

To: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

From: Dan Storck, Supervisor
Mount Vernon District

Subject: **BOARD MATTERS for February 16, 2016**

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For your consideration, I submit the following Board Matters accompanied by a brief explanation. Your support will be appreciated.

1. Tree Clearing on East Boulevard Drive

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Background

Several weeks ago, a residential home builder cleared a tree protection area on environmentally sensitive land along the Potomac River at tax map number 102-2 ((1)) lots 22 C2, C3, D2 and D3. The subdivision plans indicated the area to the south and along the eastern property boundary was not to be disturbed. The neighbors and community association, who monitored the subdivision process very closely, were pleased that these tree protection areas were depicted on the site plans and would require the land to remain in its natural state. These tree protection areas reduce storm water runoff onto adjacent properties and provide a buffer of mature trees. After the clearing occurred and after hearing from concerned neighbors, the association president and my Tree Commissioner, I asked Public Works staff to investigate why these areas were denuded.

According to staff, the developer applied for and received the appropriate approvals from Public Works to clear the vegetation at the request of Urban Forestry and Site Inspections. While many invasive species were removed, many native and mature species were also inexplicably cut down. According to staff, the trees will be replaced on a one for one basis, however it will take many years for the vegetation to provide the same buffering and storm water runoff reductions that previously existed.

The neighbors, community and my office were caught off-guard by this clearing. The expectation is that these areas will remain outside the limits of clearing and grading and will not be touched by development. While I understand the need to remove invasive species, we need to do a better job of reaching out to adjacent communities and the Supervisor's office so that we are informed and can share with staff the community's concerns. This way we can manage people's expectations and perhaps give them an opportunity to walk the site, identify native species and weigh in on the selection of trees and bushes that are to be replanted.

Proposed Action

Therefore, I ask, with unanimous consent, that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Executive to review this matter and return to the Board with his recommendations on improving communications and public outreach for these types of developments.