

Urban Forestry Commission
September 24, 2015
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Steve Campbell
Alex Sanders
Phil Klingelhofer
Scott Brinitzer
Elisha Rubin
Ed Hilz

State and County Staff

Jennifer Fioretti, Deputy Director, DPR
Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Rachel Jackson, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR
Jim McGlone, VDOF
Kirsten Buhls, VCE

Guests

Natasha Atkins
Susan English

Public Comment – Natasha Atkins and Susan English expressed their concerns regarding the loss of mature trees in the Aurora Hills neighborhood, some issues and conditions that contribute to tree canopy loss, and potential solutions to help preserve tree canopy.

Natasha Atkins stressed the need to focus on ways to reduce the loss of mature trees and “tools” that can be used to encourage their preservation. She commented that tree preservation should take precedence over planting new trees. She also noted that having a healthy tree canopy is in Arlington’s economic interest, and urged the County to pay greater attention to trees along urban corridors.

Ms. Atkins acknowledged that there is a tendency for some builders and residents to want to maximize the buildable area on their lots, and she realizes that Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, which places limits on the authority of local governments. She expressed appreciation for County efforts to use authority provided by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (CBPO) to help mitigate canopy loss, but noted that permitting understory trees to be substituted for canopy trees to meet CBPO requirements will not replace lost tree canopy.

Ms. Atkins also noted that, in the Aurora Hills neighborhood, it seems to be difficult to convince the owners of rental properties to invest in tree planting and maintenance. She acknowledged that Arlington’s Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program helps to get trees planted on private property, but the process requires considerable volunteer effort, and program funding is unpredictable from year to year. She also noted that approximately 25% of the trees planted through the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program in the Aurora Hills neighborhood last year have died, probably due to poor planting techniques and/or poor nursery stock.

Susan English outlined some of the problems that contribute to tree canopy loss, and possible solutions to help preserve canopy. Her list of problems included:

- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance tree canopy credits that allow for the planting of multiple understory trees in place of a large shade tree to help meet canopy coverage requirements on development sites;
- The unnecessary removal of some mature trees by developers when options may be available to preserve them; and,
- Difficulties involved with reaching the owners of rental properties and successfully encouraging them to plant shade trees on their grounds.

Potential solutions suggested by Ms. English to help preserve tree canopy, include:

- Providing incentives to property owners to plant trees (similar to incentives provided for installing pervious driveways);
- Earlier plan review and consultation with builders to encourage the preservation of trees;
- Mechanisms that would provide for greater oversight of tree preservation compliance during construction (such as a requirement for builders to periodically submit photos of tree preservation practices that are being implemented during the life of the project); and,
- A push for more County outreach and marketing to encourage tree preservation and planting, similar to efforts underway for the “Car-Free Diet”.

Ms. English acknowledged that such strategies to preserve tree canopy will have a cost associated with them; however, the costs will be off-set by the long-term economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits gained from preserving mature trees.

Dean Amel asked Ms. English whether the majority of tree loss in the Aurora Hills area is due to the demolition and replacement of existing homes. She responded that trees are also often removed when additions are built on existing homes. In some cases it appears that trees are removed that could have been preserved.

Nora Palmatier suggested that an outreach campaign by community volunteers, similar to the “Choking Hazard” initiative for English ivy, may be an effective way to influence property owners to preserve trees (rather than relying only on outreach by Arlington government).

Dean Amel noted that the UFC may decide to further discuss the issue at a future meeting.

Collaborations and Donations Policy – Jennifer Fioretti, Deputy Director, DPR

Jennifer Fioretti (DPR, Deputy Director) provided a summary and background on DPR’s new Collaborations and Donations Policy. The policy was developed in order to make it easier for individuals and groups to make donations to DPR programs and to develop mutually beneficial partnerships. In the past, a time intensive process and County Board involvement was required in order to accept many donations. This discouraged some potential donors and partners from entering into agreements.

Under the new policy, donations valued under \$50,000 can be processed and approved administratively, without requiring County Board review/approval. According to the policy, donations and partnerships must be consistent with the County's mission/vision, result in a clear and measurable public benefit, enhance programs and services, and must not result in the loss of County authority.

The new policy outlines an administrative approval process and establishes recognition guidelines for individuals and groups. It includes a list of criteria which must be met and considers future fiscal impacts to the County for ongoing maintenance and operational expenses. Forms of recognition for donations and partnerships include letters of recognition, press announcements, and text-only signs and attributions on County web pages. The use of third party logos and web links is not permitted.

Under the new policy, DPR's Director notifies the Deputy County Manager prior to approval. Notification/review by the County Attorney's Office and Department of Management and Finance is also included in the process for receipt of donations and agreements for partnerships. A community engagement process with relevant stakeholders may be undertaken for some collaborations. DPR's Director also has the authority to terminate agreements if they conflict with DPR policy or no longer serve the best interests of the County.

Ed Hilz asked whether the County Board must approve the new policy. Ms. Fioretti explained that it does not require County Board approval, although staff has briefed four Board members. Mr. Hilz also asked whether contributions to DPR are tax deductible. Ms. Fioretti confirmed that they are.

Tree Canopy Coverage Requirements: Recent Changes and Future Opportunities – Vincent Verweij and Rachel Jackson, DPR

Vincent Verweij (DPR, Urban Forester) provided background on tree canopy requirements associated with Arlington's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (CBPO). The CBPO, adopted in 2003, is the main tool providing some County authority to address tree canopy coverage during development. It applies to land disturbing activities in excess of 2,500 square feet, and requires compliance with a plan to achieve 10%, 15% or 20% tree canopy coverage within 20 years (depending on zoning classification) through tree preservation and/or planting.

Mr. Verweij reviewed several changes to the CBPO Guidance Manual that have been implemented in recent years to help preserve existing trees and promote forest health. These include:

- Providing 25% more canopy credit for planting trees native to our area (2012)
- Providing 50% more canopy credit for preserving existing trees (2012)
- Incorporating a requirement for species diversity when planting more than 10 trees (2014)
- Doubling the canopy coverage for each healthy tree that is adequately protected/preserved on site (2014)

- Designing and posting sample plans, checklists, and other tools on the County website to help design builders understand CBPO tree preservation and planting requirements and best practices (2014-2015)
- Removing potentially invasive trees and adding native species to the County's tree canopy coverage planting list.

Mr. Verweij showed examples of various tree protection devices and practices, including tree protection fencing, root pruning, signage and root matting. He also discussed the following concerns that make it difficult to preserve trees during development projects:

- Plans often include little tree preservation, and when they do it tends to be for small ornamental trees.
- Ensuring compliance with tree protection and proper planting remains a challenge.
- Builders often prefer sites with new trees, for the "fresh look".
- There is no legal impetus to preserve trees beyond acquiring a Certificate of Occupancy and selling the property.
- Soil destruction during construction provides little long-term growth medium for newly-planted trees.
- Homeowners often lack knowledge on the proper care of trees (for both recently planted and preserved trees).

Scott Brinitzer noted that underground utility hook-ups (especially water and gas) often have major impacts on existing trees. Rachel Jackson added that this is an issue she has been working on a lot recently.

Ed Hilz and Nora Palmatier asked whether staff has the flexibility to change the list of trees that may be planted to achieve canopy coverage required by the CBPO, and whether changes to the planting list require County Board approval. Vincent Verweij explained that the list of recommended trees can be changed administratively.

Nora Palmatier informed Natasha Atkins and Susan English that the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program includes a funding category for educational outreach. She suggested that they consider applying for a grant to educate residents about the benefits of trees and the importance of tree preservation and planting.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the July 23, 2015 UFC meeting were approved with a typo correction.

During review of the minutes, Dean Amel noted that he is to set up a meeting with DES staff to discuss tree pit designs for capturing stormwater. He will contact DES staff to set up a meeting in October during the day, with a small group of staff and interested commission members.

Mr. Amel also asked Jim McGlone (VDOF) whether VDOF may be able to assist with efforts at the state level to grant stormwater credits for trees. Mr. McGlone explained that the Secretary of

Natural Resources presides over VDOF, DCR and DEQ, which would make it difficult for VDOF to lobby for changes within their reporting structure.

Staff Reports

- Jamie Bartalon briefed the commission on upcoming changes to the Parks and Natural Resources Division's organizational structure. The reorganization was undertaken in order to:
 - increase opportunities for collaboration among units/staff with shared roles and responsibilities;
 - provide a management structure that facilitates the efficient use of staff talents and resources; and,
 - balance workloads and responsibilities in an equitable manner.

The new structure consolidates work units with an environmental operations, planning and outreach focus into a section with common leadership, and re-aligns staffing and areas of responsibility within the Park Management and Facilities Section to reflect workload demands.

- Jamie Bartalon reported that he attended a meeting to discuss potential legislative changes to Virginia's Noxious Weeds Law with Delegate Patrick Hope, a variety of stakeholders from the nursery industry, and advocates for stricter regulation of invasive plants. Consensus was not reached among the various stakeholders on the best way to move forward with changes that all parties can support. Another meeting will be held in October to further discuss the issue. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will be invited to attend.
- Rachel Jackson reported that she has been working extensively with a contractor to minimize tree impacts during the installation of fiber optic lines. The lines are being installed underground throughout the County, and often conflict with trees in the County right-of-way.
- Ms. Jackson provided updates on the following park renovation projects:
 - Renovations to Tyrol Hills Park playground are beginning.
 - Renovations at Virginia Highlands Park are almost complete. Some oak trees in the park are in decline and will need to be removed. Their decline is not related to impacts from park renovations.
 - Woodstock Park renovations have been completed and the park is now open. A few "extra" trees (above the number originally scheduled for planting) were installed at the completion of the project.
 - Work on the parking lot at Gunston Intermediate School has been completed. Trees to be planted as part of the project will be installed in October.
 - Replacement trees will be planted along the North Frederick Street border of Lacey Woods Park in October. Several oak trees in severe decline were removed earlier in the fall. Ed Hilz suggested that staff should consider posting information about tree

removals such as this on civic association List Serves. Immediate neighbors and some Tree Stewards were notified about the need to remove the declining oak trees.

- Vincent Verweij provided the following updates:
 - Mr. Verweij attended the County Board meeting on renovations to Abingdon School and will be working with APS on reducing the number of trees that will be removed from the adjacent hillside. Ed Hilz noted that the project will also include an invasive plant control component. He also noted that information provided by Mr. Verweij, regarding the lack of capacity for invasive plants on the hillside to hold the soil, was an educational opportunity.
 - Mr. Verweij will be presenting information on fruit trees at an Urban Agriculture conference on October 3, and will present information on climate change and trees at a conference to be held at Arlington's Virginia Tech building later in October.
 - The Four Mile Run stream restoration project is being re-designed in order to meet budget. The revised design may impact as many as 60 trees.
 - Mr. Verweij is working with DES/Transportation staff to reduce potential tree impacts associated with the next phase of the Columbia Pike multi-modal project.

Commission Member Reports

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (NRJAG) – NRJAG did not meet in September.

Park and Recreation Commission – The Park and Recreation Commission discussed possible changes to the Bill Thomas awards. They also participated in an exercise to evaluate trade-offs associated with Long Branch park planning.

Planning Activities – Scott Brinitzer noted that he has been attending meetings on development of the Food Star site at Columbia Pike and South George Mason Drive, but nothing new has transpired since the last public meeting.

Nora Palmatier attended a meeting on the redevelopment of Ballston mall, where a speaker stressed the importance of trees and soil volume.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – No report.

Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS) – Steve Campbell reminded commission members of upcoming planning meetings for Rosslyn Highlands Park and surrounding open spaces. The first meeting, for visioning, will be held on September 29, with meetings on concept options (October 20) and a single concept (November 9) to follow.

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) – Alex Sander's E2C2 report is attached.

Community Facilities Study – Nora Palmatier’s Community Facilities Study report is attached.

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

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

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier’s Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable report is attached.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – Phil Klingelhofer reported that the NCAC is considering changes to the procedures for entering projects into the program’s cue. The procedures under consideration will require more steps for neighborhood outreach. They will also give less weight to project opposition by a small number of residents.

Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) – Dean Amel will represent the UFC at the next PSMP Advisory Committee meeting on October 14.

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

- Recent research has identified nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the leaves of poplars... a major new finding.
- Jeff Lowenthal will present the program, “Teaming with Microbes”, on October 7, at Arlington’s Central Library.
- Fairfax County’s Tree Council is discussing the possibility of including information on proper tree maintenance with materials that realtors provide to their clients.
- Research has indicated that mulching beneath fruit trees increases fruit production by 50% over what is achieved when the ground is covered by grass.
- Mr. McGlone will be speaking to the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association. Members of the association have an increased interest in finding sources of native plants.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – Jim Meikle’s APS report is attached.

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

- Crepe Myrtle box scale has been reported in Chesapeake, Virginia, and is likely to spread.
- An Urban Agriculture Symposium will be held at Fairlington Center on October 3.
- The Horticulture Help Desk has been receiving many calls about tree health. Ms. Buhls offered to work with DPR Urban Foresters to create a list of answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s).
- VCE has a list of “tried and true” native plants available to the public.

New Business

An update on planning for Stratford School will be requested from APS for the October 22, UFC meeting.

Attachments to September 24, 2015 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission – Alex Sanders

Due to an unusually busy schedule, E2C2 met in August. We approved letters to the County Board in support of the Abingdon Elementary and the Envision Courthouse plans and heard from Shani Kruljac of DES on the County's plans for Zero Waste and Curbside Composting. We also discussed the ongoing process of selecting a site for a new FS#8 and agreed that impacts to trees and wildlife were of note to the Commission.

Community Facilities Study – Nora Palmatier

Two subcommittee meetings are left, then Sept. 29 is a joint work committee between School Board and County Board. Saving green space has been mentioned throughout, yet there has also been a clear approval for meeting both county and school needs. It's going to continue to be an aware requiring ongoing participation. Meeting materials at [study documents page](#).

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier

Information tables held throughout summer at farmers markets. We are holding the 2nd Alexandria Tree Distribution on October 10 and this time asking for \$5 deposit on each tree requested, which will be refunded when tree is picked up (or can be donated to TS for ongoing projects). Tree Distributions always have 25% or more not picked up so this is an experiment to see if no-shows are decreased (this seems to be the national experience, not just Arl/Alex). Also since trees are reserved within 24 hours of announcements, it's not advertised until 2 weeks before. Post evaluations will be shared with Arlington UFC as it may show improvements for future distributions.

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier

ACE employee Carolyn Semedo Straub has done a great job of communicating between the review committee and those applications needing further information. They'll be contracting for a Technical Adviser to review planting stock and planting procedures and to ensure the contract is followed --. See attached flyer for details. If anyone wishes to review current contract with Davey, I can send it.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier

Root Appreciation Day on Sept. 11 was a success with over 70 participants, many from Arlington TS and Vincent Verweij. Soils Conference to be held Nov. 5 at Algonquin Regional Park – flyer coming within the week. Cost will be \$70.

Arlington Public Schools – James Meikle

F&O department has resolved that we need to introduce a substantive landscape maintenance resource, either in-house or by contract. We have had some success with volunteers/PTA's etc., but that is not a system we can or should rely on going forward, especially with newer and in most cases much more complex (often storm water related) plantings everywhere. We will be building a proposal for this resource into our 16/17 Budget request. We will also explore if there might be some merit and economy of scale in some form of joint County/APS landscaping cadre/contract. We and Parks staff have had some great success with joint ventures on fields and already share a grass cutting arrangement and so perhaps we can find a way to expand our collaboration for the greater good. The discussions have mostly been at working level to this point but our Assistant Superintendent, F&O is a strong advocate of this initiative so we expect it will move up the agenda soon.