



## Bulletin of the Proceedings of the Friends of Accotink Creek

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

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*Our many projects to make the creek healthier depend on your support!*

### Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – February 17, 2026

Next Meeting: March 17 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the [Friends of Accotink calendar](#).

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**Present:** Gary Bangs, Philip Latasa, Sandy Collins, Peter Clark, Kim Schauer, Avril Garland, Suzy Foster, Julie Chang, Katy Johnson, Dave Lincoln, Mike Perel, Kim Schauer, and Sue Kuiler, all via on-line meeting. James Albright also attended to discuss Annandale Greenway.

### AGENDA



- *Represent FACC:*

- [Mount Vernon Town Hall](#): Dave said that he staffed a table at the Mount Vernon Town Hall on February 7. He had good discussions with Supervisor Storck and his aide Peyton Smith regarding the Accotink Gorge and Cinder Bed Road Bikeway.
- [Community Associations Institute Expo](#): Dave said that we will be emphasizing invasives in our display space, which we will share with Plant NOVA Natives/Fairfax PRISM on February 27 and 28.
- [Board & Brew](#): Philip and Kim will attend Board & Brew on March 25 after it was postponed from last October. This is an event intended to pair non-profits with experienced persons interested in being board members.

- [Annandale Greenway](#): James Albright said the Annandale Gateway is a concept to enhance east-west non-motorized transportation across Annandale by connecting and enhancing existing infrastructure of streets and trails. We had a native garden planting event along the route last year and hope to do 10 more in spring along Columbia Pike. They are working with Earth Sangha to get the plants and Fairfax Urban Forestry will plant some trees. Gary offered to be liaison on future projects if they need help from FACC.

[Greenway StoryMap](#)

- [George Snyder Trail](#): Sue said that we had quite a turnout for the celebration at PJ Skidoo's on January 22nd: Over 40 people on less than three-days' notice. The political opposition is shaping up to try to challenge all those councilmembers who voted against the Trail.

Philip said as soon as the snow melts, we should begin first steps toward making the on-street route a reality. We can put together some route markers and take photos of them temporarily in place. Maybe we could put together a StoryMap like that of the [Annandale Greenway](#). Maybe some of the temporary signage could be on the surface of the sidewalks and storm drains.

- [Accotink Gorge](#): Dave said that he spoke with Mount Vernon District staff member Peyton Smith at the Mount Vernon Town Hall. Peyton said an approximately \$10,000 proffer for invasives control from Costco is in the works. There also will be improved gate access to the Gorge and signage indicating parking for park visitors.

Philip said that Costco's [application to build a new gas station](#) will be voted on by the Planning Commission February 25<sup>th</sup> and by the Board of Supervisors March 17<sup>th</sup>. The multimodal analysis on [page 15 of the staff report](#) has welcome ideas about improved pedestrian and bicycle access on the streets, but also has some disconcerting language stating the "*Countywide Trails Plan calls for stream valley trails along Accotink Creek*".

Dave said that It seems, though not clearly stated in the staff report, the connections on roadways are in lieu of any trail down Accotink Creek. But it couldn't hurt to get confirmation, and get the policy removed from standing documentation.

Philip suggested that we should write to the Planning Commission and supervisors and also plan to speak at these hearings to both thank Costco and staff for the minimal environmental proffers they achieved and warn against the foolishness of a paved trail in the Gorge. Even a footpath would be a real challenge in the steeper rockier sections. We may find some reassurance in the Active Fairfax Toolkit - it

recognizes the value of stream valleys for wildlife habitat and explains “[stream valley trails are typically constructed as natural surface trails](#)”, hard surfaces only in specific locations.

Because of the connection between our Accotink Gorge project and Fort Belvoir, Fairfax PRISM put us in touch with an enthusiastic servicemember resident on Fort Belvoir who is eager to undertake invasives work with his scout troop. For his first task, Philip had him read about the scope of the challenge and then make contact with Fort Belvoir staff that may be interested in cooperating.

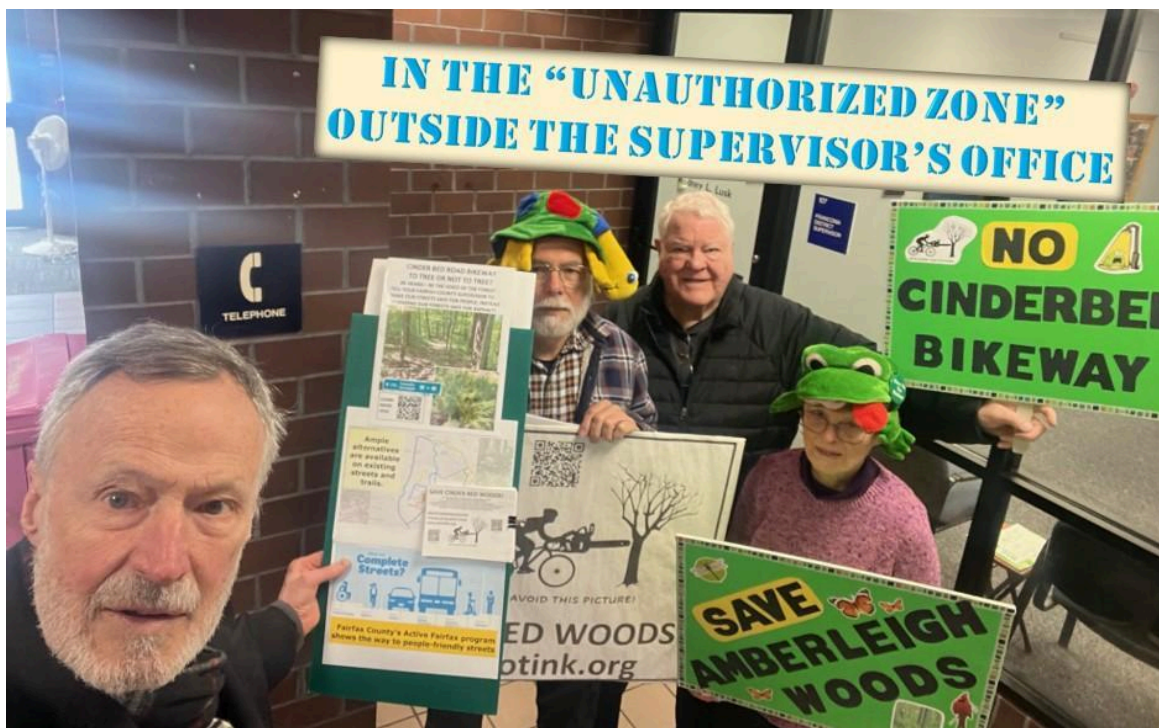
Avril said that due to the exceptional snow conditions, we had to cancel two of our winter wisteria workdays but we are hopeful more can be done.

- [PRISM Extravaganza](#): Dave said March 21 through April 12 will be a push to invite VIPs and promote invasives removal workdays for PRISM. Philip said that we have several events scheduled at IMA sites during that time. Katy said the hope is to enhance public knowledge about invasives and PRISM.
- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Dave said that he spoke with Supervisor Storck at the Mount Vernon Town Hall about the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway. He seemed to think the deal was sealed and nothing could be done.

With the appointment of Delegate David Bulova to the office of Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Philip drafted a letter to point out to him that DEQ, one of his subordinate agencies, is reexamining the circumstances of the permits issued for the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway. That letter is languishing unsent, in hopes of getting all the other concerned environmental groups to sign on.

- *BOS Public Comments Hearing*:  
Avril said that three of us spoke before the Board of Supervisor’s meeting on February 17. We tried to focus on differing aspects of what is wrong with the Bikeway project. Our statements will be attached to the Bulletin.

Philip said that four people staged a [little protest](#) against the Bikeway at the Franconia Government Center. It was brief, since they were asked to leave almost immediately by the police, but did get some good photos. The intent was to give the supervisor a taste of what we hope to do at the opening of his new district office in the next few weeks. Hopefully there will be enough media attention present at the opening to give us a little boost. Please join us next time, if you’d like.



**Protest at Franconia Government Center**

- [Americana Drive](#): Philip said that due to the lingering snow cover, we had to cancel our planned Americana Drive Presidents Day cleanup.
- [Virginia Legislation](#): Avril said that she made two trips to Richmond to lobby for bills of interest to FACC. She used two illustrated handouts listing our bills, one for Senators, and another for Delegates.
- [County Chloride TMDL](#): Gary said that Fairfax County's Chloride TMDL Action Plan for Accotink Creek has been posted for public comment, a mere 8 ½ years after the TMDL study was completed. Comments are due by March 9<sup>th</sup>.

The [February 11<sup>th</sup> EOAC presentation](#) gives some useful observations on both salt and PFAS contamination in the Occoquan Reservoir.

- [Natural Resources Mapping](#): Sandy reported the next meeting is coming up soon. Kim stated that she wants to take part, but it interferes with her teaching schedule.
- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip said that there is little news from Lake Accotink, but he is going to meet the project manager this Friday to make sure the freshwater mussel beds downstream are not being forgotten or sacrificed.
- [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#): Philip said that he had sent out a draft schedule for our spring stream cleanups. With no objections the dates will be posted. As always, everyone is welcome to join or to host one or more sites. It would be good to try to collect some statistics on the items being found, if that appeals to anyone.

- *Nature Forward Stream Stories*: Philip said that Stream Stories is a program Nature Forward began last year, but then lost federal funding. The funding was restored and a staffer from Nature Forward will join us March 6<sup>th</sup> at Avril's Hunters Branch IMA workday to interview trail users about their connections with Nature. The interviews will be used as a part of an interactive StoryMap covering the region.

- *Gateway Park*: Philip said Gateway Park is on Pickett Road in Fairfax City, and is administered by [NOVA Parks](#). We have occasionally talked about plans for renovations, but never really connected with the project managers. Now the plans are complete and released for bids. Without doing any sort of detailed analysis, the plan is for turning the areas of mowed grass into wetlands, which is a good thing. This would involve removal of a number of trees, which is not so good. There will also be an addition of six parking spaces.



*The future Gateway Park*

- *Park Authority Budget*: The County Executive released the FY 2027 Advertised Budget Plan today, so the clock is running. We need to start writing to the supervisors soon, and continue writing and speaking at budget forums in each supervisor's district.

The three main points we want to make are:

- Do not cut Invasive Management Area funding
- Do not cut Natural Resources Management funding
- Maintain funding for Hidden Oaks Nature Center

We can also urge the County to forego the waste of funds (\$18M+) that would be the [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#), a portion of which would go through Island Creek Park.

Some of our budget advocacy begun last year will be useful in drafting comments.

[Budget Testimony Before Park Authority Board](#)

[Park Budget Letter](#)

[Alliance of Park Friends Analysis](#)

- [Kris Unger Memorial](#): Sue said that nothing has happened. Still waiting to connect with the Parks arborist.
  
- [Whither FACC](#):
  - *FACC 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*: Sue said nothing has occurred on this.