

Bluemont Civic Association, General Membership Meeting
March 23, 2005, 7:00 pm
Lubber Run Community Center

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:08.

Police Presentation

Officer Koch, Arlington County police officer liaison to the Bluemont Civic Association, gave his monthly report on crime in the area. He said Bluemont remained a low crime area; most crimes were things like items missing when a car door was left unlocked. The home invasion with a gun at 706 N. Vermont was not a threat to Bluemont because the crime was related to a check-cashing business being run out of the home. The attempted assault last summer at a bus stop near the bike trail appears to be an isolated incident. An arrest made seems not to be related to this crime. Officer Koch gave out his voice mail number (703-228-3600, ext. 9701) and said he would call back as soon as possible to any messages.

10-Watt AM Radio Transmitter and 49-Foot Monopole Antenna

Jim Pebley, Co-Chair of the Arlington Citizens Corps Council Task Group on Public Emergency Communications, noted that he was not a County employee. He said the County wants to know the views of Bluemont residents as part of the process to grant a site permit for the installation of a 49-foot monopole AM-radio antenna behind Fire Station # 2 at Wilson Blvd. and George Mason Drive. From that location, emergency AM radio broadcasts would reach all of Arlington County, if the County receives a special permit from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to broadcast at 100 watts. The County currently has permission to broadcast at 10 watts, but could save several hundred thousand dollars by using one antenna rather than five or six to cover the County. Pebley said the antenna should not affect AM radio, computer, cell phone or other signals, and there is no evidence of negative health effects. He said the FCC would certify that the equipment is safe. Pebley circulated a picture of what the pole would look like at its proposed location. He said the County could not use the pole for a WiFi (wireless Internet) demonstration, as had been proposed in a motion passed at the February 23, 2005 General Membership Meeting. Pebley said there would be no problem with the County agreeing to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the pole, its fencing and related equipment.

Members unanimously approved a motion to support the installation of the 100-watt AM radio transmitter and 49-foot monopole antenna behind Fire Station #2 located at George Mason Drive and Wilson Blvd., so long as the County pledges to maintain the ongoing aesthetic appearance and upkeep of the pole, radio transmitter, fencing and everything else connected to this project.

Wilson Blvd. 50% Plan Presentation by Richard Best

Richard Best of the County Division of Transportation presented the 50% engineering drawings for the Arterial Transportation Management (ATM) project along Wilson Boulevard between George Mason Drive and Frederick Street. The plans are for traffic calming, wider sidewalks and related improvements. Based on resident input gathered during the 2004 ATM charettes, improvements from George Mason to the County line are planned, but only the first two blocks (up to Frederick Street) will be completed initially. Best noted that consultations with Bluemont residents and their representatives pushed the County to improve Wilson Blvd.

The plans include eliminating the free right-hand turn at Wilson and George Mason, tying in the sidewalk with multi-use trails, widening sidewalks and narrowing Wilson Blvd. Right-of-way issues prevent the County from widening the sidewalk in front of the strip mall between the McDonalds and Edison Street unless someone wants to re-develop that area.

Best said his group needed Civic Association approval before it discussed its proposed plan with affected businesses. He stressed the need to hear neighborhood concerns sooner rather than later. He said he would come back to the Civic Association to discuss landscaping and street lighting when the plans were 70-80% complete; and would discuss traffic signals with the Association when he presented plans at the 85-90% stage. Best said that if the Civic Association endorses the 50% drawings by this summer, construction could start in fall of 2005 at the earliest. The fastest the work could be done would be 60 days, but that would require everything to go perfectly.

Concerns raised by Association members included:

- Whether eliminating the free right-hand turn from George Mason onto Wilson would increase the queue of cars turning left from Edison onto Wilson. Best said County studies showed there would be minimal increased queuing, and re-timing traffic signals would mitigate the problem.
- Several members recommended a left-hand turn signal on Wilson at George Mason. Best said this recommendation would be assessed as part of the ATM plan to upgrade the system of traffic lights, including the ones at George Mason and Wilson and Edison and Wilson.
- Other members recommended a signal or embedded crosswalk lights at Emerson and Wilson, so people could safely reach the Safeway. Best said Emerson and Wilson did not currently qualify for a traffic light. He said another option would be re-aligning the intersections of Emerson and Wilson and Frederick and Wilson, so they formed more of a "T" shape. Best noted that "narrowing" Wilson and providing a raised median would also help pedestrians.
- Whether a raised median to eliminate free left-hand turns from Wilson into the parking lot of the 7-11 store would disrupt or endanger vehicular traffic turning

from Emerson onto Wilson, or crossing Wilson from Emerson to reach the Safeway. Association President dal Cais noted that the elimination of left turns into the 7-11 parking lot was done at the request of Bluemont residents who participated in meetings about the ATM study in 2004, and in previous discussions over the past five to six years with the County about improving Wilson Blvd. In addition to wanting to improve pedestrian safety by eliminating left-hand turns that cross the sidewalk, Association members had wanted a large enough median so that trees and other landscaping could be planted. The idea was to make Wilson into a main street for Bluemont. Dal Cais noted that the Association appreciated input from new participants in the discussion, and wanted to get consensus on the ATM study. Best said that in two to three months, he would present the Association with one or two options to place at least one cut in the median to allow left turns. He said one cut would still allow tree plantings on the median. Best said the Association could then decide whether these options should be tested using paint or batons before a final decision is made. Best noted that such a test would delay the project and lose the opportunity to begin construction in 2005.

Best said he would consider and incorporate the Association members' comments. He noted that the discussion had made him more cautious about proceeding with the project.

Dal Cais noted the need to get an Association decision in the next two to three months so that Bluemont does not lose its current position as the top priority for ATM pilot projects. There is \$90,000 in initial project funding now available, and \$1 million in bond money currently earmarked for the entire ATM pilot project. There are two other proposed ATM projects being planned for Carlin Springs Road and Four Mile Run Drive that could get this money if there are delays in approval the plans for Wilson Blvd.

Members unanimously approved a motion that the Civic Association supports the 50% plan as presented, with the notation that: (1) its comments on traffic lights and landscaping will be incorporated into future plans; (2) the Association will review the plans again at the 70-80% stage; and (3) at the May 25 General Membership meeting, Best or someone from his group will present one or two options for a cut in the median to allow left turns on Wilson Blvd. between Emerson and Edison.

New Business:

Contribution to Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation

President dal Cais said the Association would keep members informed of dates for upcoming public meetings on the proposal to widen the westbound lane of I-66 to three lanes from the Rosslyn tunnel to the Dulles Toll Road. He noted that the Association opposed the proposal. The Association unanimously approved a motion to donate \$100 to the Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation for representing Bluemont's interests in the debate on widening I-66.

Old Business:

Neighborhood Day Parade

Parade coordinator Laura Kirkconnell urged members, their children and leashed pets to join her in representing Bluemont in the May 14 Neighborhood Day parade. She encouraged members to contact her with their ideas of how Bluemont should represent itself, (e.g. political signs, a “fun theme,” no theme.) One member suggested doing a “float” representing the County’s only Frisbee golf course, which is located in Bluemont Park. Kirkconnell asked for ideas before the April Executive Board meeting, so she could report to the Executive Board and then to the April General Membership meeting. Kirkconnell noted she could be reached at lkirkconnell@hotmail.com; twospaniels@comcast.net or 703-527-3404.

Neighborhood Day Barbecue

Dal Cais noted the Association was still seeking volunteers to organize the Neighborhood Day barbecue.

Halloween Parade

Dal Cais noted volunteers were also needed for the Halloween parade.

The *Examiner* Newspaper

The Association unanimously approved a motion to support the County’s efforts and position with respect to delivery of the *Examiner*. The County had recently met with *Examiner* officials to tell them to stop mass delivery of unsolicited copies at homes in Arlington. Dal Cais noted that the Association expects the County to monitor the *Examiner*’s compliance in stopped these unwanted deliveries.

Walk-Through with a County Board Member

President dal Cais reported that he would apply for Bluemont to participate in a community walk-through with a County Board member.

Neighborhood Conservation Plans

Kate Mesches reported that Harrison Street had its 90% meeting and could complete its planning by the spring; 10th street may be done; 5th and Frederick had not scheduled its 50% meeting; and Bluemont will make a third attempt to seek funding for the project at 9th and Frederick during the next Neighborhood Conservation funding round.

House Obstructing 9th Street

President dal Cais reported that the Executive Board had agreed to send a formal letter to County staff and the Board of Zoning Appeals about the recently constructed houses near 9th and Frederick. The front stairs seem to extend into the public right-of-way. County officials told the Civic Association Vice President Carl Drummond that it will inspect the property in the course of deciding whether to grant an occupancy permit, but not before.

Nominations Committee

It was reported that Laura Kirkconnell has volunteered to be nominated as the 2005-2006 Executive Board Secretary, and she started her duties at the March 8 Executive Board meeting since the position has been vacant for nearly a year. The Board noted that the Nominations Committee slate of candidates for the Executive Board must be printed in the June newsletter, so Civic Association members can vote at the June annual meeting.

Dangerous Intersection at North Edison and Sixth Street

Bluemont resident Susan Mayo noted that this intersection has been unsafe for a long time, and said a four-way stop was needed, or a least relocation of the two stop signs from Edison back to 6th street where they were originally located. President dal Cais said he would contact the County to see what could be done, find out the County's criteria for stop signs, and identify the proper point-of-contact to receive a petition from people living near the intersection, which would be a required step before any action could be taken. He asked for Mayo's e-mail address so he could report back to her. Members noted the need for someone from that part of Bluemont to take the lead, including the collection of petition signatures from neighbors in the affected area.

Ice Rink in Ballston

Ann Bisson from a Ballston neighborhood raised concerns about parking related to the planned construction of the ice rink at Ballston mall. It was noted that the ice rink was projected to bring up to 624,000 additional patrons to the site near the Ballston mall, but only 198 additional parking spaces were planned. President dal Cais noted that the plan to build a metro entrance closer to Bluemont would also bring more cars to park in the neighborhood, so parking restrictions may need to be extended to a larger part of Bluemont. He noted that the Association would keep members informed about upcoming public forums regarding a County study to change procedures for parking permits. One option reportedly being considered is to charge residents up to \$100 a year for a permit. He said he would work with Bisson and her condominium association to coordinate a cohesive plan to represent neighborhood residents' interests regarding the ice rink project.

Tool Loaner Program

The Treasurer reported that the Association had 233 paid members, and \$2,500 in the bank. Of this amount, \$1,400 of this amount would be used to pay for printing the neighborhood-wide distribution of the September newsletter for neighborhood-wide

distribution. President dal Cais proposed using \$200 of funds, half the advertising revenue obtained for the newsletter, to purchase a power washer that could be loaned out as part of the Tool Loaner Program. He noted that this benefit could attract more members, and that the Association would have borrowers sign liability waivers liked those used by private rental companies. The Association unanimously approved a motion supporting the proposed purchase.

Proposed Construction at the Site of the Old INS Building Near Glebe and Fairfax

President dal Cais reported that the proposed 18-story building discussed at the last general membership meeting was being opposed by condominium owners whose views would be blocked by the building. Although the building is not in Bluemont, Bluemont is part of the site plan area. Interested members should inform dal Cais so he can tell them about upcoming site plan meetings.

President Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:05 pm.

Attendance:

Judah dal Cais
Laura Kirkconnell
Carl Drummond
Judy Collins
Ellen Armbruster
Suzanne Sundburg
Robert Atkins
Wendy Dean
Peter Boyd
Joan Myers
Allen Norton
George Farah
Marilyn Robinson
Wis Smith
Cindi Charles
Terry Sevie
Ann Bisson
Susan Mayo
Michael Woodbridge
Chris Healy