

**Urban Forestry Commission
December 17, 2015
Meeting Summary**

Attendance

Dean Amel
Nora Palmatier
Steve Campbell
Karen Kumm Morris
Caroline Haynes
Mikaila Milton
Ed Hilz
Phil Klingelhofer
Scott Brinitzer

State and County Staff

Jamie Bartalon, DPR
Vincent Verweij, DPR

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Recommendations to the PSMP for Updates to the Urban Forest Master Plan

Dean Amel (Public Spaces Master Plan Advisory Committee member) announced that there will be a series of three public outreach meetings in February to begin gathering input for the PSMP update. A statistically valid survey to gather input on the relative importance of various types of public spaces and their use is currently underway. The survey includes questions to rate the importance of natural areas, needs for active and passive recreational opportunities, types of facilities, and park amenities.

Dean Amel and Jamie Bartalon explained that the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) is an element of the PSMP. The UFC can provide input during the PSMP planning process on topics that the PSMP should recommend to be included in a subsequent update of the UFMP.

Suggestions to incorporate more detailed recommendations for the preservation and management of natural areas in the UFMP were outlined in a June, 2013 memo from Larry Finch and Greg Zell that was provided to UFC members. Karen Kumm Morris advised that the UFC should not miss the opportunity to include a recommendation to maximize the number of street trees included on each block during planning processes. Caroline Haynes recommended that work should begin now to update County Landscape Standards, not wait until the PSMP and UFMP processes are complete. UFC members agreed that staff from CPHD should be asked to attend the February, 2016 UFC meeting to report on the progress and content of updates to Arlington County's Landscape Standards document.

Commission members agreed that it will be important to set the stage for updating the UFMP by incorporating recommendations within the PSMP to help guide its focus. Other UFMP topics that the UFC may consider recommending in the PSMP include: soil volume requirements/goals for street trees; tree canopy coverage goals for specific urban/commercial corridors; and, canopy coverage goals for passive/natural areas.

Vincent Verweij displayed several maps of tree canopy coverage in Arlington, including overall canopy coverage, percent canopy coverage by civic association, and tree canopy coverage in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. Commission members discussed some of the difficulties associated with setting an overall tree canopy coverage goal for residential neighborhoods, which vary widely in their current canopy coverage. One suggestion was to set a goal of attaining an average percentage increase in all neighborhoods. It was also suggested that neighborhoods with low canopy coverage could be listed, and efforts to increase canopy could be targeted in those areas.

Nora Palmatier noted that, although the map showing canopy coverage by civic association gets people's attention, the map that shows actual tree canopy and how it is distributed is better for planning purposes, since it shows the actual locations where canopy is needed. She also noted that it would be helpful to distinguish areas with single family homes from areas with multi-unit dwellings.

Vincent Verweij noted that overall tree canopy goals vary between surrounding jurisdictions. While the District of Columbia has a goal to increase canopy coverage, Prince George's County has a future canopy target that is lower than their current coverage, reflecting the trend of increasing development and associated tree loss that they are experiencing.

Commission members discussed whether canopy goals should be set by zoning/land use designation. Dean Amel also raised questions of whether no net loss of tree cover in natural areas should be considered as a goal, and whether canopy goals should be set for different types of public open space. Phil Klingelhofer asked whether there should be a goal to add natural areas. Mr. Amel noted that Arlington's Natural Resource Management Plan recommends a policy goal of "zero-loss of County-owned natural lands", and that while creating natural areas where they currently don't exist would take a long time, the commission could recommend increasing canopy coverage on passive open space. Nora Palmatier suggested that the UFC could also recommend that the PSMP include tree canopy coverage as a decision making element for land acquisition and other actions.

Ed Hilz commented that in addition to setting canopy coverage goals it is important to determine through what means the goals will be accomplished. He noted that it may be especially difficult to define how canopy goals will be accomplished on private property, where the County has limited authority. Although the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program and the Tree Distribution Program focus plantings on private property, they may not be enough to make up for canopy that is lost due to development and other impacts.

Vincent Verweij displayed a map of Arlington's General Land Use Plan (GLUP), which could be used to set canopy goals. Karen Kumm Morris suggested that it may be more useful to set

canopy goals by sector plan areas in commercial districts, rather than by specific land use designation.

Dean Amel will update the commission as the PSMP process continues, so that UFC comments can be submitted at appropriate times.

Discussion of Draft Letter on APS Maintenance of Forested Areas and Potential Land Transfers

Caroline Haynes recommended incorporating additional language into the draft letter on APS maintenance of forested areas and potential land transfers that urges the County to acknowledge and identify the value of any land to be transferred to APS. She also recommended stressing the importance of wooded, ecologically sensitive areas, when urging APS to transfer green space to Arlington County that isn't suited to APS use. Ms. Haynes suggested that the UFC should send the letter to the County Board in January, after the Board's new Chair has been appointed.

Ed Hilz recommended that the letter should encourage APS to obtain the necessary resources to effectively maintain trees. The commission discussed his suggestion and those of Caroline Haynes. Dean Amel will revise the draft letter acknowledging that APS has higher priorities than management/maintenance of forested areas, and urging them to transfer such land to Arlington County. The letter was approved with the changes outlined above.

Review of Draft Letter on Rosslyn Plaza PDSP

Karen Kumm Morris summarized her comments on the Rosslyn Plaza PDSP and recommendations to include within the UFC's letter to the County Board. She noted that the PDSP includes a large number of trees to be planted over the next 25 years or so of phased development. However, the proposed PDSP design guidelines call for the use of a structural soil mix for trees to be planted over structures or adjacent to sidewalks. She noted that there are preliminary studies indicating that trees planted in structural soil mixes (which are primarily gravel and sand-based) do not thrive as well as trees planted in sandy loam (horticultural) soils.

Steve Campbell asked what the cost difference is between planting trees in structural soil mixes compared to planting them in horticultural soil. Vincent Verweij noted that costs will vary depending on site conditions and methods used to support walkways/plazas when planting in horticultural soils (such as whether structural cells are used for support). Forestry staff have recommended that structural soils not be used for planting in open areas.

Caroline Haynes noted that ongoing research may result in better tree planting technologies in the future, and that the design guidelines should not be so restrictive. Ms. Kumm Morris proposed that the UFC letter should be worded to allow the use of alternative technologies and products.

Ms. Haynes commented that the current plan includes a .81 acre plaza, while the Rosslyn Sector Plan calls for a one acre plaza. She also noted that sun/shade studies indicate that the plaza will be almost entirely shaded. Karen Kumm Morris suggested that the UFC letter should reference the need for sunlight in the plaza, as well as noting that buildings cantilevered over sidewalks (included in the current plan) will restrict the height of street trees and block access to sunlight.

The UFC approved sending a revised letter to the County Board in January, to include recommendations for the use of horticultural soils and alternative tree planting methods, exploring options to increase the size of the plaza area and the need for sunlight to support trees, and eliminating or limiting designs that include buildings that are cantilevered over sidewalks.

Development of 2015 UFC Annual Report and 2016 UFC Work Plan

Dean Amel reported that he will work with staff on the 2015 UFC Annual Report, using the 2015 Work Plan as a guide.

The commission discussed the following updates to the 2015 UFC Work Plan that could be incorporated into the 2016 Work Plan:

- A section on UFC participation in the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) process should be included in the 2016 Work Plan. Participation will take place through representation on the PSMP Advisory Committee, as well as broader community planning processes. Major concepts that the commission recommends for inclusion in the updated Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) should be referenced in the PSMP.
- The section on updating the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) should reflect that, while the PSMP update will precede the UFMP update, work should begin on gathering information that will be needed for the UFMP, such as a new canopy analysis and iTree ecological study.
- Work should begin on collecting data needed to update the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP), including preparation of a biotic inventory.
- The UFC should work with ACE to conduct an evaluation of the success of the Tree Canopy Fund Grant Program, to include survival rates of trees planted during past years.

Dean Amel will circulate a draft 2016 work plan to UFC members incorporating the changes outlined above. The draft plan will be discussed for adoption at the January 28, 2016 UFC meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the November 19, 2015 UFC meeting were approved with minor edits.

Staff Reports

Jamie Bartalon provided the following updates:

- The Parks and Natural Resource (PNR) Division’s reorganization (as outlined at previous UFC meetings) is currently being implemented. Copies of the division’s organizational chart and a map showing Park Service Areas and their respective Park Area Managers and Team leaders were distributed.
- A job announcement for the newly created Urban Forest Manager position has been posted. Applications for the position will be accepted through January 7, 2016.
- The Urban Forestry Commission’s 2016 meeting schedule was distributed. It was noted that the April 28 meeting was inadvertently omitted. A corrected version of the schedule will be distributed to UFC members.

Vincent Verweij provided the following updates:

- Mr. Verweij has been working with planners to maximize tree canopy associated with the Rosslyn Highlands Park+ planning initiative.
- Mr. Verweij attended the December 16, PFRC meeting on Stratford School. Discussions regarding the “High Road”/”No Road” options continue. Dean Amel noted that the UFC previously submitted a letter to the County Board (copying the School Board), recommending elimination of the proposed road construction and maintaining maximum tree canopy on the site. Nora Palmatier suggested that the UFC should submit another letter when design recommendations are presented to the County Board. Ideally, the letter should be submitted before the project is heard by the Planning Commission.
- Planning for Nauck Town Square has begun. Mr. Verweij met with the project’s landscape architect consultant, Walter Hood. The consultant envisions a design that ties in with the ecology of Four Mile Run.

Commission Member Reports

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

Park and Recreation Commission – Caroline Haynes’ Park and Recreation Commission report is attached.

Planning Activities – Karen Kumm Morris reported that there was a large turnout for the Lee Highway initiative design charrettes. The design initiative will form the basis for planning future projects along the entire length of Lee Highway in Arlington. A consultant’s report is expected to be released in late January. Mr. Kumm Morris advised that the UFC should submit comments

on the report upon its release. Nora Palmatier attended a design charrette and commented that the exercises to fit trees, turn lanes, bicycle lanes and other amenities into the existing right-of-way were very informative and highlighted the difficulties encountered when trying to prioritize and accommodate various aspects of the design.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – Steve Campbell’s PFRC report is attached.

Rosslyn Highlands Park+ - Steve Campbell’s Rosslyn Highlands Park+ report is attached.

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

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’s NCAC report is attached.

Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) – Dean Amel’s PSMP report is attached.

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) – No report.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) – No report.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) – No report.

New Business

No new business was discussed.

Attachments to December 17, 2015 Urban Forestry Commission Meeting Summary:

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Committee (NRJAG) – Caroline Haynes

Damien Ossi, Wildlife Biologist with the District of Columbia Government reported on their recently adopted Wildlife Action Plan. We are exploring how surrounding jurisdictions are approaching their respective management plans as efforts begin on data collection and planning for the update to the Natural Resources Management Plan in Arlington. The NRMP is also not expected to be updated until the PSMP is completed, but there is a tremendous amount of preparatory work and data collection that needs to be undertaken in the interim. The District has completed a very thorough and extensive update, with many parallel issues to those we face in Arlington.

Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) – Caroline Haynes

Jane Rudolph, Director of DPR, gave a short briefing on the budget (county expecting shortfall of \$3 million and schools expecting shortfall of \$12 million). She noted that tree planting funding was being moved from a regular funding item to one-time funding.

The PRC received a presentation on the open space elements of the Rosslyn Plaza PDSP. Ongoing concerns have been raised about the placement of the open space (Ridge Road versus Kent Street, with Kent Street being the preferred choice of the applicant), the size of the resulting open space (.81 acres as opposed to the goal of "about an acre"), the lack of sunshine in the resulting plaza, the phasing and planning of the open space elements and interim parks.

The commission was also briefed on the road and bicycle land changes in Clarendon and the resulting impact on planned open space. Additional briefings are planned for upcoming meetings.

Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) – Steve Campbell (for Ed Hilz)

I attended tonight's Stratford School PFRC meeting, as Ed was out of town. Unfortunately the driveway (the high road) is still very much alive. A small adjustment in the driveway's route, and hence the position of the playing field, is intended to slightly reduce tree loss on the east side of the field. The School Board is holding onto the "no driveway" possibility as an alternative, but it appears they would opt for that only if their request to connect to Old Dominion is denied by VDOT (which does not seem likely).

While a lot of effort is being put into design of the driveway, no assessment has yet been undertaken to measure the extent of the impact of the site design on tree loss or other environmental impacts. The design team is interested in incorporating trees into stormwater collection and bio-retention area designs. Two mature trees will be necessarily removed when one of the parking lot undergoes renovation (the lot between the corner of Vacation Lane and the playing field).

The new school west addition has been increased in size from 35,000 to 40,000 sq. ft., but the footprint of the building is not significantly increased. The increased volume is achieved by cantilevering out the upper floors.

Once tonight's slide presentation is up on the school's website, you may access it at:
<http://www.apsva.us/Page/29586>

Rosslyn Highlands Park + - Steve Campbell

The Rosslyn Highlands Park+ final concept plan was presented to the public on 12/10/2015. It has yet to be put up on the website; once available you will be able to access it by clicking on the following link:

<http://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/new-rosslyn-highlands-park/>

Tree Stewards – Nora Palmatier

The next class starts Feb. 2, Tuesday evenings through April 12. We're hoping to do a MLK Jr. volunteer event at an APS school site in January.

Tree Canopy Fund – Nora Palmatier

ACE reports a third of trees are planted and remaining this week – the crew was pulled to plant for the County. ACE hired a certified arborist as a technical adviser. He'll conduct a visit to the nursery and visit a selection of sites to observe and report back on the tree planting process and his findings at the nursery. He'll also visit some trees previously planted. Don Walsh and I accompanied Natasha to view 8 trees in Aurora Highlands that had died and we thought the nursery stock was probably to blame so it will be interesting to hear the arborists report. ACE is still working with Davey on dead tree replacements but I think this is a weakness in the system that UFC should address.

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable – Nora Palmatier

Next Roundtable is in late Feb/March, no topic or location selected.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) – Phil Klingelhofer

On December 10, the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) held its December NCAC Presentation of the Fall 2015 Funding Session for Neighborhood Conservation Projects.

Projects for consideration:

- Aurora Highlands: Nelly Custis Park (Park Project)
- Highview Park: Calloway United Methodist Church Cemetery (Beautification Project)
- Barcroft: 4800 Block of S. 9th St to W&OD Trail (Street Improvement Project)

NCAC voted to recommend all three projects to the County Board for funding. I have attached the Fall of 2015 Funding Booklet, with details on the three projects, along with a list of proposed NCP projects currently in the queue.

Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) – Dean Amel

The Public Spaces Master Plan update group met this evening. The first round of public input on the revised plan will be a series of meetings on Feb. 4-6. There will be a meeting on Thursday evening, another on Friday afternoon, a “happy hour” Friday evening and a final meeting on Saturday morning (with locations to be determined). The meetings will all cover the same material, so there’s no need to attend more than one. Attendees will be asked questions such as whether more money should be spent on acquiring new park land, on improving existing natural areas, or on new sports fields, so please encourage people to attend and make their preferences known.