



4MRV Working Group Meeting
April 4, 2017
7 – 10 PM

General Business

- Today's agenda changed because the Working Group requested more information on Stormwater and related environmental issues. Jason Papacosma, DES Watershed Programs Manager, will present and answer questions.
- The First Principles agenda item was deferred to the next Working Group meeting.
- Michelle Isabelle-Stark, Cultural Affairs Specialist, announced that the Public Art staff will soon begin a project to enhance the exterior of the 3700 building. The project will help highlight the Theatre on the Run and the other arts related activities operating in that building.

Arts / Cultural District

- Ruby Harper, Director of Local Arts Services for Americans for the Arts, spoke about arts districts around the country.
- Successful arts districts are well recognized, promoted, and labeled areas that have an anchor or an attraction that makes the area a destination.
- Example of arts districts: Short North in Columbus OH, Franklinton in Columbus OH, Lansburgh in D.C., Adams Morgan in D.C.
- Public Arts staff is expecting a report from Artspace that will provide initial insight or guidance on the arts in Arlington. The areas they concentrated on include Columbia Pike, South Four Mile Run, Crystal City, and Virginia Square.
- Comments were made about the Park Master Plan boundary and what uses are or should be permitted. This will be a topic for discussion at an upcoming County Board work session.

Stormwater

- Jason Papacosma, Watershed Programs Manager with the DES Office of Sustainability and Environmental Management presented stormwater information related to 4MRV.
- The long-term objective is to improve the Resource Protection Area (RPAs) in the County through the development process. As new or re-development of land occurs, then the county's stormwater and RPA requirements under Chapters 60 and 61 (respectively) are triggered. RPAs are protected because they filter and absorb upland runoff, stabilize soil and streambanks, provide wildlife habitat, and provide shading for streams. The Stormwater Management Ordinance uses phosphorus as a proxy for stormwater pollutants and targets 10% to 20% reduction of phosphorous with stormwater treatment facilities. Other pollutants in stormwater runoff include fecal coliform, phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment. A vegetated RPA helps to filter stormwater so less pollution enters our waterways.

- Development activity in RPAs is reviewed in a site specific manner and requires trade-offs to allow existing uses to continue while also improving the RPA buffer. Higher intensity uses and impacts require more mitigation. Stormwater compliance must also be considered and achieved. And, activities that increase RPA footprint require exception through the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Review Committee (CBORC).
- Addressing RPA and stormwater management requirements together requires a context-sensitive approach. SWM facilities can only be located in areas of existing impact. Strategies that mimic purpose and function of natural buffers are prioritized. Less compatible strategies require extensive grading and drainage piping that can conflict with protection and enhancement of riparian buffer. RPA buffer improvement is also achieved.
- The most compatible stormwater compliance option in the RPA is the ‘vegetated filter strip.’ It creates a forested buffer and meets stormwater requirements. The State-specified minimum width is 35’ – consistent with research on buffer pollutant removal functions. No excavation or piping is required and it does not conflict with high water tables. It does require a physical barrier to prevent foot traffic from damaging vegetation and soil.
- The stormwater and RPA ordinances are triggered when 2,500 square feet, or more, of land is disturbed on a parcel. Land disturbance is a man-made change to the land surface, which may potentially change its stormwater runoff characteristics. Land disturbance may include grading, excavation, new or expanded impervious surfaces, or construction of new facilities. Disturbance is measured at the parcel level and is not triggered by activity on an adjacent and separately owned parcel.
- If a property does not redevelop and continues to operate as-is, then the property owner is not required to make stormwater or RPA improvements.
- Questions were asked if the dog park should remain and what are the stormwater priorities for 4MRV. The dog park is an on-going discussion and could stay in place if the county implements stormwater mitigation strategies as well as meets RPA restoration objectives. The dog park is a point source for nitrogen (from dog urine) and fecal coliform (from dog feces), which adversely affects the water quality.
- Questions were asked about Four Mile Run and its water quality. Four Mile Run has bacterial impairment, specifically fecal coliform, which is a result of both point and non-point sources. Point sources have specific locations whose function or activity contributes to the release of a pollutant, and a point source for fecal coliform includes, among others, dog parks. Nonpoint sources cannot be pinpointed to a specific site, rather, it is the collection of pollution resulting from many diffuse sources. A nonpoint source for fecal coliform includes, among others, wildlife and dog owners not picking up after their pets anywhere within the watershed. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) administers the Virginia Stormwater management Program (VSMP) and issues Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits. The VSMP program and MS4 permit requires municipalities to focus on point and non-point sources of pollution and to demonstrate specific actions taken to reduce the release of pollutants.

- Questions were asked about the safety of interacting with the water in Four Mile Run. The Run is monitored for bacteria and is safe for secondary contact. Secondary contact includes activities that do not involve total body immersion or water ingestion; like skipping rocks, fishing, or wading while wearing shoes. See <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/streams/stream-safety/>)
- Questions were asked about the 2004 Implementation Plan for the Fecal Coliform TMDL for Four Mile Run, VA. The implementation includes education and outreach, particularly in the dog parks, ongoing sanitary sewer maintenance, and other efforts and programs to work to reduce 'controllable' sources of bacteria (human and pets).
- Questions were asked about stream restoration efforts and if the 4MRV stretch of Four Mile Run will be addressed. The Arlington County Stormwater Master Plan identifies priorities for future stream restoration projects. The 4MRV stretch of Four Mile Run is not a priority for stream restoration at this time because there has been work in the past to channelize and stabilize the stream to reduce flooding and protect infrastructure. and there are other waterways that are experiencing more severe erosion. However, in coordination with the 4MRV Area Plan and Park Master Plan, there may be opportunities for future funding through the County's Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) process.
- Questions were asked about the County's storm sewer and sanitary sewer, and if these collection systems are combined. No, Arlington does not have a combined system, but the City of Alexandria does and they are taking steps to correct this issue.

Public Comment

- Encourage the County to daylight more streams, such as Nauck Branch. Staff indicated that this is particularly difficult with Nauck Branch because of the land use and ownership patterns. The County owns little to no land in this area.
- Encourage the 4MRV process to focus on retaining existing businesses and preserving industrial uses.
- Encourage improvements to the natural environment and reconnect people to nature.
- Support for the baseball diamonds and a potential indoor sports/recreation facility.
- The RPAs are a valuable asset and not just a regulatory burden. RPAs also provide opportunities to connect people to nature.
- A soccer coach commented that it is getting more and more difficult to find practice space for his youth team. More field space is needed for the growing school age population. While Arlington school buildings are expanding to meet the growing demand, their outdoor space is not growing and there is added burden on what little open space we have left.