

5/6/14 Civic Federation Meeting Recap

In attendance were BCA delegates Dean Foster, David Hughes, Suzanne Sundburg and alternate Jonn Lau.

The May meeting featured updates from Arlington's Virginia Assembly legislative delegation. However, the meeting began with a presentation from the Revenues & Expenditures (R&E) Committee. R&E updated delegates on the status of the county's efforts thus far to establish an independent audit function, as requested by the county's external auditor, CliftonLarsonAllen, for the past two years. R&E distributed a report, "Arlington County's Internal Controls," to delegates. A copy of that report can be accessed at <http://www.civfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ArlingtonCtyInternalControls.pdf>. This portion of the meeting was covered extensively in the Arlington Sun Gazette: "Civic Federation—Arlington government needs to do more to address internal auditing" at http://www.insidenova.com/news/arlington/civic-federation-arlington-government-needs-to-do-more-to-address/article_21e2e3a4-d770-11e3-b01b-0019bb2963f4.html.

Delegates took up a resolution submitted at the April meeting by the Environmental Affairs Committee: "Regarding Planning for New School Construction." Although the resolution was not scheduled for a vote until June, it was printed in the May newsletter and both the Schools and Parks Committees had reviewed the resolution. Schools took no position on the resolution. Parks had no objections. The Housing Committee Chair objected, saying that she had seen the resolution but hadn't known what to do with it. A delegate called the question and the Civic Federation voted in favor of the measure: 18 in favor, 8 against, and 2 abstentions. The resolution asks the county and school system "to select sites [for school construction] that will minimize the degradation or reduction of existing park, recreation, resource, wildlife and open space and preferably find a way to repurpose existing county or school facilities if at all possible; and ... to carry out at the earliest stages environmental impact assessments and design reviews aimed at evaluating, among other impacts, how best to minimize the discharge of additional storm water to the Chesapeake Bay...." This resolution was prompted in response to the county and school system's proposal to place a 1,300-seat middle school on the Lubber Run Community Center site, which would involve the removal of over 170 mature trees.

Another resolution submitted by the Parks Committee, limiting funding to the existing bonds already approved by voters for the Long Bridge Park aquatics center, was tabled until the June meeting because the committee chair was absent and there were no copies of the revised resolution available for distribution.

Schools Committee Chair Michael Bear gave a short synopsis of the school system's planning to provide more seats to relieve school overcrowding. He characterized the site selection process as opaque with "secrecy" and "few details" being made to the public. He believes that the historic Wilson School building will be torn down to make way for an 8-story middle school and that a new elementary school will be located next to the Thomas Jefferson Middle School site, which is county property.

Va. House Delegate Patrick Hope presented a certificate containing a resolution passed by the General Assembly to honor Robert G. "Bob" Atkins's life and public service. Suzanne Sundburg accepted the certificate on behalf of Bob's family.

The main focus of the Arlington's General Assembly delegation (Sen. Adam Ebbin, Sen. Barbara Favola, Sen. Janet Howell, Del. Rob Krupicka, Del. Patrick Hope, Del. Robert Brink, and Del. Alfonso Lopez) was the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia under the Affordable Care Act. Virginia is losing \$5 million per day by refusing the federal government's offer of a 100% match covering the expanded cost for three years and 90% thereafter. The existing Medicaid program receives a 50% match from the federal government, and the state currently covers those who are uninsured entirely with state funds that support community health centers and hospital emergency rooms. Without the additional federal government support, one hospital in rural Virginia has already announced that it will close on Oct. 1, 2014: Lee Regional Medical Center in Pennington Gap, Va. The budget impasse continues and must be resolved by July 1 or face a government shutdown.

During the question and answer period, Suzanne Sundburg asked a follow up question: How cognizant are Virginia's legislators that the North Anna nuclear plant outside Richmond is located in the Central Virginia Seismic Zone (CVSZ) and is at risk of damage due to earthquakes like the one that occurred in Aug. 2011. Answer: Most legislators are unaware of the CVSZ and it is not being discussed in Virginia. [Note: There are plans to launch a large hydraulic fracturing, "fracking" project to recover oil and gas deposits in Caroline County, Va., which is adjacent to Louisa County, where the North Anna plant is located. High-pressure fluid injection into the ground (including fracking) can induce/trigger seismic activity.