

**Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group
Meeting Minutes 12-4-2017**

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

In attendance were: Caroline Haynes, Nereide Ellis, David Howell (Park & Rec), Claire O’Dea, Gabriel Thoumi, Sarah Meservey (E2C2), Phil Klingelhofer, Paul Campanella, Evelio Rubiella (UFC), Alonso Abugattas, Sarah Archer, Brian Keightley (DPR), and Greg Zell (Public)

Guest: Greg Zell, retired Arlington County Natural Resource Specialist and author of the 2010 Natural Resources Management Plan

Introductions made all around

No public comment

October 2, 2017 Minutes approved with no edits.

Tentative upcoming meeting dates accepted with no comments

Natural Resources Management Plan – Lessons Learned and Passed On

Greg Zell, retired Natural Resources Specialist for Arlington County Parks and the author of the 2010 Natural Resources Management Plan, presented a short history of what was involved getting the first plan adopted, as well as things to think about with a new update to the plan. The original natural resources management plan was put forth to gain a commitment of County agencies and leadership to accept a highly visible role in environmental stewardship. It took place based on 3 years of biotic inventories and lots of consideration was given to devise a plan that would be the likeliest to be adopted in the shortest amount of time and with minimal resistance. Recommendations (19 made in total) were framed in such a manner as to avoid internal disagreements. As such, water, meadow, private property, urban agriculture, and lighting issues were only briefly mentioned, something several commissioners pointed out. Hopes that some of these would be better addressed in the update were made. The greatest benefit of the original plan was that when adopted, it would provide immediate triage to damaged and or deteriorating natural lands.

Zell made several suggestions for the update of the NRMP. First of all, he suggested keeping it short (less than 20 pages) with critical recommendations targeting preservation and restoration efforts which were very attainable. He suggested identifying ways to track and measure success. Zell believed that all the environmental plans (Public Open Spaces, Urban Forest, and Natural Resources) all mutually support one another. As many of the recommendations passed in the original document were limited to DPR, he suggested making them more binding across the

County. Greg Zell also suggested that the Natural Resources Management Unit be recognized as subject matter experts across the County, and as such, they should act liaisons and be consulted in projects County-wide. Along the same lines, since resources do not exist in a vacuum and expertise is present throughout the region, that cooperation throughout agencies and groups throughout the area be the norm.

Greg Zell also suggested that the biotic inventory be updated, and that funds be found to pursue professional experts in helping to conduct such biotic surveys. Since funding would likely always be an issue, ways to seek additional funds should be examined and pursued.

Staff Updates:

Alonso Abugattas provided the following updates:

- The new Administrative Regulation protecting documented Significant Natural Resource Features was passed and will offer a new level protection. Land disturbing activities within 100' of a documented feature will trigger a Rapid Environmental Impact Survey.
- The multi-jurisdictional NOVA Cooperative Weed Management Area for which Arlington received a matching \$140,000 grant is well underway, with letters of cooperation being drafted and a survey of the whole 42-mile stretch of the W&OD trail being surveyed.
- The native plant nursery continues to expand its efforts, with regular work days and possibilities for expansion of the space allotted for its use being strongly considered.

Member Reports:

- Sarah Meservey (E2C2) reported that the Reed School tree removal had for the most part been pushed back.
- Evelio Rubiella (UFC) informed the group that the Crystal City project was drawing lots of interest and comments from the community.
- Caroline Haynes (Park & Rec) said that the Tree Canopy Fund had 80% of the trees planted surviving.
- Caroline Haynes reported that Virginia Highlands Park neighbors were not happy with the buildout plans and loss of casual space, and that County fields were going to be more open to use.