Our meeting notes serve as bulletins of our activities, interests, and discussions, supplemented by your submissions.

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Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – April 15, 2025

Next Meeting: May 21 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the Friends of Accotink calendar.)

Present: Gary Bangs, Philip Latasa, Dave Lincoln, Beverley Rivera, Sandy Collins, Susan Kuiler, Peter Clark, Katy Johnson, Jonathan West, and Kim Schauer all via on-line meeting.

AGENDA

- *Represent FACC:*
  - *Symposium on Innovative Park Stewardship, March 25, 2025* Philip said that he had hoped to learn some sort of secret formula for success in stewardship and asked the question in a few different ways. However, none of the speakers could seem to state why they were successful in any way that seemed particularly different from what we already do.

    He went on to say that there were some commonalities pointed out among the presenting groups:
    - Participants live near the site/neighborhoods
    - An available pool of retirees with time and money
    - Support from local/state governments
    - Focus on a specific neighborhood or a state park (As opposed to our rather diffuse mission)

    Philip and Dave explored the idea of repackaging many current FACC projects under the moniker of Citizen Science. This sounded good to the group, so when possible we'll use citizen science to promote activities or programs

- *Anthony Amos Meeting, April 3, 2025* Sue K., Katy, Philip, and Jim Gillespie attended. Jim is an active environmentalist in Fairfax City. Much of the discussion covered a range of topics, mostly related to the City, such as:
  - Preservation or expansion of riparian buffers
  - Homelessness in the woods
  - Watershed impacts of the City's small area plans
  - Stream restoration pros and cons
  - Possible restriction on gas leaf blowers

  They also spent time on some specific issues of interest to FACC:
  - Cinder Bed Road Bikeway
  - Accotink Gorge
  - Accotink Gravity Sewer
  - Americana Drive

Katy and Sue indicated that Anthony is new to the city council, and was noncommittal on issues pending what arises from meetings. Still unsure where he stands on the George Snyder Trail project.

- *Garnett Civic Space Earth Day, April 19, 2025* Gary indicated that he would setup at this Earth Day event in Annandale. Last year there was a stream cleanup as well but this year just the information tables at the event.

- *Leadership Fairfax Board and Brew , April 23, 2025* Avril and Kim said they are planning to attend again, in hope of making connections with non-profit leadership experience and capabilities.

- *HisTree Day , April 26, 2025* Philip said that he will have a table at the Fairfax City HisTree Day, as we have for a few years now. Although our Stafford Drive plant rescue is over, we may have a couple sources of native plants to give away.

- *Earth Sangha Open House, May 4, 2025* Dave said that he would look into attending the Earth Sangha's Spring Open House and Plant Sale scheduled for Sunday, May 4th, from 9am to 2pm at the Wild Plant Nursery.

- *Mount Vernon Summer Palooza, June 7, 2025* Dave plans to attend this event replacing the Mount Vernon Environmental Expo of previous years, where we usually have a table. It is 11:00 am to 3:00 pm if anyone wishes to join him.

• *Accotink Gorge:* Katy said that the Fairfax Master Naturalists are still going to have their geology and biology walk in the Gorge April 19th . We hope this will develop into a chapter project, providing ongoing support for wisteria control.

• *Potomac Watershed Cleanup:* Philip said that we had our first day of cleanups last Saturday with 44 volunteers removing 51 bags of trash. This included dismantling a rather elaborate homeless campsite which the previous occupant had asked us to do. The most unusual item found was a radio cassette player, a very mysterious object for some of the younger volunteers.

Something unusual found at the Fairfax City Cleanup the previous Saturday was 90 feet of sediment hose, with a silt bag attached, which took 1 1/2 hours to extract.

90' of sediment hose and silt bag lost from construction site, recovered from Accotink Creek

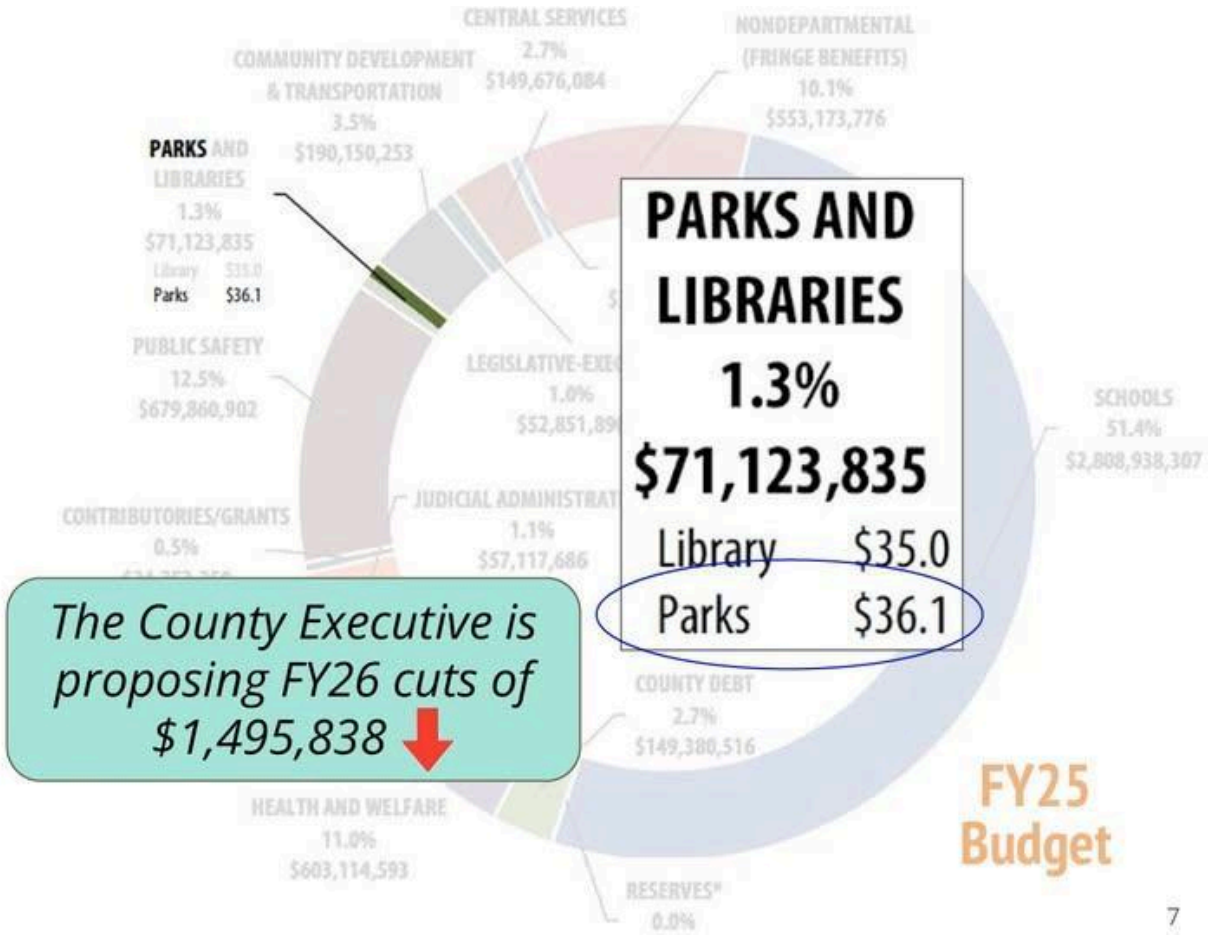
• *Americana Drive Cleanup:* Philip said that we will have our next Americana Drive cleanup on June 7th, which is the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Clean the Bay Day. Inconveniently, this is the same day as the Mount Vernon Summer Palooza. As usual, what we really need here is some means of encouraging the residents to be responsible and not engage in illegal dumping in the first place.

• *NOVA Tree Rescuers in Loisdale Park:* Philip said that from April 24th to May 10th, NOVA Tree Rescuers is partnering with Chesapeake Climate Action Network to distribute door hangers to the neighbors of Loisdale Park, followed by cutting English ivy off trees, both at the private homes and in the Park. They still need volunteers for all the days. Rather confusingly, they have separate signup forms for May 10th, but both links are on our calendar.

This area is close to the proposed Cinder Bed Road Bikeway, but on the other side of the railroad tracks. The organizers have also offered to let us display some Bikeway information at their sign in table.

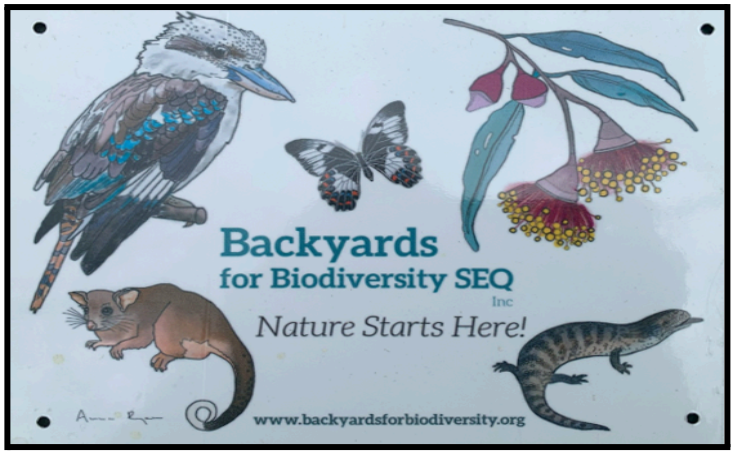
There is also significant wisteria in Loisdale Park.

• *Park Budget Cuts:* Philip said that the County Executive is proposing 3% cuts across the board to County agencies. As usual, the Park Authority is being asked for more, 4%, despite having been cut excessively in many recent years. Dave has sent a letter asking for natural resources and invasive management budgets to be maintained. He will also speak to the Board of Supervisors budget hearing asking the same.



• *Stream Stories:* Kim said that Nature Forward advised us that, due to the issues with federal funding, they had to cancel the Stream Stories project. They indicate that the project may resume if the funds do come through, but that seems rather unlikely.

• *New Sign for Lake Accotink IMA Site:* Beverley said that her sister in Queensland has an invasives control site similar to our IMA sites here. Ironically some of the invasive species she is removing there are North American natives. She has supplied one of the signs used at her site.



Our new Australia-themed IMA sign (SEQ = Southeast Queensland)

• *Accotink Gravity Sewer: Avril (5 min)*
What Avril may say –
Avril said that on April 7th, we had an online meeting with Providence District staff regarding our concerns. Doug, Sue, Vivian, Philip, and Avril attended from FACC. We also managed to get some residents of the Stonehurst neighborhood and two board members to attend.

We presented a slideshow explaining the nature of the wetlands and vernal pools that will be affected. We asked once again that the portion of the project in the most sensitive area south of Route 50 be placed in the existing cleared easement, rather than clearing a new path. The staff will communicate with Wastewater Planning, but our hopes are low.

Philip said that Supervisor Palchik is expected to attend our cleanup at Barkley Drive this Saturday. We should be prepared to take her on a tour of the affected area.

Clearing in progress for another sewer line, the Accotink Pump Station main on Fort Belvoir

• *George Snyder Trail:* Philip said that on April 8th, City Council voted 6 to 0 to stop the George Snyder Trail from going out for bid and directed city staff to work with the City Council to explore alternatives for the trail. This was very welcome news.

We still have work to do to garner the support of local businesses and city-wide residents for the alternative of improved bike and pedestrian safety along Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place. So, please, share your ideas about individuals and groups whose support we can enlist for the alternative. We need Council to hear from the community that such improvements are needed and supported. Otherwise this might ricochet back to building the whole trail as originally planned. The second step is to create a conservation easement or protected status for the whole of the woodland.

• *Cinder Bed Road Bikeway:* Philip said that we received astounding good news related to the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway in the form of a DPWES memo sent to FCDOT stating that hard surface trails in Resource Protection Areas should only be a last resort. The effect on the Bikeway or future projects is unknown, but at least the memo officially states a position that FACC has maintained for years.

The group of the interested is planning some public outreach:
On May 6th, 7:00 PM there will be an online presentation of the whole Bikeway mess and what we propose should change.
On May 18th, time yet to be determined, we will have a nature tour through the Amberleigh woods
On May 25th Philip intended to host a bicycle tour of the alternate routes on both sides of the Amberleigh woods. However, he doesn't think he will be able to get organized enough to get it planned by then.

The group of the interested is still awaiting a meeting with Supervisor Lusk.

• *Follow the Water:* Philip said that on April 28th we will have our usual spring Follow the Water in Long Branch beside Canterbury Woods Elementary School. The activity will run from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Supervisor Walkinshaw will join us briefly at 2:30. We hope this will be an opportunity to spread awareness of the Long Branch Central Project.

• *Long Branch Central Project:* Philip said as we discussed last month, we supported Woodson H.S. student Dominik Meade in his reviving of a neglected biological monitoring site in Canterbury Woods Park. The turnout was small, but we hope for better next time. We displayed information about the Long Branch Central Project.

Further up on Long Branch, the Soil & Water Conservation District resumed monitoring in Rutherford Park on April 9th. Philip brought along our display of Long Branch Central Project information.

• *Fort Belvoir Oil Booms:* Philip said an alert citizen reported that the oil booms from the April 2024 oil spill at Davison Airfield on Fort Belvoir were still in place. He reported observing migrating shad stuck behind the barriers. Getting some action to remove the booms required many emails to Fort Belvoir and involving Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and GMU researchers. After first replying that the booms were supposed to still be there and were not blocking fish migration, Fort Belvoir changed course and gave assurance that the booms had been removed. Unfortunately, that was only partly correct. Apparently, the boom locations had been forgotten and not all were taken out. The email exchanges continue.

• *Park Sign Project Eakin Park:* Philip said that the Park Authority has initiated a project to repair and update signage throughout the system. They are starting with Eakin Park in the Mantua area of our watershed. They have done a survey of existing signs and have asked FACC to cooperate in planning updated messaging. Anyone with ideas or input, please let me know.

• *Donations:* Philip said that we received donation of:
$50.00 from Dave
$425.00 as a grant from Blackbaud, his daughter's former employer.

- *Whither FACC:*
  - *FACC 20th Anniversary:* Philip reminded everyone FACC's anniversary is coming up and people should consider what if anything we should do. Generally everyone felt something is needed. FACC was founded in December 2005.

  - *Newsletter Updates:* Philip reminded all that we resolved back in January to send Newsletter items, and especially photos, to Beverley throughout the year. He suggested that we need to do better.

  - *Webpage Volunteer:* Philip stated that Jay, our student website volunteer, is slowly toiling away on setting up new photo galleries. He has not forgotten us, but seems much distracted by the demands of school.

    Dave said that an old friend and boat neighbor, a retired programmer has decided to set up a web service, with an early site set up at https://y219.com/ . He is interested in offering volunteer assistance with management of our website.

    Philip suggested that we wait for Suzy to return before making any significant changes to our website design or color scheme. It was at her request that we put in the current color scheme, so it might be best to get her involved, now that she has retired and will, we hope, again become more active with FACC.