider local landscaping requirements, including tree replacement guidelines, when planning landscape improvements and mitigation. It cites Federal Highway Administration policy stating that local environmental goals should be considered on projects that receive federal funding (such as the Arlington Boulevard project).

The draft letter also urges VDOT to expand the area available for tree replacements by planting replacement trees on other VDOT properties within the locality but outside of the project area, and/or, to identify mechanisms to fund tree replacements on nearby public or private properties. Arlington's Tree Canopy Fund Program is given as an example and potential vehicle to meet tree replacement requirements by funding tree planting on other properties.

Mikaila Milton suggested that the letter to VDOT should also call attention to the tree loss and habitat destruction caused by the disposal of soil and construction debris on two formerly wooded sites within the Washington Boulevard/Arlington Boulevard interchange area. The final letter will urge VDOT to avoid such practices.

The commission also reviewed another draft letter written by Dean Amel to notify the County Board that the UFC is sending comments to VDOT. The draft letter also informs the County

Board that Delegate Patrick Hope may reintroduce legislation for controlling invasive plants and limiting their sale in Virginia. The letter urges the County Board to support such efforts.

The draft letters were approved with amendments as discussed, for submittal to the County Board.

Update on Claremont School Stormwater Project – Steven Bernheisel, APS

Steven Bernheisel (APS) updated the commission on the status of the stormwater management project at Claremont Elementary School. The project was initiated in order to address erosion of a wooded hillside leading to the Barcroft Park magnolia bog and associated wetland areas. It was also designed to allow for groundwater recharge of the aquifer that feeds the magnolia bog and wetland areas.

APS partnered with County staff on the design and oversight of the project, which is nearly complete. The project includes remediation of the eroded hillside, including the installation of native plants from a list approved by DPR Parks and Natural Resource Division staff. Inspection of the hillside after planting revealed that the contractor had substituted some plants that were not on the approved list. County and APS staff are currently working to replace inappropriate plants with species from the approved list. They are also working to adjust the placement of some plants in order to achieve a more naturalized appearance. One year of watering is included in the planting contract for the project.

Nora Palmatier noted that some volunteers who have seen the project thought that it would negatively impact the magnolia bog, not realizing that it will actually help preserve the bog in the long run. She suggested that some additional outreach/education efforts would help with public perception.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the July 24, 2014 UFC meeting were approved with spelling corrections

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon reported that a job announcement to fill DPR's Parks and Natural Resources Division Chief position has been posted.
- Vincent Verweij reported that DPR staff are currently reviewing a draft update of County Administrative Regulation 4.3, Tree Planting on Public Property. An interdepartmental review will follow.
- Vincent Verweij and Rachel Jackson recently attended the Capital Region Invasive Pest Symposium (CRIPS), "What's Bugging Your Trees?". UFC member Mikaila Milton

also attended. Emerald ash borer (EAB), fall cankerworm, walnut twig borer and Asian long-horned beetle (ALB) were among the topics covered. ALB has not been found in the Washington area. Parasitoid wasps are being tried as a control for EAB in Maryland.

- Vincent Verweij reported that staff is in the process of updating tree canopy coverage requirements associated with the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance to provide a double canopy credit for preserving existing trees if adequate tree protection measures are implemented. The purpose of the change is to encourage the preservation of mature trees during development.
- Rachel Jackson reported that DPR is resuming EAB treatments on large, County-owned ash trees this fall. DPR currently plans to treat 34 ash trees, staggering treatments every other year.

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 – No report.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – No report.

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

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

Tree Canopy Fund – No report. Dean Amel thanked UFC members who helped review Tree Canopy Fund Grant applications for this year's program.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – No report. Elizabeth Rives' has resigned from the UFC and from the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee. A new NCAC representative to the UFC needs to be identified.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier will serve as the new Chair of the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable. She encouraged other UFC members to attend Roundtable meetings/conferences. She will also work to encourage more participation in Roundtable events by private industry.

Virginia Department of Forestry – No report.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – No additional report.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – No report.

New Business:

- Dean Amel announced that Nora Palmatier will serve as the UFC representative on the Thomas Jefferson Site Evaluation Working Group. Mr. Amel substituted for Ms. Palmatier at the Working Group's first meeting on September 20, which consisted of a site visit. DPR Urban Foresters Rachel Jackson and Vincent Verweij have surveyed all trees on the grounds of the Thomas Jefferson site.
- Dean Amel reported that DPR is about to begin the process to update the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP). It is expected to take 2 to 3 years to update the Plan. Mr. Amel will participate in the process and represent the UFC unless there are other volunteers from the commission. He noted that DPR intends to include a Land Acquisition Policy within the PSMP.
- Nora Palmatier reminded commission members that Arlington's Tree Distribution Program will take on October 4, at the County's nursery facility. As in previous years, tree Stewards will be on site to help coordinate pick-ups and provide educational information on tree planting and maintenance to residents. All understory/flowering trees have been reserved, but quite a few large shade trees are still available.

Attachments to September 25, 2014 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Committee – Caroline Haynes

NRJAG heard from representatives of the Audubon at Home program on efforts to encourage property owners to plant native plants, manage water on site, reduce or eliminate chemicals and reduce lawns. The Arlington Regional Master Naturalists have taken the lead on coordinating the outreach and site visits in Arlington and Alexandria. Master Gardeners and other conservation organizations have taken the lead in other jurisdictions.

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes

The Park and Recreation Commission took a walking field trip of Jennie Dean Park and Shirlington Park for the August meeting. The site visit was in preparation of the anticipated master planning of Jennie Dean and the adjacent parcels that have been purchased with land acquisition funds for the park. The agenda for the September PRC meeting includes a presentation by Steve Cole on the revised site plan review process, as well as an update on the Courthouse Square planning process.

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier

Members have been staffing tables at farmers markets in Westover, Courthouse and Del Ray with advertising of the tree distributions next month. Several have met with homeowners/condo/church owners to assist with choosing tree species. All of the 140 Alexandria's trees have been reserved; Arlington still has sycamores, hophornbeam, hackberry and tag alder. Reserve at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tree-distribution-program-2014-tickets-12933336959>

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 7PM at Fairlington Community Center is the continuing education program on Emerald Ash Borer with Rachel Jackson and other pests with Kirsten Buhls.

Next TS Class starts February 3, 2015, Tuesdays 7-9:30 PM at Fairlington