

## **Forestry and Natural Resources Commission Charter** **Adopted November 17, 2020**

**Introduction:** The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) is created as an advisory body by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia. The Arlington County Board initially established the Urban Forestry Commission by adoption of a charge on June 10, 1990.

**Mission:** The Commission shall provide the Board with advice and recommendations to improve the health and sustainability of Arlington's urban forests, natural areas, and natural resources. The Commission charge includes:

- Programs and policies for the maintenance and enhancement of trees and other natural resources on public property.
- The preservation or restoration of trees, other native vegetation, biodiversity, and ecological sustainability in conservation areas, parks, and other County owned natural areas.
- The preservation and enhancement of trees, other natural resources, and natural features associated with development and infrastructure improvement projects on public and private property.

The Commission shall coordinate education and outreach activities to foster the preservation and enhancement of trees, native plants, and natural habitat on private property, which provide biophilic, economic, social, and environmental benefits for the County as a whole.

The Commission shall be advisory to the County Board, and in that capacity may undertake studies, develop recommendations, conduct public meetings and educational programs, hold hearings, prepare reports, and appear before public bodies to further the objectives stated above.

**Governing Documents:** Urban Forest Master Plan; Natural Resources Management Plan; Public Spaces Master Plan; Integrated Forestry and Natural Resources Master Plan (under development), as well as portions of other plans that pertain to Arlington's forestry and natural resource interests.

**Functions and Scope:** The functions of the Arlington County Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall include:

1. Overseeing implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan (2003), which is an element of the Public Spaces Master Plan.
2. Overseeing implementation of the Tree Preservation Ordinance and other current and future ordinances and authorities that pertain to urban forestry and natural resource concerns.
3. Overseeing implementation of the Tree Canopy Fund, in cooperation with the non-profit organization EcoAction Arlington.
4. Jointly with the Park and Recreation Commission and the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission, overseeing implementation of the

- Natural Resources Management Plan (2010), including providing FNRC representation on the Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group;
5. Overseeing, in collaboration with the Park and Recreation Commission and the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission, implementation of the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Master Plan, a priority action item in the Public Spaces Master Plan and currently under development, once approved;
  6. Advising on the acquisition and creation of natural spaces, including acquisition of privately-owned woodlands, natural areas, and restorable spaces in the built environment;
  7. Recommending tree canopy, natural resource, and ecological goals for the County as a whole, for individual neighborhoods, and for portions of the County covered by area or sector plans.
  8. Participating in the site-plan review process, and making recommendations concerning tree preservation and planting, natural resource priorities, and ecological sustainability in site-plan projects.
  9. Participating in community master planning for the purpose of meeting tree canopy goals, conserving existing forest, ensuring that streetscape plans provide good sites for street trees and other natural resources, and advising on other ecological and biodiversity interests.
  10. Making recommendations concerning elements of transportation plans that have implications for the urban forest and other natural resources, including trees and other ecological assets near streets, paths, and trails.
  11. Making recommendations concerning elements of the County budget that relate to the urban forest, natural resources, and ecological sustainability.
  12. Monitoring efforts to control invasive species and other natural and human threats to wooded parks and natural areas, and making recommendations regarding the scope and nature of those efforts.
  13. Cooperating with Arlington Public Schools to foster planting and care of trees and other natural features on school properties and to promote outdoor learning opportunities related to trees, natural habitats, biodiversity, and urban nature.
  14. Coordinating a variety of outreach and education activities, including Arbor Day ceremonies, Tree City USA awards, and the Notable Trees selection process.
  15. Coordinating the Champion Trees program, working with staff and volunteers to identify champion trees and selecting some for designation as Specimen Trees under the Tree Preservation Ordinance.
  16. Participating in the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable, fostering exchanges of information with other jurisdictions, and working to enhance urban forests across the region.
  17. Working with educational institutions and state organizations to plan forestry conferences.
  18. Preparing an annual work plan for the Commission in consultation with the County Board.

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall keep County and community leadership apprised of issues and actions regarding the status, preservation,

enhancement, and management of Arlington's urban forest, natural resources, and urban ecology.

**Membership:** The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall be comprised of fifteen (15) members. These members are drawn from:

- One member from the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission;
- One member from the Park and Recreation Commission;
- One member from the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee;
- Twelve members appointed at-large, including individuals with direct knowledge of urban forestry, natural resource and urban ecology matters, either from their professional background or from training and volunteer activities in such programs as Tree Stewards or Master Naturalists.

In addition, the Commission may designate non-voting members to represent organizations with an interest in the urban forest. These include state organizations such as the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension; County organizations such as Arlington Public Schools; and non-profit organizations such as EcoAction Arlington.

The County Board will appoint and maintain a roster of members including contact information, official affiliation, appointment dates, reappointment dates, and expiration dates of terms.

Members will be appointed for three-year terms. All members serve at the pleasure of the Board.

Forestry and Natural Resources Commission members are expected to serve a liaison function to interested parties in Arlington including any group who has formally submitted their name for membership. A member of the Commission who fails to attend three (3) Forestry and Natural Resources Commission meetings in a single year without providing advance notice to the Chair, or staff, may be asked to resign his or her remaining term on the Commission. The Commission Chair, after consultation with the County Board liaison, shall notify the member if such an action is warranted.

**Chair, Vice Chair (if applicable) and Committees (if applicable):** The County Board shall appoint a Chair or the Group shall forward a nomination to the Board who shall serve as Chair to lead the efforts of the Advisory Group. Also, one member of the group may be appointed by the County Board or the Group to serve as Vice-chair when the Chair is unavailable.

**Committee Membership:** The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission may create committees, as are necessary, to accomplish specific Commission missions and the Chairman shall appoint committee leadership. Committee membership may include persons who are not on the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission.

**Staff Liaison:** The County Manager shall appoint a member of staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation to serve as liaison to the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission.

**Meetings:** The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission will meet as needed to adequately fulfill its role and responsibilities outlined in this charter. Meetings will typically be held on a monthly basis, with the possible exception of the July or August meeting, which may be cancelled if a significant number of commission members expect to be absent.

All meetings will comply with Virginia Open Meeting requirements and the Freedom of Information Act. Agendas and meeting minutes will be made available to the public in a timely manner.

The Advisory Group Handbook provides additional information on the conduct of meetings as well as communication protocols that should guide all members in their advisory group work.

**Reporting to the Board:** The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission will provide recommendations to the County Board about the preservation, enhancement, and management of Arlington's urban forest, natural resources, and urban ecology. The Forestry Commission will at a minimum submit an annual report to the County Board after consultation with the Board Liaison. The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission may, from time to time, be asked to provide comment at a regular Board meeting or Board work session. In addition, testimony from advisory groups on budget and capital spending priorities is always welcome. The Chair should consult with the staff liaison and review the published public hearing schedules.

**Update of this Charter:** From time to time, the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission shall review this charter to assure that it meets current needs. Any requests for changes must be processed through the Board Liaison.

**Definitions:**

**Ecological Sustainability:** Maintaining natural resources and ensuring the viability of future generations of all organisms and natural systems.

**Natural Resources:** Those natural biotic and abiotic components, such as trees, other woody plants, herbaceous plants, wildlife, streams, wetlands, ponds and natural geological features, and the unified and inter-related system that they comprise, as highlighted in the Natural Resources Management Plan.

**Urban Ecology:** The relation of flora and fauna with each other and their surroundings in the context of our urban environment.