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AGENDA

Thursday, August 14, 2025 @ 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Durant Center, 1605 Cameron St

1. APPROVAL OF JUNE MEETING MINUTES

June Minutes approved by Commission.

Attendees in person: Liz Gelfer, Eleanor Trice, Sara Rhoades, Alysa Wong, Eleanor Quigley, Russ Baily, Kevin Fisher, Hashim Taylor, Dereth Bush, Ken Krupa, Kurt Moser (President of 4MileRun Foundation)

Attendees on phone: None

Unexcused absence: Laura

Other attendees: Oscar Mendoza

2. Welcome and Discussion Regarding Habitat Restoration Area at 4MileRun Park

Alysa Wong, ABC Commissioner and Kurt Moser, president of the Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation

Alysa is working with Kurt Moser to create wildlife habitat areas in Four Mile Run Park. She noted that Potomac Yard Park is beautiful representation of native plants, shrubs, and trees. Adjacent to this is Four Mile Run Park. She would like to connect two very sensitive areas that would contribute to watershed protection and wildlife quality and designate parts of the park as wildlife restoration areas. The beautification commission already have partnerships with Four Mile Run and would help to implement the habitat restoration pilot plan with the City. Two areas would be designated as Class V No Mow areas so landscapers won't mistakenly damage the trees and mow the areas. They would organize themselves to implement the City master plan.

Kurt Moser said Four Mile Run Park already has natural areas. There needs to be an emphasis on keeping these areas protected for wildlife habitat consistent with the Four Mile Run Masterplan to ensure the area is designated as a natural space as well as a space for recreational uses.

In conjunction with the master naturalists, Alysa would like to provide education as to why we are creating a habitat restoration area. Another potential idea is to make a wild looking area look separate with a clear definition – to show that it is a unique space that is different and should be nurtured. The Commission will collaborate with the Master Naturalists, Kurt, and the City of Alexandria, VA.

Commission voted Yes for Alysa Wong to work with the City Naturalists to create the habitat restoration plan.

3. Guest Speaker: Hashim Taylor – New City of Alexandria Urban Arborist

Hashim is an Alexandria native who grew up in the Del Ray neighborhood. He has experience replanting native trees, managing urban tree canopies, and planting trees from his work in Virginia Beach.

Hashim is a champion of planting native trees, prescribed burns to help with this growth, natural resources, and urban forestry. His direction is to understand where RPCA is now. Get a better system and be transparent to the public. He is going to roll out a monthly newsletter in the Fall about RPCA natural resource efforts to get the communication free-flowing. He is making sure we are having more collaboration with ACPS and the community at large. He encourage everyone to sign up for the newsletter on the website. Hashim Taylor is currently meeting with a lot of community partners currently to get more feedback from the community.

Alysa asked: RPCA has a lot of mandates, how can our Commission support your goals?

Hashim Taylor: City Naturalists, Rachel and Katrina, need champions, advocacy, and education on the pollinator zones, reforestation planting. Help with education and advocacy to the public.

Eleanor Quigley asked if trees would be available for planting in the Fall.

Oscar Mendoza said there will be 50 trees available for planting from a local nursery.

Russ Bailey said we will need to coordinate with RPCA managers about the two places the Commission wants to plant trees. Russ said the property owners have committed to help with watering.

Eleanor Trice asked Hashim about the Environmental Policy Commission and said they have reached out to talk about budget with the City. She asked him if there were any priorities that he would like us to support and champion.

Hashim Taylor said he wants more money for trees and natural resources. He said he didn't have a lot of details right now.

Eleanor Trice said we would like to institutionalize the tree equity program, we are interested in how we can reduce heat islands.

Alysa Wong asked about whether it would be feasible to start up a City-run nursery?

Oscar Mendoza said we used to have one but discontinued the use of this.

Kevin Fisher said maybe we could look into a public private partnership nursery.

Eleanor Quigley mentioned we should include native pollinators, shrubs, and bushes in the natural resource plan. Gateway areas should be planted this Fall – the City said no for the Spring planting.

Eleanor Quigley brought up Bradford Pear trees – these are highly invasive trees with an offensive smell, and branches that split. They send up shoots that create thickets. She would like to get rid of Bradford Pear trees from the City of Alexandria. They are one of 37 trees the state legislature has labeled as invasive. She would like to see them banned from being sold in nurseries in Alexandria, VA.

Eleanor Trice mentioned planting native grasses in medians. The City naturalist has reached out to us about doing a backyard habitat certification and also get a National Wildlife Federation Community Habitat certification. Could ABC work with her on this project? Go back to our award winners and find out if they could get certified. We need 145 properties to get certified.

Eleanor Quigley said the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (NVBA) certification is much better than the National Wildlife Federation. Its more rigorous and makes a real difference. They need to get city assistance. They have ambassadors that go around to households and talk about native plants. She said there already is a virtual award winner at Monticello park where you bring in the neighbor homes into the habitat of the park. The NVBA certifies small or large properties, like a whole park. The idea is to have a waystation for a bird in a backyard or maybe you have a whole park that's a waystation. The idea of community is built right into the NVBA certification. We should push this one more with the City.

Eleanor Quigley made a motion to state that ABC would support working with the City on the habitat at home NVBA community certification. Everyone voted Yes.

4. Alexandria 250th Celebration Discussion

The Alexandria 250th Celebration is coming in 2026. There are four tall ships coming to Alex 6/12 to 6/14/2026. The City would like to plant red, white and blue gardens at waterfront park and hanging baskets on King Street in the Memorial Day time frame. Hashim was directed to look at a proposal for plantings at Recreation Centers. They are also looking at what native plants would be good for the medians since this is hostile environment. Eleanor mentioned maybe an award for the best red, white, and blue garden in the City for the awards ceremony. Also, we should reach out to plant nurseries to see if they can offer native red, white and blue plants. Can we get a pledge from residents that they will start planting native plants on their properties – maybe the City could put some money into this. Make this into a challenge.

Members of the Advocacy Committee talked about the 250th anniversary and the bicentennial tree near Holmes Run (in the West End). Can we replicate this on the very old tree on Holmes Run near the Beatley Library. The Alexandria office of the arts are not interested. But the Del Ray Artisans might be interested in putting together a workshop for creating art work for the trees in the area.

Ken Krupa made a motion to put this the Del Ray Artisan art workshop proposal into effect. The Commission approved it.

Dereth Bush mentioned that the Beatley Library has art projects for kids that might be something we could look at.

Liz Gelfer volunteered to reach out to plant nurseries about the Red, White, and Blue native plants.

5. 2025 Award Ceremony Discussion

We have delivered all the signs to the 29 award winners. Update on activities:

- Provided City with the website content update
- Provided City with the Press Release and eNews
- Created social media content for all award winners
- NVBA, Master gardener booths, Eco City – leave it to the awards committee
- Two honorable mentions: Northern Alexandria Native Plants Sale wanted the Churches to get recognition because they are providing their space; Friends of Mount
- Invite the Zebra and give them an award or recognition for the space
- Reached out to an aCopello group to sing about trees
- Eleanor asked that all the subcommittees concentrate on the Awards ceremony for the month of September and October.
- Whole Foods donating cheese and fruit platters

6. Board Report and Attendance Report

- Must send this to City Council July 2024 to July 2025 by 9/15/2025

- ABC Gmail – alxbeautification gmail
- Abdel-Rahman Elnoubi, a city council member, will be coming to the September meeting.

7. Miscellaneous Commission Updates Brought Up by Chair, Eleanor Trice.

GW Middle School Outreach

Kevin Fisher talked about a teacher at GW middle school wants ABC to come to the campus to talk to the kids about beautification. This may be as simple as planting trees on campus. They would like us be advisors on this issue and a landscape contractor for the school will do the planting. Kevin will give us an update soon.

Planning Commission Meeting

The Chair of the Planning Commission – Melissa McMahon – met with Liz Gelfer and Eleanor Trice. The Green Building Policy that may be unveiled in the Fall. Could they talk about native plants? Talked about process – George Mason mature trees were not included in the planning for the redevelopment.

Alexandria Affordable House Committee

Eleanor Trice and Liz Gelfer met with this committee and talked about the tree equity program. They are a good contact as new projects come up to include native plants. Will meet with ARHA representatives in the future

Sara Rhoades mentioned that ABC should be involved in the Waterfront Commission – the publicity has to do with the pump station at Founders Park

Fort Ward Park – Arborist Plaque

Oscar Mendoza said the plaque is in process. Eleanor Trice said we want to plant the tree in the Fall.

Meeting adjourned at 9 pm.