

Subject: Support funding for Long Branch and Gulf Branch Nature Centers
From: "Scott Miles, AHCA President" <president@aurorahighlands.org>
Date: 5/21/21, 4:10 PM
To: CountyBoard <CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us>
CC: Mark Schwartz <mschwartz@arlingtonva.us>, Jane Rudolph <jrudolph@arlingtonva.us>



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

May 21, 2021

Re: Funding for Long Branch and Gulf Branch Nature Centers

Dear Members of the County Board,

The Aurora Highlands Civic Association strongly supports an increase in funding for the Long Branch and Gulf Branch Nature Centers. These nature centers have provided important opportunities for Arlingtonians to experience the natural world, perhaps never more so than during this past year. Our natural areas are important for our citizens' physical and mental health, for our biota, and for the County's efforts to improve sustainability and equity.

Arlington has signed on as a Tree City and a Biophilic City, yet our investments have not matched our aspirations. Our investments in the County's nature centers have been woefully insufficient, especially in relation to the support provided for other community centers.

We therefore urge the County to include the following items in its next CIP:

1) Gulf Branch Nature Center

- Upgrade/expansion of animal exhibits
- Installation of A/V stations and programming
- Upgrade of the Native American Room

2) Long Branch Nature Center

- Upgrade/expansion of animal exhibits
- Installation of A/V stations and programming
- Enhancement of raptor and turtle facilities and children's play area

We recommend funding of \$750,000 for each nature center (\$1.5M total), as well as funding for evaluating a new nature center at Long Branch Park, now that the County has acquired the adjacent site at 601 S. Carlin Springs Road.

We believe that with the recent increased interest in the outdoors – one silver lining of the COVID pandemic – the County’s investment in its neglected nature centers will be money well spent.

Thank you for your consideration.

/Scott Miles/

President

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

cc:

Mark Schwartz, County Manager

Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation