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September 12, 2017

Jay Fisetto, Chairman  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd. #300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: Request Pause in Donaldson Run Stream Tributary B Restoration Project in order Update the Design to Preserve More Trees

Dear Chairman Fisetto,

Donaldson Run Tributary B needs to be restored to control future damage from storm waters and protect the Chesapeake Bay. Originally conceived more than a decade ago, with detailed plans six years old, this project would benefit from review and updating in light of significant changes in the storm water management and stream restoration fields, the changes to the built environment in this watershed, and growing concerns among residents about the rapid loss of trees in the area. We request that the County pause to take the opportunity to review the valuable work and information amassed on this project to date, review it in light of these changes, and reassess the best options to meet current and future needs.

Since the project has already been deferred for several years, a pause to review is reasonable and needed. It is also justified based on expressed citizen concerns. Nearly 200 citizens have signed petitions collected over only 8 hours at Donaldson Run and the Marymount Farmer's Market, along with an online petition (copies attached). They are requesting this review primarily because of the potential loss of trees expressing a desire to preserve as many trees as possible. Most were shocked that there was not more public notice of the project and that preserving trees was not a high priority during design. This heightened level of public concern that trees and natural areas be preserved and enhanced was documented in the Arlington County 2016 Parks and Recreation Need Assessment Survey where 64% of citizens identified it as their top investment priority.

New Best Management Practices (BMP's) for storm water management techniques are now available. There is also extensive scientific research to identify which methods are most effective depending on the type of stream. (Articles attached) It is now recognized that trees are critical to erosion control, streambank stabilization, storm water uptake, and rainfall interception are removed. We've learned a great deal from the ongoing problems with Tributary A and have an opportunity to use other methods and compare outcomes. Extensive discussion and documentation of these issues has been prepared and submitted to County staff and Board members over many years. The County's own 2016 Urban Forest Effects and Values study calculated a structural value of the trees of \$1.4 billion (copy attached). In addition, the trees remove large amounts of air pollutants and avoid nearly 11 million cubic feet of runoff each year. Some representative options for alternative actions to restore Donaldson Run Tributary B are attached.

Once lost, the existing stream and terrestrial landscape of Donaldson Run cannot be restored, so it is all the more important to carefully assess alterations before making them. The Zachary Taylor Nature Area that Donaldson Run traverses is designated for preservation with certain restrictions to be respected. It is a complex interrelated ecosystem that will be seriously altered. While restoration of some kind is needed, careful consideration should be given to any sensitive and endangered wildlife, and to the biological interrelationships throughout. Extensive recontouring could inhibit wildlife movements or destabilize steep slopes endangering private properties.

Estimates from 2011 put the project costs at the time over \$1 million. By using these funds wisely now, there is a chance now to achieve the best cost/benefit ratio from the investments not only for the storm water control but also to preserve trees and natural areas as requested by citizens. I urge you to suggest that the County Manager review this project before completing final design and putting the project out for bid. The process should include mechanisms for citizen input of important, relevant information. Information should also be shared with the public, especially citizens in all neighborhoods surrounding the project, with opportunities to provide feedback.

Sincerely,



Mary Wolter Glass

Cc: Katie Cristol  
John Vihstadt  
Christian Dorsey  
Libby Garvey

Attachments:

- Representative options for altering Donaldson Run stream restoration.
- Petition signatures and comments.
- Myths About the Stream Restoration Program
- River restoration: the fuzzy logic of repairing reaches to reverse catchment scale degradation by Margaret Palmer with bio
- 2016 Urban Forest Effects and Values Study Executive Study
- Bulldozing a creek in order to help save it: City spending \$10 million on disputed Stony Run job