

**Bluemont Civic Association
General Membership Meeting
January 24, 2007, 7:00 pm
Arlington Traditional School**

Call to Order

President Judah Dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 pm.

In attendance were Judah Dal Cais, Carl Drummond, Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, Terry Serie, Judy Collins, Kate Mesches, Dave Leichtman and Lisa Byington. Also in attendance were 10 other Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members.

Approval of 12/20/06 Minutes

Newsletter Editor Suzanne Sundburg, filling in for Secretary Lisa Byington for the general membership meeting held on December 20, 2006, distributed draft minutes for the 12/20/06 meeting. Sundburg reported that no one had made any edits to the minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted unanimously to approve the minutes as drafted.

Glebe Road Transportation Project

Tom Hutchings, of the Arlington County Department of Environmental Services (DES) Division of Transportation, reported on the plans to improve 3 crosswalks on Glebe Road. First, Hutchings summarized the history of the Glebe Road projects – including the 1999 ad hoc pedestrian safety study, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) grant-funding process, and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) approval requirements. Hutchings then summarized the proposed changes to be made at each of 3 sets of Glebe Road intersections: Carlin Springs Road, Fairfax Drive and Wilson Boulevard. Because of the many regulatory approvals still required, Hutchings expects construction to start in September 2008.

For the Glebe Road and Carlin Springs Road intersection, DES is proposing to make the traffic island in the middle of Glebe Road wider in order to provide a “safe haven” for pedestrians crossing Glebe and to slow traffic on Glebe. The curbs will be reconfigured so that traffic seeking to turn off of Glebe Road and onto Carlin Springs Road will need to slow down in order to navigate the tighter turn. New crosswalks will be more obvious, with new street lights. Some BCA members asked about the ability to create a crosswalk at N. 7th Street, where some pedestrians feel safer crossing Glebe because there are fewer cars turning across the crosswalk. President Dal Cais and Newsletter Editor Sundburg stated that Arlington County had agreed to use funds that were not spent on an elevated walkway over Glebe Road at Carlin Springs for a pedestrian crosswalk at Glebe Road and N. 7th Street instead. Hutchings agreed to look into it and get back to BCA on the matter.

For the Glebe Road and Fairfax Drive intersection, Hutchings reported on the changes that have already been made – the new bike lane on eastbound Fairfax Drive and the elimination of the free right-turn lane from eastbound Fairfax Drive onto southbound Glebe Road. Some BCA members expressed concern about the significantly longer traffic back-ups on Fairfax Drive (stacking up traffic onto I-66) since the free right-turn lane was eliminated, causing cars to rush

through the intersection to “beat the light” and perhaps not notice pedestrians in the crosswalk. Also noted was the short time period for the left-turn light for westbound traffic on Fairfax heading south on Glebe. Hutchings reported that Arlington County will re-review the impact of changes to the intersection, but noted that VDOT must approve any future changes made to the intersection (or any efforts to undo changes already made to the intersection). Hutchings noted the “challenge” of balancing pedestrian safety with keeping an orderly flow of vehicular traffic. The heavier that pedestrian and vehicular traffic becomes, the greater the challenge. President Dal Cais and Secretary Byington reported that BCA members had requested many of these traffic-calming efforts because of the high speed at which cars exit I-66 and enter the Bluemont neighborhood along Fairfax Drive.

At Glebe Road and Wilson Boulevard, Hutchings reported that the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) II building was completed, along with the curb and sidewalk enhancements. One member mentioned the no-left-turn-during-rush-hour sign that was posted on westbound Wilson, asking if that restriction would still be in place now that a left-turn lane and light have been added. A number of BCA members asked about the left-turn light that has been planned for eastbound Wilson Boulevard for cars turning northbound on Glebe Road. Pedestrians reported on their many close calls with left-turning cars that race to beat oncoming traffic and fail to notice pedestrians until the last minute. President Dal Cais reminded Hutchings that the County had promised BCA a left-turn light for years. Hutchings said he would check on the feasibility of installing a left-turn light during the interim period while the community is waiting for the other needed improvements to be made. One member asked about the possibility of eliminating the left-turn from eastbound Wilson altogether and rerouting that traffic onto N. Taylor Street (and around the block to Fairfax Drive). However, the group noted that the left-turn lane on eastbound Wilson onto Taylor Street had been eliminated by the addition of a larger median and the dedicated left-turn lane for westbound Wilson onto southbound Glebe.

BCA Website Upgrade

David Leichtman and Sam Ferro reported on their progress to update BCA’s website. BCA officers agreed that the most important improvement was to update the materials available on the website and then to upgrade the “look and feel” of the site and its links. Members also discussed the possibility of using the website as a message board for members to post reviews of local vendors and service providers. Leichtman and Ferro also discussed the possibility of using a Yahoo/Google group to replace Topica as the method by which BCA members would be notified of BCA meetings and other announcements.

Peck-Staples Site Plan

Terry Serie, BCA’s Information Coordinator for the Peck-Staples Site Plan Redevelopment, stated the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting originally scheduled for January 22, 2007, would be rescheduled. County staff members continue to digest the feedback that BCA members provided at the SPRC meeting on January 8, 2007. The turn-out for the meeting was much larger than the County had anticipated, and County staff and the SPRC members realized that there are a wide range of opinions and competing interests to be considered. Accordingly, County staff members are proceeding carefully.

Serie reported that BCA's current and past presidents and current and past Neighborhood Conservation representatives would be meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2007. At that meeting, BCA and Arlington County staff members will discuss the SPRC process and the legal and other parameters that will govern the important land-use and zoning policies to be used to evaluate the Peck-Staples site plan. After BCA learns of the County staff's opinion as to the parameters governing these matters, BCA members will work to establish a consensus among members and will vote on the BCA position to be presented to County staff.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Judy Collins reported that BCA has 140 current members. About 150 past members have not yet renewed their membership for 2007. BCA officers discussed the possibility of calling or emailing past members to urge them to renew. Newsletter Designer Ferro agreed to put a prominent link on the upgraded BCA website to urge viewers to "Renew Now."

New Business

President Dal Cais reminded members that there was a presentation on parking issues in the County to be held on January 26, 2007.

President Dal Cais also reported that a BCA member has noted that there is a missing sidewalk link along N. Kensington Street. The deadline for applying to the County for funds to add sidewalks under the Missing Links program is the end of February.

Newsletter Editor Sundburg reported on the I-66 workshop held on January 23, 2007. VDOT is planning for "spot improvements" along westbound I-66 between the Rosslyn tunnel and the Dulles Toll Road to ease congestion. Congress has funded the improvements in order to provide an evacuation route in the event of an emergency (despite the fact that congestion in the city and federal shelter-in-place policies will likely prevent most cars from reaching I-66 during an emergency). Many Arlington residents and BCA members are concerned about the impact of the proposed construction on the Custis Trail and on the level of noise that construction and an increased number of cars will generate. VDOT has concluded that it can implement the expansion in its right-of-way without acquiring any new property, and this has caused many to be concerned about the fate of the Custis. When I-66 was first built in the early 1980s, the State of Virginia promised Arlington County that the road would be limited to 2 lanes in each direction (the Coleman decision). The proposed improvements would violate that agreement, and Arlington County has expressed its concern and opposition to the program. However, because funding has been guaranteed by Congress, VDOT is planning to proceed with the expansion. Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation (ACST, at www.acstnet.org) is mobilizing to legally challenge the expansion of I-66, and interested members are urged to work with ACST.

Adjournment

President Dal Cais adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.