

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, April 21, 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, Carl Drummond, Judah dal Cais, David Van Wagner, Jim Thorne, Bob Atkins, 7 Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members, and 20 others.

Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Plan Update
County Staff Member Tim McIntosh

This bond-funded program started in 1964 to provide funds for smaller neighborhood beautification projects. Since then, it has grown to include major park renovations; street light installation; traffic calming; sidewalk, curb and gutter construction; and other related neighborhood initiated projects. Neighbors are urged to complete the BCA NC survey that was distributed with the April newsletter. This input will be used to write the new Bluemont NC plan, last updated in 1999. This plan will communicate the neighborhood's vision for the next 10 to 15 years. The NC program rewards neighborhoods that regularly update their plans with additional points in the NC project funding process. Completed NC surveys are due on June 1, and writing the plan will take 6 to 12 months. The plan will then be presented to the NC Advisory Committee. Tim McIntosh will put the key points of the plan in a matrix and route it to County Board members and county staff. The County Board will "accept" but not "adopt" the plan. The hope is that board members and staff will use it as a guiding principle when making development decisions regarding Bluemont. However, they are not required to implement any part of it. The question was raised as to why bother to write this plan when the county is looking to cut the budget. Current NC projects are funded by a \$9 million bond (the money does not come from the operating budget where the cuts are being made), which is divided between 50 neighborhoods. Those wanting to help write the plan should contact David Van Wagner. Carl Drummond gave examples of completed NC projects in Bluemont as illustrations of the program. Construction in the 1000 block of North Frederick will probably begin in early 2011. Robert Atkins asked neighbors for suggestions of needed improvements to put on the NC list. The deadline for "missing links" projects is today but due to the low number of submissions, post-deadline applications will be considered.

Results and Recommendations from the 2/17/10 Bluemont Village Center Design Forum
Virginia Tech Grad Student Jane Kim

Jane Kim has been working with BCA since November 2009 when she took a walking tour of the neighborhood with some members of the Executive Board. For the purposes of the forum on February 17, Kim split Bluemont's commercial corridor (Wilson Boulevard between George Mason and Greenbrier) into 6 sections. Those attending the forum were divided into 6 groups, with each being assigned to a section. The groups looked at types of uses (retail, offices, and

housing mixed with retail and/or offices) location of parking, building heights, incorporation of green space, and multimodal transportation.

Kim presented the results of the neighborhood forum, which she led as part of her graduate studies. Residents were interested in mixed-use development, consolidated parking, underground utilities, green and open spaces, and a café, coffee shop or pub. Attendees stressed that they wanted to retain a grocery store in the commercial area and maintain the single-family residential character of the neighborhood. Kim's report will be posted on the BCA Website, but some summary points follow. The Safeway parcel would likely be the first to be redeveloped within the next 10 years. This would have the densest development and be the center of Bluemont's commercial area. The parcel across the street, where 7-Eleven and Federal Lock and Safe are located, would most likely be redeveloped in 10 to 25 years. Building heights would step down from 3 to 5 stories on the Safeway site nearest to Wilson Blvd. to 2 to 3 stories on adjacent lots, and 1 to 2 stories on the periphery of the commercial area next to single-family homes. The block with the Texaco station and townhouses would remain the same, at least for the near term. The sections that comprise several properties and therefore have more owners will take longer to develop. Green space will be incorporated where possible, including a green roof on the new Safeway parking garage. Parking lots will be built above- and underground. Kim did not look at traffic issues based on the projected density or the market aspect of development. It was suggested that BCA could take a proactive approach and take this plan to a developer. Kim's report can be used in whole or in part when updating the NC plan, but BCA is not obligated to use any of her recommendations. Attendees again were urged to complete the NC survey.

Approval of Minutes for 3/24/2010

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 3/24/10 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 3/24/10 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 3/24/10 minutes as drafted. Thorne will forward the 3/24/10 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

Old Business

The County Board will vote this weekend on a proposed change to the zoning ordinance, which will decide whether D&V (Texaco) can continue to do business as they have for many decades. Current ordinances allow a gas station to pump gas and perform limited repair services. The new ordinance would allow vehicle service establishment to sell gas, related items, and snacks; to do automotive repairs; and to provide state inspection services. Truck rental will not be permitted under the new ordinance. As it is written, the ordinance does not contain a "grandfather" clause.

Carl Drummond will coordinate the Bluemont barbecue on May 15. Judah still needs to follow up with the captain at Fire Station #2 to make sure BCA can use its facilities for the barbecue. Mary Thorne will work with Carl and several other volunteers.

Treasurer Judy Collins reports that there are 275 paid members. Newsletter text is due to Suzanne Sundburg by May 11.

New Business

Sam Ferro reports that the newly revamped Website is coming soon. It will be linked to Facebook and Flickr (an online photo-sharing service) and will be more interactive. The goal is to finish the update by the end of April.

Judah dal Cais proposed constructing a bocce court adjacent to Stu Jessup's property (where the bike path crosses N. Emerson Street). His vision is for neighbors to work together to build the court and use it as a meeting place to exchange news and socialize. In another effort to improve the feeling of community in Bluemont, Dal Cais will organize a fundraiser/block party/crab feast in September.

The PTA for Ashlawn School requested a \$125 donation from BCA to subsidize the moon bounce at their Fun Fair on May 15. The membership discussed whether funding this request would set a precedent. A motion was made and seconded to make a one-time contribution of \$100 to offset Ashlawn's expenses for this event this year. The motion passed. BCA will put its newsletters on a table at the Fun Fair.

A proposal was made to decrease the number of BCA meetings and newsletters. This suggestion came from a weary Executive Board. If no volunteers step forward to do the work of BCA for the upcoming year, this step would decrease the workload for the current group. If new officers are voted in, then the burden would not be as heavy. Given the difficulty encountered in finding neighborhood meeting space, the decision was made to continue to reserve Arlington Traditional School for the fourth Wednesday of the month, September through June. It will be easier to cancel the space than to arrange it at the last minute. The newsletter will continue to be distributed to all 2,000 Bluemont households in September and April. There was much discussion regarding how to best get the word out about BCA. Some neighbors prefer short notices that they can access electronically and look at on the fly. This group suggested adding the URL to the signs that announce the monthly meetings. Others prefer paper newsletters. Perhaps information could be posted on the bulletin board at Safeway. Any changes to the schedule will be made starting in September.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:11 p.m.