

**Urban Forestry Commission
October 23, 2014
Meeting Summary**

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Steve Campbell
Scott Brinitzer
Caroline Haynes
Ed Hilz
Paul Campanella

State and County Staff

Jennifer Fioretti, Deputy Director, DPR
Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR
Rachel Jackson, DPR
Jim Meikle, APS
Jim McGlone, VDOF
Ellen Vogel, VDOT

Guests

John Vihstadt, Arlington County Board
Delegate Alfonso Lopez
Jason Stanford, Aid to Del. Lopez
Elisha Rubin

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Meet and Greet / Discussions with County Board Member John Vihstadt

County Board member John Vihstadt informed the UFC that he has been visiting advisory commissions since joining the County Board in April, and extended his thanks and appreciation for the input that commissions provide. He specifically noted the input that the UFC provided to the County Board on the Use Permit for expansion of McKinley Elementary School. Mr. Vihstadt stated that he would like to see more incentives for tree planting and more disincentives for tree removal. He also noted that the Urban Forest Master Plan is in need of updating.

Mr. Vihstadt noted that there are currently two vacancies on the UFC, and Dean Amel confirmed that there is a need to fill them. Mr. Vihstadt also informed the commission that they are able to freely participate in meetings of the Site Plan Review Subcommittee at their discretion.

Commission members were invited to individually share their thoughts, experiences and concerns. The following is a summary of commission member remarks:

Caroline Haynes:

- The UFC is a good group to work with. Members work well together.

Steve Campbell:

- Concerned about canopy loss.
- An advocate for more trees.
- Would like to see improved tree planting standards in urban areas.
- There is a need for more open space and parkland, particularly in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor.
- The County has a good invasive plant control program, but would like to see even more done.

Scott Brintzer:

- Being on the UFC has taught him a lot about how local government works.
- Tree canopy, planting and maintenance are important and require an investment and citizen participation.
- A long-term view is important for achieving goals.

Nora Palmatier:

- As president of Tree Stewards, feels that the creation of partnerships between volunteers and the County is very important.
- Urges the Board to support staff and their relationship with volunteers... making it clear to staff that working with and supporting volunteers is an important part of their job.
- More County resources should be devoted to tree maintenance, even if it means reducing the number of trees that are planted by staff.
- The County's planting budget should be cut and the maintenance budget doubled.
- Volunteers can plant trees. County resources should be dedicated more towards maintenance.

Jim Meikle (APS):

- Has been working with the County on planting more trees on APS grounds.
Dean Amel noted that Mr. Meikle has done a lot to establish a good relationship between APS and the UFC since he joined the commission.

Paul Campanella:

- Pleased with the County Board's vote on the Use Permit for the McKinley Elementary School expansion.
- Concerned about the loss of open space.
- There is a lot of competing interest for using open space for other purposes, but once it's gone, it's gone.
- There is a need for more funding for the acquisition of parkland.

Ed Hilz:

- It is important to have sufficient resources for watering and pruning trees.
- Appreciates what Jim Meikle has done to improve APS's relationship with the County, since both have responsibility for Arlington's urban forest.
- There needs to be greater acknowledgement of the stormwater management benefits that trees provide.

- More trees need to be planted on private property.
- The Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program serves an important need.

Dean Amel:

- APS needs to plan and include funding for structured parking as part of school expansion and new school construction projects so that open space can be preserved.
- Updating the Urban Forest Master Plan is a priority, especially now that the County's vacant Urban Forester position has been filled.
- Proud that the UFC was able to help influence the County budget process so that funding for additional temporary employees to water trees was included in the ongoing/base budget.
- Also proud of UFC's involvement in establishing the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program to plant more trees on private property. UFC members review grant applications and weigh public benefits of grant proposals.
- The Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program is especially important for encouraging tree planting on the grounds of multi-family developments.

County Board member Vihstadt thanked commission members for their hard work and looks forward to working with them in the future.

Discussion of VDOT Tree Removal and Replacement – Delegate Alfonso Lopez

Delegate Lopez is the State Delegate for Virginia's 49th District, which includes portions of southern Arlington and eastern Fairfax County. He thanked commission members and expressed appreciation for their work to preserve Arlington's tree canopy.

In January, 2014, Delegate Lopez introduced House Bill 806, which would require VDOT to follow tree replacement policies adopted by the locality in which a VDOT construction project is located. The proposed legislation was initiated after community concerns were raised over tree loss associated with VDOT's Arlington Boulevard/10th Street North/Courthouse Road project, and the stockpiling of excavated dirt and debris to create two large mounds in the Washington Boulevard/Arlington Boulevard interchange.

In lieu of the proposed legislation, VDOT requested the opportunity to address the matter of tree replacement administratively through revisions to their landscape program. Since that time, Delegate Lopez has been negotiating with VDOT and meeting with local staff and residents on how VDOT should amend their landscape program to more closely reflect local tree replacement goals. A public comment period on VDOT's proposed amendments was extended to September 29, at Delegate Lopez's urging.

Delegate Lopez envisions VDOT's next steps as:

- Development of planting guidelines that consider environmental impacts of construction projects.
- Development of landscape plans earlier in the process.

- Simplifying the permit process for volunteers and community groups such as HOA's to plant on VDOT property.

Delegate Lopez stressed that he wants to hear from constituents, and encouraged the UFC to contact him for assistance. He also noted that he has been appointed to the House of Delegate's Natural Resource Committee.

Dean Amel stated that VDOT's disposal of dirt and construction debris to create two large mounds within the Washington Boulevard/Arlington Boulevard interchange, with no advance notice, was very discouraging. He noted that a stream runs under the interchange, where water used to slowly infiltrate. However, stormwater now runs off of the newly constructed mounds. He also noted that trees planted in the area by volunteers were removed during construction, and that VDOT seems to view trees as potential hazards rather than seeing the value provided by healthy forests.

Mr. Amel also informed Delegate Lopez of the need for Virginia to establish (or allow localities to establish) stricter regulations on the sale and planting of invasive plant species. He noted that Delegate Patrick Hope introduced a bill to more strictly regulate invasive plants in Virginia, but a decision was made to allow the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to address the issue administratively. He added that VDACS's proposed regulations are very weak, and hopes that new legislation will be introduced again. Delegate Lopez stated that he would support legislation to more strictly regulate invasive plants.

Scott Brinitzer agreed that VDOT's construction of the mounds was very unfortunate. He appreciates that Delegate Lopez is working to improve VDOT's practices. He noted that there are many stormwater management regulations that apply to homeowners, but a large part of the problem stems from paved parking areas and highways.

Delegate Lopez commented that VDOT's disposal of dirt and construction debris to create the two mounds was likely driven by cost-savings associated with hauling and disposal. He noted that the need to complete projects within budget often seems to drive decisions, and stressed the need for VDOT to take a longer term view, rather than only considering up-front costs.

Ed Hilz commented that Arlington's relationship with local VDOT staff seems to be pretty good, but difficulties are sometimes encountered at higher levels in VDOT's structure. Vincent Verweij noted that he and Ellen Vogel (VDOT's landscape specialist for the Northern Virginia area) have worked cooperatively on VDOT projects. Ms. Vogel added that she strives to be as creative and cooperative as possible to address local concerns, but there are limits to what she can implement within project scope and funding restrictions.

Caroline Haynes commented that there may have been fewer tree impacts and less disruption if VDOT and Arlington County had coordinated more closely on the Washington Boulevard trail installation and VDOT's road improvement project. Jason Stanford (aid to Delegate Lopez and resident of the Penrose neighborhood) hopes that it will be possible to work with the County to preserve trees along Washington Boulevard near 2nd St South during construction of the proposed bike trail.

Ellen Vogel discussed circumstances leading to the creation of the mounds in the Washington Boulevard/Arlington Boulevard interchange, and next steps moving forward. She noted that VDOT sometimes allows contractors to dispose of excavated soil on other VDOT property near a project area if it results in significant cost savings. The soil used to create the mounds would otherwise have needed to be hauled to a site in Maryland, at a significantly higher cost.

Ms. Vogel met with residents and County staff, including DPR Urban Forester Vincent Verweij, to work out a tree planting plan for the mounds and areas adjacent to Washington Boulevard. A dense planting of native tree “whips” will be installed on the slopes of the mounds, and larger (2-inch caliper) native trees will be planted closer to Washington Boulevard. Restoration efforts will also include invasive plant control efforts prior to planting trees and native grasses. Contract specifications will include a two-year maintenance period for plantings, with payments pro-rated over the two-year period. Dean Amel noted that the dense planting of many young trees on the slope seems like a good strategy to ensure that some trees survive to reach maturity.

Nora Palmatier raised the concern that VDOT’s current permitting requirements make it very difficult for volunteer groups to obtain permission to plant trees on VDOT property. Ellen Vogel noted that she is working to simplify and improve the permitting process as it applies to volunteers and community groups. She would like to meet with volunteers to discuss how the permitting process can be more flexible to accommodate appropriate plantings.

Dean Amel also suggested that VDOT could contribute money to the Tree Canopy Fund for planting replacement trees on non-VDOT property in cases where there is not ample space for planting an appropriate number of replacement trees within the project area. This strategy would also relieve VDOT of future maintenance responsibilities associated with off-site replacement trees.

Steve Campbell inquired about the quality of soil on the newly constructed mounds, stressing the importance of soil quality for tree survival and health. Ellen Vogel and Vincent Verweij agreed that the soil on the mounds is fairly porous. Clean fill dirt was added to a depth of four feet above construction debris and concrete.

Delegate Lopez thanked commission members for their work on this issue and other initiatives to preserve tree canopy. He encouraged members to contact him whenever they would like his assistance.

Thomas Jefferson Site Evaluation Working Group Update – Nora Palmatier

Nora Palmatier provided an update on options being considered for the potential siting of a new elementary school on the grounds of Thomas Jefferson Park. Ms. Palmatier’s summary of key points at an October 18, community open house is also attached.

Four options for siting of a new elementary school were presented at the community open house. A wooded area on the eastern side of the site is not shown to be developed in any of the four

options. Architects and APS staff report that there will be no significant loss of green space or programming area, with most siting options located primarily on existing parking lots. However, there is strong community concern regarding the potential loss of park land. There does not appear to be a significant loss of trees associated with the design options as they are currently depicted. However, current drawings of design options do not account for disturbance anticipated from construction, which may impact some trees.

Dean Amel noted that some options show that construction will occur close to some large trees. Siting of the new building in Option #4 may have the most impacts to large trees.

Caroline Haynes commented that the entire park needs to be master planned, rather than moving things around to make them fit within the current configuration.

Scott Brinitzer added that the needs of APS, the community and environmental impacts must all be balanced in planning for this project.

Dean Amel commented that the costs associated with incorporating structured parking into APS projects is a major issue that should be planned for in School bonds. Caroline Haynes added that the cost of open space is not “free”. Mr. Amel and Ms. Palmatier agreed and both noted that there is a lot of community advocacy for preserving trees and open space associated with this project.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the September 25, 2014 UFC meeting were approved with a minor typographical correction.

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon announced that Arlington County has received a Tree City USA Sterling Award in recognition of ten years of Growth Awards. Jim McGlone will present the Sterling Award to the County at the beginning of the November 18 recessed County Board meeting.
- Jamie Bartalon and Vincent Verweij reported that the County Champion Wildenow’s Oak is located on a property that was recently sold to a developer. The Wildenow’s Oak is a red oak/black oak hybrid. Several residents notified staff of the sale of the property at 6000 27th Street North, and their concerns that the tree may be at risk when the property is developed. Staff will do all that they can within the County’s authority to preserve the tree. Development plans for the property have not yet been received. The oak is located near the County’s street right-of-way, and a small portion may have grown onto County property. Whether it can be considered to be jointly-owned will be determined when a plan and survey have been received.

- Vincent Verweij shared photos of some unusual types of pruning found in Holland.
- Mr. Verweij also reported that surveys by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer services (VDACS) have not detected the presence of walnut twig beetles in Arlington. Jim McGlone added that they have been detected in Fairfax County. The beetle is the vector for Thousand Canker Disease, which has been responsible for extensive mortality of black walnut trees in the western U.S.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group – Caroline Haynes reported that Jason Papacosma (DES) gave an update on the Four Mile Run restoration project to NRJAG. The project is beginning to move forward. She also reported that an “Arlington Parks Coalition” group is forming to support and advocate for open space in Arlington.

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes reported that the Park and Recreation Commission received an update on changes to the charge of the Site Plan Review Subcommittee (SPRC). The Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study was also discussed. The amount of open space envisioned has been reduced from 150,000 square feet originally proposed, to a maximum of 60,000 square feet in the current proposal.

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

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – Ed Hilz’s PFRC report is attached.

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

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

Tree Canopy Fund – No report.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – No report. Ed Hilz volunteered to provide NCAC updates until a replacement for the NCAC representative position on the UFC (formerly filled by Elizabeth Rives) can be permanently filled.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Jim McGlone announced that the next Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable will be held on November 20, at Prince William Forest Park. The main topic will be combating the impact of climate change on urban forests with species diversity. The Roundtable will also include a report from the Chesapeake Bay Urban Forest Summit. Nora Palmatier will begin to chair the Roundtable after the November’s meeting.

Virginia Department of Forestry – Jim McGlone reported that VDOF’s State Forester, Bettina Ring, spoke at the recent Waynesboro Tree Healthcare Workshop. VDOF has experienced budget cuts that resulted in the elimination of four positions.

He also reported that a location in Prince William County is being considered as a release site for parasitoid wasps that attack Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetles. EAB was recently found on fringe trees in Ohio. It is not known whether the fringe tree population will be significantly impacted.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – Jim Meikle encouraged commission members to use him as the conduit for UFC input, concerns and questions regarding APS CIP projects. He also reported that APS now has a dedicated budget to address stormwater compliance issues.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – Kirsten Buhls VCE report is attached.

New Business:

- Dean Amel announced that the Planning Commission’s Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) is leading a process to gather and review input on the County’s proposed Public Land Site Evaluation Guidelines. He will serve as the UFC representative at an October 28 meeting. The LRPC will report back to the Planning Commission and the County Board with their recommendations in December.

Attachments to October 23, 2014 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Thomas Jefferson Working Group Report – Nora Palmatier

There was an Open House for community residents & school stakeholders at TJ Middle School last Saturday morning, with the usual arrangement of 20+ large poster boards showing current buildings/park amenities and four variations of where a new elementary school might be sited. I've attached the 10 page handout of the schemes. These are all rough sketches to get pros and cons out; there is no voting at this point, only collecting of information. Below are my thoughts on the process so far:

- 1) The architects and school staff say green space is to be preserved and not built on. Indeed, each of the schemes so far is sited primarily on current parking lots.
- 2) The current tree census showed up on all the posters Saturday so we could see where buildings might impact, and the significant trees (as designated by the Arlington County forester) were highlighted – something I and others on the TJWG requested. The attached document is from the first draft and the trees shown don't reflect current conditions. It's a good sign that this request was followed up on for the open house posters, and that others made the request before they even got to me as the UFC representative!
- 3) Conversations with the architect and the landscape designer have been good; we discussed one of the designs that would impact some trees (but more invasive shrubs) on a hill overlooking the soccer field and they understand my concern.
- 4) Of course, the devils are in the details and since so many stakeholders are on the TJWG (parents, nearby residents, parking and transportation folks, fair people, theatre people, community rec people, kids, etc) who knows what the prioritization will be.

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris

The Planning Commission did not meet in October due to a lack of items for an agenda, (unbelievable as that sounds). But, there are a number planning efforts underway that continue to keep everyone busy.

LRCF

1. Draft Retail Action Plan. The UFC interest in this Plan is to ensure that the same level of street tree planting is maintained along the streetscape and not reduced to improve visibility for retail signage. Trees need to be pruned up so that first floor signage is visible underneath the trees canopy. Jamie B. or Vincent V. may wish to comment on staff's understanding on the review of streetscape and proposed retail policy.
2. Courthouse Square. The UFC interest in a green square was expressed in a letter that was drafted earlier this month. The draft Plan will come before the Planning Commission in Nov. Dean Amel may wish to follow up with comments on the Courthouse Square planning effort.

Site Plans coming to the Planning Commission in Nov.

Key Blvd - North Rosslyn, proposal for 158 units including 82 affordable units, 6 stories.

Currently, an art deco apartment building with a central green. Proposal eliminates central green but saves mature street trees along 19th Street. Community opposes the site plan citing that it is not in conformance with existing, approved GLUP and Sector Plans for the area.

Site Plans coming to the Planning Commission in Dec.

400 Army Navy Drive - Proposal for a 588 Residential high rise within the Crystal City planning area. Street trees are over an existing garage making soil volumes challenging. But, trail canopy trees should be planted on the private drive (being called an alley), and soil volume increased using Silva Cells or equivalent. Jamie or Vincent should look closely at this proposal and advocate for tall canopy trees with expanded soil volumes under the sidewalk.

Site Plans under SPRC review

Gables N. Rolfe Street - Proposal for 421 units and 16,500 SF Transitional Living Facility.

Includes a public park with significant tree save area thanks to everyone, especially Steve Campbell for insuring the trees will be saved. The plan is ready to come forward to the Planning Commission, but it isn't on the PC agenda yet.

2025 Clarendon Blvd. (Wendy's) - proposal to amend the GLUP to allow a high rise office building, 185,000 SF and 6,837 SF of retail. Issues with compatibility with Colonial Village, retail activation along Courthouse Road (100% corner), and architectural design. Street trees are proposed but many utility conflicts are limiting the number of street trees.

223 23rd Street (Plaza 5) - Crystal City, a rezoning to allow a 353 unit residential bldg. and a 658,365 SF office bldg. Issues with retail frontage along 23rd Street, location of office building and parking entrances. Staff is requesting implementation of the full cross section of 23rd Street be built at one time. This takes out a double row of London Planes in the existing wide median to be replaced with SWM infiltration and a transit lane. It will be important to ask staff to include street trees in the design of the SWM infiltration. DES should be invited to the next UFC to present their plans for 23rd Street. Crystal City should not lose significant canopy when new street work is done.

The Berkeley - 2900 S. Glebe Road, Currently, working on issues....lack of developed open space for families, architecture and SWM.

Site Plans on hold

Park Shirlington - proposals calls for a rezoning for 750 units including 100 committed affordable units. Redevelops the existing garden apartments into a high density, low rise complex, eliminates existing, generous open spaces and removes all existing on site trees except street trees. This project may have been redrawn by the applicant. SPRC comments at the first meeting were generally negative.

Rosslyn Plaza - 1777 N. Kent Street, a significant, large block development with 5 high rise buildings (2 office, 3 residential) and significant open spaces. On hold while the Rosslyn Sector Plan continues to develop proposals for this edge of Rosslyn. An important opportunity to

connect over to the Mt. Vernon Trail and provide an Esplanade along the eastern edge of Rosslyn.

Public Facilities Review Committee – Ed Hilz

The PFRC met on October 15 for the first time regarding the renovation and expansion of Abingdon Elementary School. The following is a link to the website where you can access the Agenda and a Report that was prepared for the October 15 meeting:

<http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/planning-commission/public-facilities-review-committee-pfrc/>

PowerPoint presentations were made at the meeting by the Arlington Public Schools (APS) staff and consultants. These presentations should be on the PFRC website by Thursday Oct 23.

- A landscape consultant will be retained to conduct a tree inventory and evaluation.
- APS will be discussing with DPR the possibility of including the adjacent Fort Reynolds Park property in the open space plans for the expansion. Purchase of property along 31st Street South that was formerly used as a Dominion substation and adding it to the site will be explored.
- It has been determined by County staff that no archaeological findings could be found from nearby Fort Reynolds because past redevelopment of the property has buried them.
- Residents in the Courtbridge I and Courtbridge II condominium associations located next to Abingdon were upset that they were not initially included in the Building Level Planning Committee and the PFRC. They now have representation.
- Reconfiguring the open-space areas in the school to help meet the needed additional capacity will be considered.

The structural feasibility of adding vertical space instead of expanding horizontally will be analyzed. The school currently is two levels in one area.

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier

A very busy but successful month for TreeStewards. We had a continuing education program on Emerald Ash Borer courtesy of Rachel Jackson, Thousand canker and other nasties courtesy of Kirsten Buhls.

The Arlington Tree Distribution was Oct. 4, and over a dozen TS provided education while 300+ tree whips were adopted. Alexandria's was Oct. 11, and 150 tree saplings were adopted. We are in the process of evaluating both events for improvements next year and UFC will get a report with our recommendations.

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Kirsten Buhls

New or Timely and Interesting Info for Urban Forestry Commission Members from Virginia Tech and Beyond:

Eric Day EAB I-book <http://www.hort.vt.edu/eab.html>

Eric Wiseman named Virginia Big Tree

Coordinator <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2013/12/120513-cnre-bigtreescoordinator.html>

Susan Day The Soil Rehabilitation Experiment Site is currently being used to evaluate the effects of a soil rehabilitation practice called Soil Profile Rebuilding on soil physical properties and carbon dynamics, tree growth, greenhouse gas emission, and the ability of the site to capture stormwater. <http://urbanforestry.frec.vt.edu/SRES/index.html>

NOVA Urban Forestry Roundtable November 20th 2014 8:30 am Prince William Forest National Park <http://www.treesvirginia.org/events/free/november-20-2014-nova-urban-forestry-roundtable>

Greg McPherson, USFS, Center for Urban Forestry Research. “Research on the Benefits and Drawbacks of City Trees and Street Drawbacks of City Trees and Street Tree Planning

Overview” http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/uesd/uep/products/cufr_399.pdf

Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change CIPEC Bloomington Urban Forestry Research Group (BUFRG) Indiana University, Bloomington studies implications of urban forest as a social ecological framework. http://www.indiana.edu/~cipec/research/bufrg_about.php