

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, March 24, 2010, 7:30 p.m.
Arlington Traditional School

Call to Order and Attendance

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 p.m. In attendance were Mary Thorne, Judy Collins, Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, David Van Wagner, Judah dal Cais, 4 other Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members.

Arlington Police Liaison, Officer James O'Daniel

Officer O'Daniel reported on recent crimes in Bluemont. The police have arrested a person of interest in the recent kidnapping on North Wakefield Street. In addition, there has been an assault and battery, some larcenies from autos, and several stolen vehicles. O'Daniel reminded neighbors to remove GPS devices from their cars due to their popularity with thieves. Neighbors asked O'Daniel if there were regulations regarding how far a car must park from a corner. Cars on their block park very close to the intersection. The required distance is 15 feet. Parking enforcement will check intersections of Frederick and 5th Streets, and Frederick and 8th for these violators. As the temperature has risen, so has the number of sightings of the flasher on the bike trail. Police bike patrols have been unsuccessful so far in catching the perpetrator.

Recap of Bluemont Village Center Design Forum on 2/17/10

Virginia Tech Grad Student Jane Kim

For the purposes of the forum, Jane Kim split Bluemont's commercial corridor into 6 sections. Those attending the forum were divided into 6 groups, with each being assigned a section. The group looked at types of uses (retail, offices, housing mixed with retail and/or offices) location of parking, building heights, incorporation of green space, and multimodal transportation. There was general agreement that the neighborhood wanted to maintain the residential nature of the neighborhood and to retain a grocery store and add one or more cafes. At the April meeting, Kim will make some short- and long-term recommendations. A survey addressing the future development of Bluemont will be distributed with the April newsletter to all Bluemont residents and will be available on the BCA Website. The survey will be used to update Bluemont's *Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Plan*. The County would like to see a 10% response rate on the survey. Surveys will be due by June 1, 2010. The goal is to vote on an updated NC plan at the General Membership Meeting in September.

Government-Change Referendum Discussion

Ken Dennis, Arlington Coalition of Police (ACOPS)

Roye L. Lowry, Former County Board & Civic Federation Member

Biographies (below) of the speakers were distributed at the meeting:

Ken Dennis, a graduate of Purdue University, is an 18-year veteran of the Arlington County Police Department. He currently is assigned to the midnight patrol section and is a team leader on the SWAT Team. Dennis has lived in Arlington for 18 years. In addition to serving as president of the Arlington Coalition of Police (ACOPS), he represents public-safety employees in the Arlington County Employees' Retirement System.

Roye L. Lowry, a former County Board member in the '60s, moved to Arlington in 1957. He was chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arlington County Employees' Retirement System and of the Arlington County School Employees' Supplemental Retirement System. He also has served both as chairman and a member of the Civic Federation's Revenue and Expenditures Committee and its Schools Committee. Moreover, Lowry has been president and chairman of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Council of Governments, Treasurer of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, and Chairman of the Arlington County Industrial Development Authority.

Ken Dennis spoke first in favor of the referendum. He advocates moving from a County Manager Plan form of government to a County Board format. Under the County Board system, the County would be redistricted and four of the five board members would be responsible for a specific district. One board member would still be elected at large. In the current system, all board members are elected at large and their residences are not evenly distributed throughout the county. They are responsible to everybody and nobody at the same time. We are the only county in the state with this form of government, and any change would have to be approved in Richmond. Dennis felt this system worked well 95% of the time but he outlined several ways in which the 5% failure was important. The current system favors the incumbents and makes it nearly impossible for members of parties other than the Democratic Party to be elected. From his viewpoint and that of other police and firefighters, the biggest flaw with the current system is a lack of communication. The police chief can't go directly to the County Board. He must go to the County Manager who in turn goes to the Board. This does not provide for a free flow of dialogue. To get this referendum on the November ballot, supporters must obtain 14,000 signatures from eligible voters. Interested citizens may contact Dennis via e-mail at acopslocal48@yahoo.com or by calling him at 703-508-4169.

Roye L. Lowry spoke against the referendum. Lowry stated that a system that worked 95% of the time did not need to be changed. He stated that change does not necessarily lead to improvement. He sees this referendum as being supported by police and firefighters who are dissatisfied with the system used to increase their pay and benefits. This will not necessarily change with a new system because Virginia law is restrictive on collective bargaining. He pointed out that redistricting can be very problematic and contentious—current County Board members would likely draw district boundaries that favored them. Under the current system, County Board members are responsible to every county resident not just those in those their "district." It is the responsibility of every voter to change the composition of the Board if current Board members are not meeting voters' expectations.

After the initial presentations, the speakers answered questions from the floor and were allowed time for a short final rebuttal statement.

Approval of Minutes for 1/20/2010

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 1/20/10 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 1/20/10 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 1/20/10 minutes as drafted. Thorne will forward the 1/20/10 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

Other Business

Motions were made and votes taken to approve budgets of \$100 each for the annual barbecue and for the electronic version of the NC survey. Both motions passed unanimously. The letter regarding D&V (Texaco station) needs to be posted on the BCA Website. Judah will ask Bob Atkins to chair the nominating committee. Bob will need two other volunteers to join him. One of the recently replaced split-rail fences in Bluemont Park has been broken. Judah will ask Parks and Recreation to repair the broken fence. It appears that the fence was not a casualty of the snow but rather was deliberately broken. Tim McIntosh is currently reviewing the NC update survey and will forward his comments to David Van Wagner by April 2. Judah mentioned the renewal of a special exception permit for a daycare business located at 520 N. Carlin Springs Road. No one present was aware of any problems, and it was determined that the business lay outside of Bluemont's boundaries. Sam Ferro showed the group a couple ideas for the redesign of the Website that he and Webmaster Dave Leichtman have been working on.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:55 p.m.