

Urban Forestry Commission
September 26, 2013
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Mikaila Milton
Paul Campanella
Elizabeth Rives
Scott Brinitzer
Ed Hilz

State and County Staff

Vincent Verweij, DPR
Jamie Bartalon, DPR

Guests

Patrick Kenney

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Updating Administrative Regulation 4.3, Tree Planting on Public Property / Soil Volume for Trees – Vincent Verweij, DPR

Vincent Verweij (DPR) updated the commission on work in progress to update County Administrative Regulation 4.3, as well as work to increase the volume of soil available to trees at the time of planting. These two agenda items were combined in a single presentation/discussion because of their inter-relationship.

Mr. Verweij is working on proposed revisions and additions to Administrative Regulation 4.3, which has not been updated since 1982. The administrative regulation outlines requirements and guidelines for trees planted by the County. Although the current version of Administrative Regulation 4.3 is over 30 years old, Mr. Verweij noted that (with the exception of some recommended tree species) it still reflects many current best practices. However, Mr. Verweij is proposing to include updated tree planting details and recommended tree species lists in a revised administrative regulation. The revised document will also include updated standards for soil quality and soil composition, as well as dimensions for excavation during planting and soil volume available to trees in pits.

Examples of several new tree planting details were shown and discussed. The planting detail for trees in pits reduces the depth of excavation from the current depth of 60 inches, to a depth of 30 to 36 inches, or the depth required to accommodate the tree's rootball (including a 12-inch sub-base for drainage). The new detail also eliminates the requirement to automatically stake trees, and includes a better illustration of how to properly mulch a tree.

During a discussion of the proposed depth reduction for tree pits it was noted that the current requirement for a 60 inch deep tree pit does not provide additional benefits for tree health and survival beyond what is provided by excavating to the proper depth necessary to accommodate a

tree's rootball and provide adequate drainage. Mr. Verweij also noted that reducing the depth of required excavation for tree pits will also result in significant cost savings. This savings may be used to partially offset the costs of increasing the amount of horizontal soil volume available to trees through the installation of structural cells or continuous soil panels.

Mr. Verweij noted, assuming that the depth of "usable" soil for tree roots is 36 inches, a standard 12 foot by 5 foot tree pit provides 180 cubic feet of soil volume. The installation of a 5-foot wide continuous soil panel between tree pits spaced 30 feet apart, results in 450 cubic feet of soil volume. Current research by DES's Engineering Bureau indicates that reinforced sidewalks can bridge a 7-foot wide continuous soil panel, which would result in 630 cubic feet of usable soil. The width of a continuous soil panel (and resulting soil volume) could be increased further through the use of structural cells, which are now being produced by several companies.

The current tree planting administrative regulation requires a minimum planting strip width of four feet between the curb and sidewalk for planting trees in "tree lawns". The revised version of Administrative Regulation 4.3 will recommend establishing wider planting strips; however, planting will still be permitted in four-foot strips for tree replacements and new installations where there is not sufficient County right-of-way to accommodate wider planting strips. It was noted that the current Form Based Code calls for 8-foot wide tree lawns along some sections of Columbia Pike where sufficient right-of-way exists.

During a conversation about the County's use of permeable pavement, Elizabeth Rives noted that DES is very resistant to considering the use of permeable pavement in the South 7th Street W&OD Trail entrance project. The main concern expressed by DES is that, in addition to increased installation costs, permeable pavement also requires regular maintenance (and associated costs) to prevent clogging. It was noted that DPR has used (or plans to use) permeable pavement in several park improvement projects. Ms. Rives urged advocacy for interdepartmental support for the use of permeable pavement.

Scott Brinitzer suggested that photographs of trees that were planted using various types of soil treatments (such as continuous soil panels and Siva Cells) would provide a helpful comparison of results, and illustrate the importance of providing increased soil volume for tree growth and survival. Vincent Verweij noted that the literature does contain such comparative studies, but that projects in Arlington have been built too recently to show visible results. He noted that the Rosslyn Commons project, and others in that area, includes continuous soil panels. Silva Cells were used under the plaza area at Penrose Place.

Ed Hilz was curious about how the development community will view trade-offs associated with applying money saved by decreased excavation depth requirements, towards the cost of soil enhancements, such as the construction of continuous soil panels and installation of structural cells. Nora Palmatier asked if requirements to improve the quality of soil used for tree planting will also be addressed in the revised administrative regulation. Vincent Verweij noted that the addition of organic amendments, such as leaf mulch, may be included.

Jamie Bartalon informed the commission that the draft recommendations to update Administrative Regulation 4.3 must still go through a more extensive internal, interdepartmental

review process. Staff will report back to the commission when proposed changes have been incorporated into a draft document for review and comment.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the July 25, 2013 UFC meeting were approved with minor corrections.

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon reported that, in addition to the letter submitted by the UFC, County staff also submitted comments to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) on proposed changes to the state's Noxious Weed Law. County comments included a recommendation to designate plants as "noxious weeds" if they are listed by the Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR) as highly or moderately invasive. The County also proposed that plants classified as being invasive in Virginia should be labeled as such if they are being sold.
- Jamie Bartalon and Nora Palmatier reported that the website to reserve trees for the Tree Distribution Program is up and running. This year, residents can select from a list of 6 native trees and reserve their selection on-line. The Tree Distribution event will take place at the Arlington County nursery, 8 am to 3 pm, on October 26th. Jamie Bartalon thanked Tree Stewards for their assistance with this event, including those who visited nurseries to help select trees.
- A split has developed in the trunk of the County Co-Champion white oak on North 16th Street. Staff is in the process of soliciting bids for cabling and/or bracing to try to preserve the tree. Elizabeth Rives asked staff to evaluate the condition of the swamp white oak adjacent to the shelter in Bluemont Park. She believes that the tree is declining.
- Vincent Verweij reported that the list of plants known to be invasive in Arlington County (created by Parks and Natural Resource Division staff) will be incorporated into CPHD's Landscape Standards document.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – The Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (NRJAG) report by Caroline Haynes is attached.

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes reported that in lieu of an August meeting, members of the Park and Recreation Commission did a walking tour of the Wilson School and redevelopment sites in Rosslyn.

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris’ report on recent planning activities is attached.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – Ed Hilz was not able to attend the September 18 PFRC meeting; however, he forwarded the following information to UFC members:

The PFRC is starting its review of the McKinley School Expansion at 1030 North McKinley Road. It held its first meeting on September 18 and toured the site. I was out of town, so I was not able to attend the meeting. The following is a link to a summary of the September 18 meeting:

<<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/Commissions/PublicFacilitiesReviewCommittee/page86074.aspx>>. Although the entry for September 18 is labeled “New ES #1 Report”, it is actually a report on the McKinley School expansion.

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) – Alex Sanders’ E2C2 report is attached.

Champion Trees Committee – No report.

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier reported that the Tree Steward organization has submitted a Tree canopy Fund Grant proposal to produce posters that illustrate changes to Arlington’s tree canopy coverage. A couple of laminated posters already exist, and have generated a lot of conversations when they are displayed at the Arlington Farmer’s Market and other events.

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier and Dean Amel discussed recommendations to plant some tree species in the spring. Although it is recognized that several species of trees tend to benefit from spring planting, only white oaks and black gums will be planted in the spring of 2014, since grant awardees were not notified otherwise. In future years, an expanded list of trees to be planted in the spring will be shared with applicants. Vincent Verweij clarified that the advantage for planting some species in the spring is actually a function of when those species are dug at the nursery.

Ms. Palmatier stated that she would like to have a broader discussion of the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program with the commission when planning next year’s program. Among the points for discussion is whether large caliper trees should be planted (as has been the practice), or whether smaller caliper “whips” should be made available. She would also like to discuss whether “Gator Bags” should be provided with Tree Canopy Fund grants.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – Elizabeth Rives’ NCAC report is attached.

Columbia Pike Form Based Code Advisory Working Group – Steve Campbell’s Columbia Pike Form Based Code Advisory Working Group report is attached.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – No report. Jim McGlone was unable to attend the September 26, UFC meeting. However, others noted that the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable’s fall conference will be held on November 19, at Algonkian Park in Sterling, Virginia. The theme of the conference is “Planning for Climate Resiliency in the Urban Forest”.

Virginia Department of Forestry – No report. Jim McGlone was unable to attend the September 26, UFC meeting.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – Jim Meikle was not able to attend the September 26, UFC meeting, but submitted the following information:

The hot environmental issue for schools right now is storm water management. After discussions with County Staff it was determined that we should get our own MS4 permit and we have started that process. We anticipate needing significant additional staff and contract resources just to deal with this issue. We aim to make additional trees a big part of the solutions we use to meet our MS4 requirements going forward.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – No report.

New Business

- Dean Amel noted that a task force has been created to assist with the West Rosslyn planning study, including future use of APS’s Wilson School property. Representatives from E2C2 and the Park and Recreation Commission have been appointed to the task force. Very few trees are located on the Wilson School property.
- Mr. Amel noted that the County Board approved plans for Pen Place on Saturday, September 21. He stressed the importance of UFC participation in Site Plan Review Subcommittee meetings for planning initiatives such as this. Although UFC and Planning Commission member, Karen Kumm Morris, has been extremely valuable in her advocacy for trees, Mr. Amel requested that other UFC members volunteer to assist with attending the large number of planning meetings that take place.

Attachments to September 26, 2013 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Caroline Haynes

- **NRMP Recommendation #5: Individual NRCA Management Plans -**
Greg Zell, retired Natural Resource Specialist, is no longer serving as a consultant to the County but he has graciously agreed to volunteer his time to complete the last two Park Management plans for the Natural Resource Conservation Areas. He hopes to have all seven completed sometime this fall.
- **NRMP Recommendation #6 - Natural areas preservation, conservation and acquisition -**
Two properties, currently owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia, were highlighted as targets for potential acquisition. One parcel is in the Pimmit Run valley, the second parcel is adjacent to N. Glebe Road near Chain Bridge. Collectively, they represent around 15 acres and include wetlands and some significant champion trees. It is highly unlikely that the property would ever be used for road construction in the future and it was suggested that Arlington County should request that it be deeded to the County for use as parkland.

A second potential acquisition could be in the form of a conservation easement adding to Barcroft Park. Eight acres of a globally rare plant community that is currently part of Claremont and is unusable by them could be a valuable addition to the NRCA. It was suggested that both proposals should be brought to the attention of Jane Rudolph, Department of Parks and Recreation Director.

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris

PenPlace

- 10 ac vacant site along Army Navy Drive in Pentagon City, proposal for 1.8 million SF of office, hotel and retail uses. 1.5-2 acres of public open space, and a 20,000 SF community facility as a major public benefit. Purchase of \$15 million TDR's from Long Bridge to increase the density over the allowable zoning limit that helps fund the construction of the aquatic center.
- Very controversial, many issues over density, TDR's, lack of residential component, lack of specificity on uses of public open space and community facility and, of course, traffic congestion.
- The site is the largest undeveloped tract of land this close to downtown DC. Represents major economic development opportunity for the County.
- County Board approved the plans with a number of significant improvements. They set up a working group and a public process to further identify needed recreational uses and programming for the open space concept that will be reviewed by the various commissions with final approval by the County Board.
- This follow up step will be the Urban Forestry Commission's opportunity to weave urban forestry planning into the open space concept and have specific design guidance in the

design guidelines document. I gave urban forestry guidance early in the process (closely spaced, diverse street trees, woodland in the Secure Building stand off space, use of soil panel for all street trees, etc) but the discussion at SPRC focused on so many other threshold issues that the urban forestry comments were not a priority at this time. But we will bring them forward again in the working group to come.

- County Board did not approve residential uses to the dismay of many in the community including the Planning Commission.

Williamsburg Elementary (Ed Hilz may wish to add to this)

- A 96,800 SF elementary school on the Williamsburg Middle School site in North Arlington. 100 new parking spaces, a high school sized gym, reconfiguration of the ballfields (didn't lose fields but did lose informal play areas).
- Major traffic circulation issues to work out. Significant loss of on site trees and street streets.
- Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) worked out as best they could mitigation of the impacts. Everyone recognizes that another school needs to be built.
- Additional tree preservation, identified by the Planning Commission, was achieved by revising some grading. APS has agreed to do so.
- Main issue was the last minute decision by the County Manager to install synthetic turf that would lead eventually to lighting the fields in the future. This decision came after the PFRC meeting concluded. County Board resolved issue by calling for a working group to study the impacts of lighting fields and a strongly worded condition that lights were not a foregone conclusion given need to protect the character of the surrounding community.
- Additional evergreen screening was added to the western edge of the woodland as well as revised grading to save these trees along the western edge and adjacent to the south end middle school parking lot.
- A significant number of new trees will be planted. Hundreds of new trees and a commitment to maintaining them.

Realize Rosslyn - Sector Plan Addendum

- Open House- Oct. 4 (informational) and Workshop (participatory)- Oct. 5, go visit the website and RSVP for breakfast and lunch on Oct. 5
- Key opportunity to get urban forestry objectives and recommendations into the Sector Plan.
- Opportunity to get a policy guidance promoting extensive tree planting with a goal of 17% tree canopy coverage.
- Increase in soil volumes above County's standard to sustain healthy street trees given the harsh urban environment.
- Wider sidewalks key to getting sufficient space for all the competing interests in the public realm.
- Recognize the environmental benefits of street trees for clean air, reduction of heat build up, storm water infiltration, etc.
- Plan to come and bring a friend. Turn out matters.

Western Rosslyn Planning Area (Wilson School) (Dean may wish to add more info)

- Program for 60,000 SF open space
- Opportunity for urban forestry goals and recommendations.

Early in the process, if working group is named yet, opportunity to meet with them and promote tree canopy goals.

E2C2 – Alex Sanders

E2C2 has written a letter of support for a paved access path between the W&OD bike trail and the northbound side of Carlin Springs Road.

This was once an access road for utility vehicles but has been abandoned for several years.

We are unaware of any tree loss from this project. The site is no longer mowed and has been permitted to recover from its previous uses in the last few years.

Note: E2C2's letter of support was attached in Mr. Sander's e-mail to UFC members.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee – Elizabeth Rives

The Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee approved the Arlington Ridge Neighborhood Conservation plan and heard a brief presentation by new Parks and Recreation Director Jane Rudolph at its September 12 meeting. Items of interest to UFC members include:

- NCAC projects deadline is November 15. Neighborhoods desiring projects to be put into the NCAC funding queue must have the President of the civic association submit a letter to NCAC staff by the November 15 deadline.
- NCAC staff announced that they are working on internal streamlining of NC plans to get them moving through the process more quickly. At the moment there are four plans in the queue, with two more expected to be submitted soon. Staff targets three plans to be in process at any one time, so efforts are being undertaken to expedite the process.
- NCAC reps had a lively discussion with Director Rudolph about several items of concern in neighborhoods, including: 1) not enough maintenance (mowing) of parks (this was mostly directed at a park in Cherrydale) and invasive control in parks; 2) pedestrian pathway lighting after dark; 3) residents from outside the county using lighted basketball courts, preventing access to the courts by County residents; 4) insufficient "Adopt-a-Park" opportunities; and, 5) ways to get volunteers more involved in Park operations. The mowing/invasive control issue generated the most discussion, with reps saying that the Department has not done even minimal maintenance/upkeep of certain parks to the extent that they are now too overgrown with invasives for citizen/volunteer efforts to have any effect. Arlington Forest rep Timothy O'Leary noted that their civic association used NCAC funds for the massive invasive removal project in Lubber Run, and suggested that other neighborhoods consider doing the same. Chick Walter of Arlington

Ridge noted as a matter of principle that invasive removal in many parks should be part of the maintenance responsibilities of the Parks Department and should not require expenditures of neighborhood money.

The Committee's next meeting is October 10.

Columbia Pike Form Based Code Advisory Working Group – Steve Campbell

Below are links if you would like to access the latest draft of the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan Form-based Code. The process is nearing the finish line.

I did have a couple of concerns and have discussed them with Vincent or Jen Smith (head planner).

- 1) When development takes place adjacent to a Preserved Natural Area (these are privately owned), under the FBC locating limits of soil disturbance at the perimeter of the natural area would be determined by a certain formula. (See Part 3/ 301./ D.Preserved Natural Areas /1. (on page 13 of the new draft)). Vincent is taking another look at the wording of this section.
- 2) One section specifies that street tree planting area soil levels may be between 0-6" above the sidewalk level (probably at the root ball)(505./B./3./a. (page 59). Vincent is checking on that.
- 3) I suggested shredded hardwood mulch might be an alternative to turf and other groundcovers. Vincent pointed out that shredded mulch is not an accepted erosion control cover (505./B./C./3. (page 59)).
- 4) Some of the wording regarding diseased or damaged trees in the Conservation Area section may need some tweaking (703. B./10./b./i)/d. (page 96)).

If I have any additional comments I will send them to you before Thursday's meeting. If any of you have any comments please address them to Vincent and/or me.

All in all this code will provide the Columbia Pike area with many more trees planted along its streets, trees which will have available soil volumes significantly greater than the current County standard. As a result these trees will have a much greater chance to reach a mature size. Also, this code prohibits the planting of invasive plant species, even on private property. Biggest disappointment is the limited amount of open space/natural areas that resulted from the Columbia Pike Neighborhood Area Plan ("parent" of the FBC). Of course this is a larger, County-wide issue and will have to be addressed as such.

Due to a conflict I will not be able to attend the UFC meeting this week (I will be attending the *last* meeting of the Columbia Pike FBC AWG).

- **Final Draft Form Based Code:** [Parts 1, 2 & 3 |Regulating Plan Maps](#) | [Part 4](#) | [BES Frontages](#) | [Parts 5-10](#)
- **Final Draft Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Amendments:** [Western Pike](#) | [Central Pike](#) | [Eastern Pike](#) | [Entire Columbia Pike](#)