

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

General Membership Meeting Wednesday, April 23, 2008, 7:30 p.m. Arlington Traditional School

Call to Order

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:37 pm.

In attendance were Judah dal Cais, Carl Drummond, Sam Ferro, Mary Thorne, Suzanne Sundburg, Wendy Dean, twelve Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members and three nonmembers.

Approval of Minutes for 3/26/08

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 3/26/08 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 3/26/08 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 3/26/08 minutes. Thorne will forward the 3/26/08 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

AHC Inc. Update

John Welsh and Curtis Adams from AHC Inc. presented the latest version of AHC's plan for the Peck-Staples site. Welsh is the director of multifamily housing, and Adams is the director of this project. The current design uses cast stone, three colors of brick and an improved landscape design to better blend in with the neighborhood. The louvers for venting the garage are now faux windows to match the upper levels. There was a suggestion to add some planting here as well. The building exhaust will be located in the courtyard and will not be visible from Wilson Boulevard. The generator will be located on 9th Street N. There will be 79 parking spaces for the 90 units.

On April 1, AHC Inc. gave the residents of the 22 occupied units of Jordan Manor notice to vacate by July 31, 2008. Four families have moved out and two more families have given notice that they have found a new place to live. A relocation specialist is working with the remaining residents to locate alternative housing. AHC is ready for site plan review but has not yet been given a meeting date by Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC). AHC hopes to meet with SPRC by the end of May. This would allow them to take their proposal to the Planning Commission on June 2 and to the County Board at its meeting on June 17. AHC expects to demolish Jordan Manor in the fall. The new units will rent for \$1,100–\$1,500 per month and must stay affordable for at least 30 years. AHC may decide to keep it affordable for 60 years, depending upon the lender's requirements. Welsh will let dal Cais know when the SPRC meeting is scheduled.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Susan Retz gave a presentation and entertained questions regarding the proposal to allow accessory dwelling (AD) rental units in single-family homes in Arlington County. Retz is a member of the subcommittee of the Planning Commission that spearheaded this proposal. This proposal was worked on for two years with the goal of helping to increase the supply of affordable housing. An au pair, caregiver or elderly parent could be housed rent free in a family suite, or the addition/AD could be rented to help defray the costs of buying property in Arlington County. The current code bars an au pair or caregiver from living in a house with four family members. The subcommittee recommends a structure that is less than 1,000 square feet, which could be an interior or exterior addition. Unused garages could be converted to living space, though the Planning Commission does not recommend this approach. Before construction begins, the owner would be required to obtain a permit. The owner would be required to live on site.

Three main concerns were raised repeatedly by the members present. The first was that there would be increased pressure on street parking, which is already in short supply. Second, given that many of these units exist illegally already, there seems little incentive for owners to go through the permit process. Finally, given the ineffectiveness of code enforcement to date, it seems unlikely that code enforcement personnel will be effective in monitoring the new accessory dwellings. On May 1, 7:00–9:30 pm, there will be a community forum at Washington-Lee High School to discuss accessory dwellings. This issue will also be discussed at the County Board meeting on May 17. Residents wishing to express their opinion on this matter should send letters to the members of the County Board.

Neighborhood Conservation (NC)

The priority project for the next NC funding round must be voted on and submitted by May 15 to be considered in the fall funding round. Projects move toward the top of the funding queue by accumulating points. Points are assigned for meeting deadlines, keeping the NC list updated, and projects with sidewalks. Projects also earn points each time they are not funded. The first priority project in the queue for BCA is N. Frederick Street. However, since the lighting component was dropped from the 5th Street NC project because it exceeded the funding limit in place at that time, there was a vote to move this to the head of the queue. There has been a delay of several years between the 5th Street and 9th Street projects' funding approval and their construction. During this period, the cost of the projects increased significantly.

Originally the cap for NC projects was \$250,000, but both 5th Street and 9th Street ultimately cost more than \$400,000 (despite having eliminated light component from the 5th Street plan). NC Representative Wendy Dean will find out from County staff member Tim McIntosh whether Frederick Street can maintain its priority status along with the 5th Street lights, which were tied to a project that

waited its turn in the queue already. The motion to add the 5th street lights to the funding queue while maintaining the Frederick street project's top priority passed unanimously. Some residents near Bon Air Park want lights to be added to discourage the "lovers lane" activity. There was a suggestion to see if park funds could finance this project or perhaps a park grant.

Petition for Arlington Traditional School (ATS) Walk Zone

BCA member Larry Smith (lrsml@aol.com) is circulating a petition in support of a neighborhood walk zone for ATS. Smith and his supporters would like the County to approve preference in the lottery for children who live in an, as yet undesignated, walk zone. Many children who live across the street from ATS face a long bus ride to and from school every day. Other children face similar trips to ATS every day. Many families avoid this neighborhood due to the lack of a neighborhood school for neighborhood children. As a result, there are a large number of rental properties in Bluemont. The large number of rental properties makes the neighborhood a target of opportunity for developers. It was suggested that School Board candidates be asked for their views on this issue.

Newsletter Deadlines

All articles must be submitted to Sam Ferro by May 13 so that the completed newsletter can be at the printer by May 19. The next general membership meeting will be held on May 28.

Neighborhood Day

BCA will host a cookout behind Fire Station #2 on May 10. Those people who ordered tree whips will pick them up at the designated address. There will be a few extra trees available at the cookout. Chris Healey announced a trail clean-up project from 7:30–11:30 am; participants will meet in the St. Anne's Church parking lot. There is a Revolutionary War hero buried in the cemetery next to the trail spur. The goal is to prompt the County to make a connection with the Custis Trail.

Budget Rental Trucks

The Budget rental trucks and trailers owned by Robbie Guenther, owner of the Texaco station, continue to be parked on Fairfax Drive and N. Frederick Street. On behalf of BCA, member Lisa Byington has drafted a letter asking Safeway to reconsider allowing the rental trucks to park in the Safeway lot under certain conditions. Dal Cais suggested that other neighbors contact Robbie to register their complaints.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at 9:25 pm