

**Urban Forestry Commission
November 21, 2013
Meeting Summary**

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Paul Campanella
Larry Finch
Caroline Haynes
Steve Campbell

State and County Staff

Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR
Alonso Abugattas, DPR
Steven Bernheisel, APS
Jim McGlone, VDOF
Kirsten Buhls, VCE

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Updates on Natural Resources Management Plan Implementation – Alonso Abugattas

Alonso Abugattas (DPR) updated the commission on recent activities associated with implementing recommendations in the County's Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP). The NRMP, adopted by the County Board in November, 2010, has 19 major recommendations. Mr. Abugattas distributed a spreadsheet that is used to track implementation status/progress on each of the 19 recommendations. Quarterly summary reports are also provided to DPR Director, Jane Rudolph, and Parks and Natural Resources Division Chief, Caroline Temmermand.

Mr. Abugattas reviewed several initiatives associated with Recommendation #11 in the NRMP - "Promote the use of native plant species in County-sponsored plantings and enhance the ability to procure local ecotype plant stock". DPR's new "Planting Policies and Guidelines" prohibit the planting of invasive plants on County projects and recommend planting local ecotypes in Natural Resource Conservation Areas (NRCA's). A native plant nursery is in the process of being established to grow local ecotypes. An area has been fenced off to house the new operation, and supplies for building nursery beds, a shade structure, and sprinklers have been ordered. Seeds from about 20 local species have been collected, including "state rare" frosted hawthorn seeds.

Dean Amel asked where the resulting local ecotypes will be planted, and whether any would be available for use in the Tree Distribution Program or planted on school grounds. Mr. Abugattas explained that the plants will initially be used for restoration projects in NRCA's, but may be available for general planting projects after the nursery operation becomes established. Larry Finch suggested that Natural Areas should be considered the next priority for planting local ecotypes (after NRCA's). Mr. Abugattas agreed.

As nursery production increases over time, it may be possible to move some plants to “foster nurseries” so that there is more room at the County facility for growing additional seedlings. The establishment of foster nurseries and care of plant stock may be a role for volunteer groups.

Recommendation #3 in the NRMP calls for the establishment of a GIS-based environmental review process to help ensure that projects on County land do not impact documented, significant natural resources. It also recommends exploring ways to help ensure that land disturbing activities on private property do not impact documented natural resources on public property.

Approximately 120 natural features, with 100-foot buffer zones around each, have been mapped and incorporated into an environmental review GIS layer. “Map books” containing these features have also been distributed to key staff so that features can be identified before land disturbing projects or maintenance activities are performed.

A draft Administrative Regulation (AR) that outlines the process for Rapid Environmental Reviews of County projects that occur within 100 feet of documented significant natural resources is currently being reviewed by the County Manager. An interdepartmental review of the draft AR will follow.

Dean Amel asked how significant natural resources or buffer zones extending onto private property will be addressed when projects are initiated by residents. Mr. Abugattas explained that the County may be able to negotiate with property owners to protect natural resources in cases where development is occurring through a special exception process, such as a Site Plan, Use Permit, or Unified Residential Development. Otherwise, the County can only notify and educate property owners of potential impacts to natural resources, encouraging them to implement preservation measures.

Larry Finch noted that E2C2 is currently reviewing AR 4.4, which governs the County’s overall Environmental Assessment process. The review of AR 4.4 is likely to be a lengthy process. Mr. Finch cautioned that it will be important to keep the review and adoption of the new AR (for significant natural resource features) separate from the AR 4.4 review process, so that its adoption is not delayed by AR 4.4.

Mr. Abugattas also reported that draft management plans have been completed for six of seven NRCA’s, as per NRMP Recommendation #5. The final management plan (for Glencarlyn Park) will be completed soon. Plans will be reviewed by Parks and Natural Resource Division staff responsible for park maintenance and management.

Other initiatives underway include the review of best practices for managing meadow areas; re-colonizing certain species of frogs, salamanders and butterflies in former habitats; and, monitoring deer populations.

Mr. Abugattas noted that meadow areas are very susceptible to being overrun by invasive plants. Meadows are best managed by conducting prescribed burns; however, Arlington’s Fire Department has not supported this approach. Staff is researching other management techniques

that mimic the effects of fire, such as thatch removal and scarification of the ground. Techniques are being tried near the Barcroft Park magnolia bog, at Fort C.F. Smith, and in areas under transmission power lines; however, each site is unique and there is not a single protocol that works well in all situations. Jim McGlone (Virginia Department of Forestry) offered his department's assistance with explaining safety protocols and helping to manage controlled burns if Arlington wants to reconsider their use as a management technique.

Some success has already been achieved with re-colonizing species in former habitats. New populations of some species of spring frogs have been established in vernal pools by moving egg masses and breeding pairs from other areas. Positive results have also been observed as a result of managing salamander habitats, and by introducing host plants for butterfly species.

Mr. Abugattas has observed anecdotal evidence of deer altering plant communities, and expects to see major impacts on woodlands in the future if deer populations are not managed. A panel of local experts met in Arlington to discuss region-wide problems caused by expanding deer populations and options for control. Mr. Abugattas has performed some surveys to monitor Arlington's deer population and is planning further efforts.

Mr. Abugattas concluded his briefing by noting that inter and intra-departmental cooperation and coordination among staff on natural resource management issues has greatly increased since adoption of the County's NRMP.

Seattle's Urban Forest Master Plan...Ideas for Discussion – Vincent Verweij, DPR

Vincent Verweij reported there has been a lot of activity across the nation in the past few years to establish Urban Forest Master Plans. He has been reviewing plans from other jurisdictions for ideas that may be incorporated into a revision of Arlington's Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP). He noted that Arlington's current UFMP, adopted in 2004, was quite good for its time and was one of the first comprehensive plans that addressed more than street trees.

Mr. Verweij reviewed the template and layout of Seattle's revised Urban Forest Management Plan. The revised plan (adopted in 2013) incorporates many photographs and graphics, which makes it inviting for people to read. It stresses an ecological approach towards urban forest management, with preservation and maintenance as high priorities.

Seattle's plan begins with an executive summary and listing of guiding principles. It has a natural resource management perspective that extends beyond managing only trees. Priority actions include "preserving what you have", maintaining existing trees, restoration efforts, planting new trees, and education/awareness.

The Seattle plan includes recommendations for different levels of forest management according to land use types, such as management techniques to be used in natural areas, residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Topic areas include: canopy coverage, invasive plants, soils, available growing space, utility conflicts, green roofs/green infrastructure, urban agriculture, solar access, and forest health monitoring. Larry Finch noted that Seattle's plan not

only provides guidance to staff, it is also written and formatted in a manner that is inviting for the public to read.

Paul Campanella noted that some power companies are considering tree and vegetation management when setting utility rates. Larry Finch recommended that Arlington's revised UFMP should include a template for periodic updates on implementation status.

In addition to research on other urban forest master plans, canopy coverage calculations, and topics for inclusion, Vincent Verweij has begun to compile photographs taken in Arlington to include within Arlington's revised UFMP. Additional staff resources will be directed to completing the plan after the vacant Urban Forester position has been filled.

Discussion of Pending Letters to the County Board

Site Plan Comment Letters –

Dean Amel will draft separate UFC comment letters to the County Board for “The Spring” (Carlin Springs Road and North Thomas Street) and for the project at 2401 Wilson Boulevard. Both letters will incorporate comments and recommendations provided by Karen Kumm Morris, including comments on the use of structural soil. The letters will be circulated among UFC members for review before being sent to the County Board.

Letter on Unified Residential Development Process –

Commission members agreed to delay sending a letter to the County Board on possible changes to streamline the Unified Residential Development process pending more research on the actual outcomes of long-term tree preservation efforts that have resulted from the use of this process, and the frequency of its use.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 24, 2013 UFC meeting were approved as submitted.

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon reported that the County Manager is predicting an estimated \$25 million budget gap for the combined County/APS budget in Fiscal Year 2015. A budget briefing with commission chairs is being held this evening.
- A very successful Tree Distribution Program was held on October 26, at the County nursery. Over 500 trees were distributed to residents. More than a dozen Tree Stewards volunteered at the event, providing information and advice on tree selection, planting and maintenance.
- Vincent Verweij informed the commission of a new “root bridging” product that allows sidewalks to be installed on top of less compacted soils.

- Vincent Verweij informed the commission that a project to install a new bridge near the Pentagon at the Washington Boulevard/Route 110 interchange will result in the removal of about 85 trees. Mr. Verweij provided recommendations for tree preservation, although the project is occurring on federal and state property.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Caroline Haynes reported that Lisa Bright (Earth Sangha) provided a very good presentation and advice on establishing a local ecotype nursery.

Park and Recreation Commission – No report. The Park and Recreation Commission has not yet held their November meeting.

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 November 20 PFRC meeting on McKinley Elementary School expansion. However, a link to information about four concept designs and the agenda for the November 20 meeting are attached.

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

Champion Trees Committee – No report.

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier reported that Tree Stewards are actively recruiting for their next training class, which begins on Feb. 11.

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier’s report on the Tree Canopy Fund is attached.

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 – Jim McGlone reported that the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable’s conference on climate change was a very big success. Topics for a winter Roundtable are currently being explored.

Virginia Department of Forestry – Jim McGlone provided the following updates:

- VDOT will be revising their list of acceptable tree species for use along state roads.
- White oak seedlings produced at the VDOF nursery this year are not up to standard.

- The Fairfax County Board is considering revising the County’s tree canopy coverage goal. The current goal is for 45% canopy coverage; however, a recent analysis found Fairfax’s actual canopy coverage to be 50%.
- A low mast production is predicted for this year, which is likely to result in significant impacts to seedlings from deer browse.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – Steven Bernheisel (APS) provided the following updates:

- The number of trees to be planted as part of the Ashlawn Elementary School expansion has increased.
- Three “planters” which act as cisterns to mitigate stormwater run-off from re-locatable classrooms have been constructed.
- Bradford pear trees that needed to be removed at Abingdon School to provide access for re-locatable classrooms will be replaced by scarlet oaks.
- The bulk of work to address stormwater run-off from Claremont School, adjacent to the Barcroft Park magnolia bog, will begin this summer.

Mr. Bernheisel also asked Nora Palmatier if there would be space for some APS staff to enroll in this year’s Tree Steward training class. Ms. Palmatier confirmed that there will be space and that APS staff are welcome to enroll.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – Kirsten Buhls (VCE) provided the following updates:

- i-Tree training will be conducted on December 11, at Fairlington Community Center.
- An exhibit on turf grasses, including some native varieties, is being held at the National Arboretum.
- The National Arboretum will host an International Society of Arboriculture workshop on tree climbing in April.

New Business

- Nora Palmatier reported that she has contacted DR. Eric Wiseman (VA Tech) about the possibility of having a graduate student evaluate the impacts of Arlington’s Tree Distribution Program and Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program. A conference with Dr. Wiseman, Ms. Palmatier, Dean Amel and Jamie Bartalon call is being scheduled to discuss ideas for evaluating the two programs.
- Ms. Palmatier also reported that Tree Stewards has received a \$500 grant from Trees Virginia to purchase tree identification plaques to be installed at a location to be determined in Arlington or Alexandria.

Attachments to November 21, 2013 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris

Below are the most recent site plans under review by the Planning Commission. Please see attachments. The 10th Street Flats provide a good model on how to setback street trees from the corner in order to maximize street trees along the block. The other project, 2401 Wilson Blvd, unfortunately has many utility conflicts making additional street trees impossible to achieve. Timing of comments is important. The Springs and 2401 Wilson Blvd will be going forward to the Planning Commission at the Jan. 6 and 8 public hearings.

10th Street Flats, Unified Commercial Mixed Use Development (UCMUD), U-3348-12-1, 3132 10th Street North (10th and Highland, Clarendon)

Proposal is for a 5 story residential development with 3,700 SF retail adjacent to the Credit Union on the west side of the project and live/work units in the middle of the block. UCMUD process is similar to a site plan and with zoning ordinance regulations that require substantial compliance with the Sector Plan. Primary issue with the proposal is that it does not provide retail in the location identified in the Sector Plan at the corner of Highland and 10th Street.

Street trees are shown on the plan view at the desirable location from the corner although the perspective does not show this. The street trees are actually proposed approximately 30 to 35 feet back from the point of intersection of the corner. And, the proposed bump out for the crosswalk helps the sight distance for turning vehicles.

The street tree layout is a model of how to handle the street tree spacing balancing all the needs to maximize trees, ensure adequate sight distances at the corner, integrate layout with street lighting and provide shade for pedestrians. We should see more layouts like this one for the urban areas of the County.

Will not have a public hearing until February, most likely.

2401 N. Wilson Blvd., Site Plan #404 & Unified Residential Development, U-3350-12-1 16th Street

Site Location (near Courthouse and Key School), includes 4 houses that front 16th Street. Proposal is to construct an 8 story hotel fronting Wilson Blvd. and redevelop existing homes along 16th Street in the rear of the property. Will require a change in the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) and rezoning from C-2 to C-O-2.5 zone. Long Range Planning Committee conducted a special study in 2011 recommending a land use change to either Medium Office/Apartment/Hotel mix or High Medium Residential Mixed Use. The County Board will hear the rezoning at the same time as the Site Plan.

The Unified Residential Development (URD) is part of the proposal redeveloping 4 small single family homes fronting 16th Street into 4 larger new single family homes with garages accessed from the shared alley behind the proposed hotel.

The project also proposes to construct a vehicular turn around (cul-de-sac) at the end of N. Adams Street. The street is currently blocked today and will remain closed due to the need to avoid cut-through traffic and safety concerns with Key School. The Fire Marshall has determined that N. Adams must allow for emergency vehicle access to 16th.

Proposed street tree locations are constrained by utilities along Wilson Blvd. and the proposed driveway access to underground parking along N. Adams Street. The Fire Marshall will not allow a tree to be planted in the cul-de-sac island. Street tree plantings along 16th Street are also constrained by over lines in front of the 4 single family homes.

Proposed Site Plan and URD.

Public Facilities Review Committee – Ed Hilz

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – The following is a link to information about four concept designs for expansion at McKinley Elementary School:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/Commissions/PublicFacilitiesReviewCommittee/page86074.aspx>>. At this link, click on "Report" under Wednesday, November 20 to access the information. If more information is provided about the November 20 meeting, I will forward it to you.

The agenda for the November 20, 2013 PFRC meeting follows:

Public Facilities Review Committee McKinley Elementary School Expansion Wednesday, November 20, 2013, 7 p.m.

McKinley Elementary School Library
1030 North McKinley Road
Arlington, VA 22205

Agenda

- I. Introduction
- II. Public Comment
- III. Update from Parks and Recreation (Jane Rudolph)
- IV. Transportation
- V. Placement/Massing
 - a. BLPC Update
 - b. Placement/Massing Options
 - c. County Response
- VI. Next Steps
 - a. December 18, 2013 – PFRC
 - b. January 15, 2014 – PFRC
 - c. January 23, 2014 – Final concept design to School Board as an informational item
 - d. January 29, 2014 – PFRC (optional meeting – feedback on School Board meeting)

e. February 6, 2014 – School Board action on final concept design

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission – Alex Sanders

Jason Papacosma at DES gave a presentation on the county's efforts to prepare for the coming requirements from the state on stormwater management. The new regulations will take effect on July 1, 2014, and are more stringent than Arlington's current regulations. In response to these upcoming regulations, the Board will consider a new Stormwater Ordinance in March 2014. E2C2 discussed the framework of a letter to the Board.

The PFRC schedule for McKinley Elementary has been accelerated. E2C2 discussed its concerns regarding the project- stormwater, protection of trees, energy efficiency and so on.

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier

More than halfway through Condo/HOA tree plantings and should start on civic associations first week of December. Hopefully with good weather, all will be planted by end of December. White oaks and black gums will be planted in the spring. I'll be sending around a list of questions for members to discuss at the next UFC meeting on possible tweaks to the TCF program.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee – Elizabeth Rives

November 14 NCAC Meeting Update:

- Ed Fendley from the Bluemont Civic Association presented the neighborhood's comprehensive new neighborhood conservation plan. The NCAC unanimously approved it with few questions.
- Katie Brown-Henry, NCAC planner, made a presentation on the Arlington Neighborhood College -- a free eight-session program taking place from Feb. 13 - Apr. 3, 2014 on consecutive Thursday evenings from 6 - 9:30 pm. Participants will learn how various County departments operate and what services the county government provides, as well as gain and sharpen communication, coalition-building, and networking skills that will help them become more effective community activists and leaders. Priority is given to residents of the 11 Neighborhood Strategy Areas: Buckingham, Columbia Heights West, Pike Village Center, Nauck, Arlington View, Long Branch Creek, Radnor/Fort Myer Heights, Barcroft, Lyon Park, Penrose, And Westover. Here is the link to the program and the session content:
- <http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/ons/college/CPHDOnsCollegeCurriculum.aspx>

The next meeting is on December 12 and is a funding meeting for qualified projects. Glencarlyn, Barcroft, Waverly Hills, Arlington Ridge, Highland Park/Overlee Knoll, and Waycroft Woodlawn all have qualified projects in the queue.

Columbia Pike Form Based Code Advisory Working Group – Steve Campbell

The NAP FBC is moving through the approval process. Many thanks to Karen for her advocacy, which certainly resulted in the inclusion of the language (*highlighted below*) in the Planning Commission recommendations to the County Board at the November 16 meeting regarding Board approval of the request to advertise the Columbia Pike NAP FBC:

That favorable consideration be given to the recommendations of the Urban Forestry Commission, as stated in the letter dated November 5, 2013, taking into account any comments staff might provide after they have had an opportunity to review the proposed changes. Regular item #27 on the November 16 Regular Meeting of the County Board:

27. [Adoption of the following amendments in order to implement the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan:](#)
 - D. [ZOA-13-06 Zoning Ordinance amendments to amend, reenact, and recodify Article 11 to incorporate the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Special Revitalization District Form Based Code \(CP-NFBC\), and Articles 5, 6, and 7 to allow optional development under the CP-NFBC in R-6, R-5, R2-7, RA15-30T, RA14-26, RA8-18, RA7-16, RA6-15, C-1 and C-O districts for properties located within the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Special Revitalization District \(CPNSRD\) on the GLUP. This amendment also allows the commercial nodes CP-FBC in C-2 and C-O districts for properties within the Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District, that were omitted from the reformat of the Zoning Ordinance adopted on May 18, 2013.](#)

P.C. Recommendation: Adopt the ordinance to amend, reenact and recodify Articles 5, 6, 7, and 11 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, as shown in Attachments A and B, including incorporation of the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Special Revitalization District Form Based Code and to allow its use in certain "R", "RA", and "C" districts, in order to implement the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan, with the following modifications:(1) That the language on page 7 of the FBC, Provision 204.D.2. be amended to read as follows: In considering the approval of transfer of development rights from a CONSERVATION AREA, the County Board shall determine that a specified number of units with the CONSERVATION AREA will be renovated consistent with Part 7 Conservation Area Standards and preserved as committed AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS as set forth in Section 902. The amount number of density eligible for transfer shall be determined by the County Board in accordance with standards set forth in 15.5.3 and in furtherance of the purposes of the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan. (2) That the County Board direct staff to initiate a study to include involvement by relevant commissions and other citizens as determined by the County Board to consider issues arising from the use of TDRs with the aim of establishing additional criteria for their use. Issues to consider are: whether a stated multiplier should be used; how TDRs should be distributed among site plans and sector plan areas; and whether established criteria should be

revised to reflect changing market conditions and that the County Board hold over final consideration of the TDR policy until its December 2013 meeting when it takes up the full range of issues related to the financial implementation tools. **That favorable consideration be given to the recommendations of the Urban Forestry Commission, as stated in the letter dated November 5, 2013, taking into account any comments staff might provide after they have had an opportunity to review the proposed changes.**

C.M. Recommendation: Adopt the ordinance (attached to the staff report) to amend, reenact and recodify Articles 5, 6, 7, and 11 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, as shown in Attachments A and B, including incorporation of the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Special Revitalization District Form Based Code, and to allow its use in certain R, RA, and C districts: a) with the changes included in Table 1 in the staff report dated November 7, 2013; and b) without the regulations contained in Attachment A, §204.D that would implement transfer of development rights within the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Form Based Code, in order to implement the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan. Defer consideration of paragraph §204.D (Transfer of Development Rights) of the Zoning Ordinance amendment shown in Attachment A to the December 14, 2013, County Board meeting.