# Virtual AFCA Meeting—School Issues

AFCA invites you to join our monthly Zoom meeting on Wednesday, February 21, at 7 p.m. We will discuss issues related to Arlington Public Schools, so if you have related questions or concerns, please join us and raise them!

To join the meeting, you can participate through Zoom by entering the following URL into your browser between 6:50 and 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 21: http://tinyurl.com/ue5zpzmm. (If you have never used

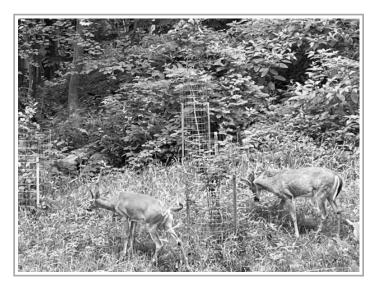
Zoom, you can view a short tutorial at https://zoom.us/resources by clicking on Joining & Configuring Audio/Video.) Alternatively, you can dial in to the meeting at 301-715-8592, where you will be prompted to enter meeting number 876 9055 6416 and passcode 010188. You might also be prompted to hit the # sign one or more times. This call-in number will be active starting at 6:50 p.m.

# AFCA January 2023 Meeting

On January 17, AFCA President Esther Bowring hosted a virtual AFCA meeting via Zoom with about 35 residents in attendance. Esther started by introducing Alonso Abugattas, natural resources manager for Arlington County's Department of Parks and Recreation.

Alonso gave an excellent update on the county's Deer Management Project, initiated in 2023. (His slides were circulated the next day on listserv; you can find out more online at Arlington County Deer Management Project.) Project launch followed county surveys of deer numbers and impacts in Arlington's forested parks. Alonso emphasized that white-tailed deer are native to and belong in Arlington's forests but that, for lack of extirpated predators like wolves and mountain lions, deer populations now vastly exceed the area that can support them. The maximum level of a healthy deer population is about 15-20 deer per square mile, whereas Arlington's deer population is estimated at up to 124 deer per square mile in some places. County resource managers are considering five basic management options: (1) sharpshooting, (2) controlled archery, (3) surgical fertility control, (4) fencing, and (5) chemical repellants. Fencing and repellants are already in use where feasible. The final plan will almost certainly involve some combination of these options. The county completed an initial set of public engagements last year and will conduct further sessions

...continued on page 2



# Contents Deer management.....3 County news .......8 Coyotes .......4 Parks update ......8 Winter trees ......6 Around the Forest .....9 Barcroft news .......7 Kids for hire ........10

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The Arlington Forester is the official publication of the Arlington Forest Citizens Association, Arlington, VA. A nonpartisan, nonsectarian publication serving the residents of Arlington Forest, the Forester welcomes articles and photos focusing on issues specific to our neighborhood. We publish monthly from September to November and January to May. The deadline for submissions is the first of the month. Email your submission of up to 400 words—preferably with a photo—to newsletter@arlingtonforestva.org. Articles on controversial issues are welcome but do not necessarily reflect the views of AFCA and will be marked as opinion.

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# **AFCA Meeting**

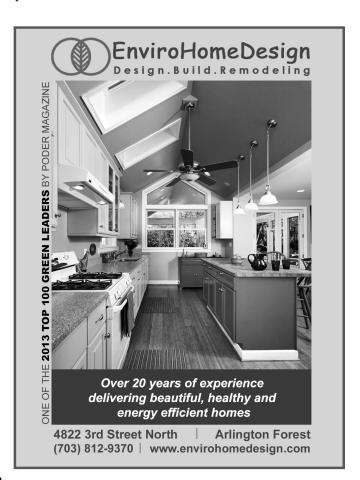
#### ...continued

this year to better familiarize residents with the issue and the options under consideration.

Kay Tiernan noted that the new outfall (drainage) structures for Sparrow Pond are completed; the Four Mile Run Trail will reopen in February. The next portion of the project will require closing part of the W&OD trail by the pond for 6-7 weeks while streambank stabilization and other work is done. After the pond restoration is complete, work on the storm drain at the bottom of S. Park Dr. will commence.

Colleen O'Hara said that the county is working on getting an easement from Dominion Power in order to replace a spur trail connector bridge destroyed by fallen trees in Southside. Other topics briefly discussed included recent storm damage to the Lubber Run pavilion and traffic management at the intersection of N. George Mason and N. Park Drives.

Esther concluded the meeting with news that Arlington County Board Chair Libby Garvey has proposed a countywide strategic plan covering the time period through 2050. Civic association presidents and other group leaders have been invited to an initial meeting on the plan in February. Some Foresters asked whether residents might be able to stream the meeting. Esther said she would contact Libby Garvey to try to make this possible.



# Public Feedback on Deer Management

By Hutch Brown

A 2021 census of white-tailed deer in Arlington County (full results are online at Arlington County Deer Survey and Next Steps) recorded 290 deer, mostly concentrated in Arlington's forested parklands. Glencarlyn Park, for example, had 39 deer per square mile, far exceeding the 15-20 considered sustainable by wildlife experts. A followup "browse report" in 2023 found that deer damage to native plants threatens Arlington's forest ecosystems. In response, the county launched a Deer Management Project to reduce deer numbers to sustainable levels.

A first step was to survey Arlingtonians in June/July 2023 for a baseline of public sentiment on deer control. A total of 2,625 residents participated in the countywide "engagement," which included an online feedback form (2,524 participants); a community forum (75 attendees); and a deep-dive conversation (26 attendees). Two-thirds of all participants lived in neighborhoods with single-family detached homes; interestingly, Arlington Forest had more participants (107) than any other neighborhood. Here are some of the results.

On a scale of 0-5, 61% of the respondents reported high levels (3-5) of concern about deer impacts in Arlington; 36% reported low levels (0-2). Most respondents (55%) were supportive of actively managing deer impacts in Arlington's parks, with a large minority



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(35%) unsupportive. The county is considering in particular two methods of deer control—sharpshooting and sterilization. Respondents supportive of sterilization (63%) far exceeded those unsupportive (24%); for sharpshooting, opinion was more evenly divided, with more unsupportive responses (51%) than supportive ones (43%). Responses were heavily skewed against two additional deer control measures, archery and fencing. Participants called for broader public dissemination of information on the issue (online at Arlington County Deer Management Project).

Arlington staff is currently visiting neighborhoods to explain the Deer Management Project; Arlington Natural Resources Manager Alonso Abugattas presented a slide show on the subject at the January AFCA meeting (see page 1). Engagement #2 in late winter/early spring will discuss draft recommendations for a deer management strategy. Engagement #3 (no date given) will discuss final recommendations to the Arlington County Board, with a board vote to follow.



# The Eastern Coyote

#### By Alonso Abugattas, Arlington Natural Resources Manager

The piece is adapted from an online article at http://tinyurl.com/b3vy8tmd, where you can see the author's video of a coyote in Arlington.

Our eastern coyote is a recent arrival with an interesting story. The coyote (*Canis latrans*) was first noticed east of the Mississippi River in about 1930 near the Great Lakes as coyotes native to the West took over areas vacated by the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). They interbred with the Algonquin wolf (*Canis lupus lycaon*) in the Great Lakes region and continued traveling eastward, interbreeding with dogs as well. The result was a mix of about 60% western coyote, 30% Algonquin wolf, and 10% dog, although the proportions can vary. Coyotes are now found in every county in the mid-Atlantic region.

The eastern coyote is bigger than its western counterpart, about the size of a border collie or even a German shepherd—often 45-55 pounds, occasionally even bigger. The males are usually larger than the females. Coyotes in our area are not only larger than their western cousins but also quieter, not howling as much; they are often in much smaller groups. Their color can vary but is often a shade of tan, usually with a white chin; they have erect ears and bushy downward-pointing tails with dark tips. Coyotes are opportunistic feeders, with diets that include fruits and vegetables as well as meat. They are great scavengers, often eating deer roadkill. They rarely

take down adult deer unless the deer is injured or ill, but they see any small pets as food, particularly outdoor cats—one more reason not to let cats outdoors.

Coyotes are remarkably shy. Most are rarely seen, usually running away at the first sign of people, and none are any danger unless they are very sick. (If you think any animal is sick, you should call Animal Control.) If you encounter a coyote that is clearly healthy, you can get the animal to run away by yelling, clapping your hands, throwing things, or shaking a can full of pennies. You should never feed coyotes or leave food out for animals such as cats; that can lead a coyote to get used to people, which can be bad for all concerned.

People have been living near coyotes for a long time, though most have no idea that coyotes are even around,



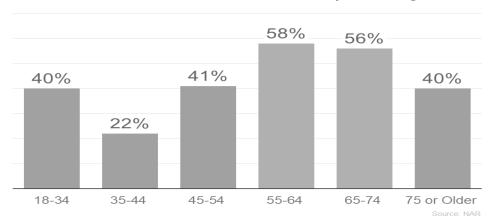
especially because they are active mostly at night. So if you do see a coyote, consider yourself very lucky!



Grandparents Are Moving To Be Near Loved Ones - Recent data from The National Association of Realtors (NAR) shows people between the ages of 55 and 74 are moving farther (more than 100 miles) than any other age group (see graph below): Never underestimate the power of grandchildren especially when it comes to lifestyle and financial decisions.

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# The Magic of Winter Trees

By Cindy Speas, Fairfax County Tree Commission

The article is adapted from Plant NOVA Natives.

Winter is a lovely time to get to know your trees better. Many folks spend winter days planning their spring gardens, winter sowing, or putting in nursery orders for spring delivery of native plants. If you have trees nearby, winter might also be the time to learn how to appreciate and protect their incredible beauty. When our trees are bare of leaves, you can more clearly visualize their beautiful shapes, see their special characteristics, and assess their health. Several local organizations offer winter educational hikes or webinars to learn about our forests, including Nature Forward, the Virginia

Native Plant Society's Potowmack Chapter, Capital Nature, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, and more.

With the leaves off in winter, you can see more in the woods. It's often easier to watch hawks, owls, or other raptors at work. Smaller birds can be spotted searching for insects and berries, and mammals often make an appearance as they look for food. Native evergreens or the lovely marcescent (persistent) leaves on oaks and beeches provide some color among the gray tree trunks.



One of the loveliest things you can see in a winter forest is by looking up to the sky and seeing how the tree canopy develops: trees growing side-by-side sometimes leave a path around each canopy's branches to let sunlight reach the forest floor, a phenomenon called canopy shyness. These patterns of sky and crown branching can sometimes be seen in groupings of the same tree species.

If you like vigorous outdoor work in winter, now is the time to pull, dig, or hack and squirt the invasives in your yard or to volunteer for similar ongoing activities in your community. With the exception of a few native evergreens, almost all swaths of green in your neighborhood are inva-

sive nonnative plants—from wintergreen to vinca and English ivy, from privet to nonnative holly and bamboo. Invasive plants displace the tree seedlings that are essential for our future forests, and some of them directly kill large trees. You can find organizations with volunteer opportunities on the Plant NOVA Trees website.

So if you want to learn about trees, more closely observe nature, find quiet time for spiritual reflection, or get rid of tree enemies, winter is a magical time to spend outside in the stillness and beauty of the forest.

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# Barcroft School News By Samantha Bell

The students got a few days off of school in January to enjoy the snow. There was a Winter Concert on January 23, with 4th- and 5th-grade students from the band, orchestra, and chorus performing for students during the day and for their families that evening. On January 26, the PTA treated the teachers and staff to snacks and a hot bar of coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. (See the photos for the concert and hot bar.)



Upcoming events include the PTA Online Auction on February 3-11; Bingo Night on February 22; a Restaurant Night Fundraiser on February 28 at Sloppy Mama's BBQ (5731 Langston Blvd., 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.); and Fiesta de Amistad (Friendship Party) on April 12.

You can support the Barcroft PTA by linking your Harris Teeter card at www.harristeeter.com/together-in-education; the Harris Teeter Barcroft code is 4238. You need to relink every year.

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @ BarcroftEagles and on Facebook at Barcroft Elementary School PTA. You can contact barcroftptapresident 2024@ gmail.com if you would like to support the PTA and have any questions.





# County News

#### **Speed Cameras Are Coming**

According to Arlington County Vision Zero Manager Christine Baker, the county has contracted with a vendor to install speed cameras at critical locations on major thoroughfares near our neighborhood, such as N. George Mason Drive. County staff is working with police on "a methodology that prioritizes school zone locations for camera placement based on speeds, crashes, equity, and activity."

#### Snow/Ice Issue?

Arlington County has a "Report a Problem" website with a link to a "winter storm form." You can use the link to report a local problem with snow or ice on a street or sidewalk, such as an unplowed street. Check it out online at Arlington County Request a Service.

#### Free Bus Rides for Students

As of January, students from kindergarten through 12th grade can use an iRide SmarTrip card to ride Metrobus for free in Arlington. Sponsored by Arlington County and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority, the program gives students safe, environmentally friendly options for getting to school and elsewhere. Arlington students can get a free iRide SmarTrip card at any Commuter Store in Arlington or through Arlington Public Schools.

#### Arlington 2050 Kickoff

The Arlington County Board, led by incoming Chair Libby Garvey, has announced a broad public engagement to envision what the county should look like in 2050. It will be the first such initiative since 1986, when residents came together to envision what Arlington could become in the new millennium. On February 5, the Arlington County Board hosted a kickoff event for its Arlington 2050 Initiative, featuring a panel discussion moderated by Garvey on what Arlington will look like in 2050 if current trends in business, climate, and demographics continue. AFCA President Esther Bowring was invited to attend.

#### **Reporting Incidents**

Foresters have used listserv to notify neighbors of incidents in our local parks, most recently at the Glencarlyn Playground below Southside, where a teen was blocked by three men from climbing down from a play structure. Arlington County has an online system for reporting nonemergency incidents to police. Incidents to consider reporting range from hit-and-run accidents and credit card fraud to vandalism and suspicious circumstances of any kind. Check it out at Arlington County Online Police Reporting System.

# Parks Update

#### January Storm Damage

A branch from a fallen tree punctured the roof of the Lubber Run pavilion below Northside. A large oak growing beside the paved Lubber Run Trail fell across the creek, possibly due to slope saturation by heavy January rains; the tree was tall enough to strike the pavilion. AFCA reported the damage to the county, which has cut away the branches in preparation for repairing the relatively minor roof damage. A second large oak, this one well downstream, also fell across Lubber Run, joining a previously downed tree already bridging the creek there.

#### Bridge Replacement Over Lubber Run

An epic storm in July 2019 destroyed two bridges over Lubber Run, one of which is slated for replacement. The bridge will reconnect the unpaved trail below Greenbrier with the paved trail below Northside. County plans for bridge replacement are in place, and construction is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of this year and last to the fourth quarter. You can find out more online at Lubber Run Park Bridge Replacement Project.

#### **W&OD Trail Closure**

The Four Mile Run Trail below Southside reopened at the end of January. To build a new outfall (drainage pipes) from Sparrow Pond to Four Mile Run, workers have been excavating the area, placing the concrete outfall structures, and stabilizing the slopes. Starting as early as mid-February, the W&OD Trail will be closed for 6-7 weeks to complete the outfall work. Detour signs will direct cyclists and pedestrians to the Four Mile Run Trail. For more information online, see Sparrow Pond Restoration Project.

#### Wildlife Encounters

We occasionally encounter foxes, raccoons, coyotes, and other animals in our yards and parks, sometimes (though rarely) during the day. If you think an animal is sick or injured, you should contact Animal Control at the Animal Welfare League of Arlington. The League has an emergency number and an online form to fill out for nonemergencies. You can find both online at Arlington County Animal Control.

#### Deer, Oh Deer!

Arlington County's Deer Management Project, launched last year, is designed to reduce Arlington's burgeoning deer population from a threat to forest ecosystems to sustainable levels. The county is holding a second public "engagement" on the issue in late winter or early spring, giving Foresters another opportunity to weigh in through an online feedback form and in-person meetings. You can find out more online at Arlington County Deer Management Project.

## Around the Forest

## Request a Service/Report a Problem

For nonurgent issues in our neighborhood, Arlington County has a website for requesting services and reporting problems. You go online and give the location, then describe the issue. Topics include graffiti, litter, parks and trails, street signs and signals, potholes and gutters, trash and recycling, and more. If you see dangerous driving, such as illegal crossings of N. George Mason Dr. from N. Park Dr., you can report it here. Check it out online at Arlington County Request a Service.

#### Coralberry



Coralberry is a native shrub that gets about 5 ft tall and forms clumps. We don't see much coralberry in our local parks, but you can find clumps of it on the wooded Northside buffer strip next to Arlington

Forest Park. In winter, lines of lovely purplish-pink berries make coralberry stand out. Birds and other wildlife eat the berries, and deer browse the shrubs (therefore also called buckbrush), although our local coralberries show no signs of deer browse so far this year.

#### **Snow Shoveling**

We finally got some measurable snow again this year! Arlington County's snow removal ordinance requires property owners to clear snow and ice from public sidewalks adjacent to their properties within 24 hours (36 hours for a snowfall of more than 6 inches). Homeowners who are physically incapacitated are exempt. Find out more online at Snow Removal Ordinance Arlington County VA. For snow shoveling help, see Kids for Hire on page 10.



#### Winter Salt

Arlington County is helping to reduce salt use on winter roads by replacing rock salt with brine, which uses a quarter as much salt. Excess salt is bad for soils, streams, plants, and wildlife. You can use less salt on your walkways by shoveling early (before snowmelt turns to ice) and evenly distributing modest amounts of salt. A 12-ounce mug of salt should be enough for a 20-foot driveway or about 10 sidewalk squares.



Tracy C. Taylor, Author

#### W-L High School Graduate George Mason University Graduate

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# Community Calendar

**Next AFCA meeting:** Wednesday, February 21, 7 p.m. **Neighborhood Spring Cleanup:** A Saturday in April 2024

**Annual AFCA Picnic:** Wednesday, May 15, 2024 **Annual Yard Sale:** A Saturday in May, 2024

Turnaround Day: A Saturday in June, 2024 (tentative)

# **AFCA Meetings**

February 21, 2024: School issues

March 20, 2024: Native trees and

gardens

April 17, 2024: Pedestrian/traffic

safety

May 15, 2024: Neighborhood traffic

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