

**Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group
Meeting Minutes 8-6-2018**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm in the auditorium of Long Branch Nature Center.

In attendance were: Caroline Haynes, David Howell (Park & Rec), Sarah Meservey, Claire O’Dea (E2C2), Phil Klingelhofer, Evelio Rubiella (UFC), Jason Papacosma (DES), and Sarah Archer (DPR).

Introductions made all around

No Public Comment

Minutes from June 4, 2018 meeting were accepted with no corrections.

Guest: Jason Papacosma, Department of Environmental Services, Watershed Program Manager

Watershed Program Updates

Jason Papacosma, Watershed Program Manager, provided an overview and update of the Stormwater Management Fund. The dedicated tax creates a fund that pays for projects focused on meeting the requirements of Arlington’s MS4 permit. Mr. Papacosma discussed additional programs funded through the Stormwater Management Fund; including street sweeping, tree planting, a staff position created in DPR for maintaining stormwater facilities, and new costs for maintenance.

David Howell stated that the County should find or create alternate funding streams for other important but peripherally related programs rather than spreading Stormwater Management Fund too thin.

Caroline Haynes requested that the letter related to the Stormwater Management Fund written by E2C2 be shared with the Committee for additional background.

Mr. Papacosma discussed that the Stormwater Management Fund funds incremental, large projects including the design and rehabilitation of Ballston Pond and Donaldson Run Tributary B. Additional “design only” projects include Sparrow Pond and Gulf Branch. Timelines of these projects can be slowed due to difficulty with access and easements, as well as seasonal restrictions on work in wetland areas. Windy Run rehabilitation was recently completed, but had been in the cue for 13 years.

The Ballston Pond design is now at 90% completion. Caroline Haynes suggested that DES implement additional outreach with the community.

Sparrow Pond is fed by an eroding stream which crosses 30 – 40 individual properties.

David Howell inquired if the private properties are responsible for erosion in the RPA and if so, are there guidelines and inspections associated with this responsibility. He suggested the possibility of leveraging owner responsibility to encourage restoration easements. Caroline Haynes inquired if there is a tax break for easements.

Jason Papacosma noted that there have been very extreme storm events which require that completed projects to be revisited for maintenance. Tributary A had damage from a May 22 storm, but it is still functioning properly. Phil Klingelhofer stated that Tributary A could be used as a success story. Caroline Haynes added it would be helpful to include statistics on storm improvements, as well as “before and after” pictures to get community support for future projects. Mr. Papacosma mentioned it is difficult to get good data for stream quality on urban streams. This data could also include recreational value and ecological or habitat value. Caroline Haynes mentioned that data collection could be a role for citizen scientists and that there might be an overlap with the broader discussion of Biophilic Cities. David Howell suggested that homeowners in the RPA could be given an honorary stewardship award to encourage and educate about care of their properties. Caroline Haynes stated that would be a good role for a citizen group.

Mr. Papacosma noted that streams continue to decline due to an incremental and steady increase of impervious surface in the County. DES regulates individual home development projects to mitigate impacts, but there is still an increase in runoff. DES funds green streets and infrastructure projects, but they can be expensive. David Howell inquired about if there are opportunities to daylight natural streams. Mr. Papacosma said that can be difficult because of land use around where historic streams were present.

Jason Papacosma discussed using trees in bioretention areas. It can be difficult to use trees in street green infrastructure because of the maintenance required to keep them functioning properly. In some facilities, it is necessary to remove and replace soil which causes disturbance to the tree. It is likely that trees can be used depending on the location of the facility and other factors.

Caroline Haynes asked if there was any progress on getting credit for preserving trees for stormwater compliance. Mr. Papacosma said that they have been in discussions with DEQ about convening a working group to discuss the complexities of the issue. One thing they can do in the meantime is to make sure there is plantable area in site plans to accommodate mature overstory trees in the future.

Staff Updates

Sarah Archer provided the following updates:

- There were over 5,000 plants were propagated in the native plant nursery in FY18
- Ongoing issues with the irrigation system at the nursery are affecting the ability to water the plant stock.

- The Natural Resources Management Unit is collaborating with other PNR Units to grow native plant material for landscaping and maintenance.
- The Arlington BioBlitz is being supported by Arlington Regional Master Naturalists, DPR's PR and Marketing Unit and other Environmental Units in PNR. The event is listed on iNaturalist and the County's website
- DPR will be combining the updates of the Natural Resources Management Plan with the Urban Forest Master Plan and contract funds are being sought to fund the updates.

Member Reports

- Claire O'Dea gave an update on E2C2 and their discussion of AR 4.4. Ms. O'Dea mentioned that there needed to be more clarity around what the role of E2C2 would be in the process.
- Sarah Meservey from E2C2 noted that several members of E2C2 who are focused more on environmental issues are thinking about cycling off the Commission. The change of membership might shift the focus of the Commission.
- Phil Klingelhofer discussed the recent UFC meeting where they learned about the County's Invasive Plant Program and several PNR grants. Mr. Klingelhofer mentioned the NoVA PRISM effort, including pilot projects along W & OD. The UFC will be writing a letter to County Board about the PRISM. Mr. Klingelhofer discussed the changes at Upton Hill and wanted to make sure as much can be done to preserve trees.
- Sarah Meservey mentioned that the design of the lower parking lot in the Upton Hill project could be reevaluated to see if it could be maintained in a more natural state.
- Caroline Haynes gave an updated about the Parks and Recreation Commission. Ms. Haynes mentioned that they heard from the Four Mile Run Working Group and got an update on the Bill Thomas Award. The award criteria will be updated to align with how it was initially envisioned.