

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, January 19, 2011, 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 Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, Judah dal Cais, Mary Thorne, Matt Fehling, Larry Smith, David Van Wagner and 8 other Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members.

Approval of Minutes for 11/17/2010

Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 11/17/10 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 11/17/10 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 11/17/10 minutes as drafted.

Bluemont Village Center—Ryan Arnold

Ryan Arnold is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan's architecture program, whose mother lives in Bluemont. Working with Judah Dal Cais he has improved on Jane Kim's design for the Village Center by providing a visual concept. The overall goal of updating the Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Plan is to transform the Bluemont commercial sector into a walkable focal point for the neighborhood and a source of pride for the community.

Ryan's design strives to increase the distance between pedestrians and vehicles by allowing on-street parking; widening sidewalks; and moving parking behind, above, or below businesses. Not only would this create a safer environment, but it also would encourage residents to walk more, thus increasing the foot traffic for local businesses. Both the blocks, which now include Safeway and McDonalds, would become single buildings with a combination of residential, business and retail. The Safeway-lot building would have apartments on top, businesses below and parking beneath both with a park at the west end next to N. Frederick Street. Ryan was not aware of the river running below the Safeway lot, which would likely require a change in the parking element of that building's plan.

The new building across N. Edison Street would have three stories of apartments on top, several levels of parking below that, and retail businesses at street level. There was concern expressed as to the fate of the small businesses in that block. Judah will contact Super Pollo about their experience with relocation from its original Ballston location due to the redevelopment of the block where the Liberty complex is being constructed. There would also be a parking structure on the site on which Federal Lock and Safe is now located. The buildings would be stepped down towards single-family homes with windowless exposures for reasons of privacy. The timing is unknown but it is believed that development is inevitable. Updating the NC Plan to document Bluemont's vision may make the neighborhood more attractive to a developer. NC Plan

Update Committee Chairman David Van Wagner noted that in the NC survey results, a large number of residents were concerned about local businesses being displaced by redevelopment, and he questioned whether residents would support a grocery store that did not offer convenient pull-in, pull-out street parking as opposed to garage parking. Due to a demanding work schedule, he also renewed his call for more volunteers to help him write the NC Plan update. Judah suggested that Ryan contribute to this effort.

April Newsletter

The April newsletter will be distributed to all residents and businesses of Bluemont. The advertising deadline will be March 20. All articles are due to Suzanne by April 1. David Van Wagner has an adequate team to deliver the newsletters but could use more volunteers as back-ups. Matt Fehling suggested asking for distribution help from local Boy and Girl Scout troops to broaden community involvement in this effort.

Neighborhood Conservation

BCA's NC Representative Larry Smith reported on the Neighborhood Conservation Micro Projects Program. These are small-budget (\$10,000 upper limit) beautification projects such as bus shelters, bike racks and trash/recycling receptacles. Neighborhoods can submit an application once every two years. Application deadlines are March 1 and September 1. The April newsletter will include an article about the program and a request for suggested projects. Larry was also asked to provide follow-up on a woman who lives on N. Kensington Street between 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard who attended the November 2010 General Membership Meeting and complained about flooding. [Note: This project is being considered for inclusion on BCA's NC project list. The resident, who reported collecting the signatures of the two neighboring properties, was unable to attend the September 2010 General Membership meeting, at which time the measure was to be discussed.] Larry had since looked at the situation and saw no easy solution, particularly through the NC program, given the effects of gravity and driveways on flowing water. Larry also questioned whether the project would involve improvements just to the three private properties involved, in which case the project would not likely qualify for NC or other public funds.

Reports from Officers and Representatives

Matt Fehling has the information necessary to allow credit cards to be used to pay for BCA membership on the Website. He would also like members to have the ability to download meeting dates into their electronic calendars. For the first time, a few newsletters were sent out electronically. Sam Ferro would like to see information for advertisers provided on the Website. Judah is coordinating with Ashlawn Elementary School regarding the creation of a learning center (raised garden plots) next to the historic Torreyson-Reeves home [this property is what remains of Arlington's last dairy farm, purchased by the county in 2001 to enlarge Bluemont Park]. He also is circulating a petition to obtain support to construct a bocce court. The next steps in constructing the bocce court will be discussed on April 27 at the next general meeting.

Old Business

There was a suggestion at the November 2010 meeting that BCA send a letter of support for allocating money to renovate the Lubber Run Amphitheater in the county's 2012 budget. The decision was made to obtain more information regarding cost and competing budget priorities before sending this letter. Judah reported that the project would cost \$100,000 or more. Judah has contacted the Arlington Forest Citizens Association, where the amphitheater is located, but he has had no response. Suzanne Sundburg and David Van Wagner will help Judah continue to research this through the Civic Federation and personal contacts in Arlington Forest. The mid-block pedestrian crossing on Glebe Road (planned to run roughly between the Westin Hotel and the new Virginia Tech building at the Peck-Staples site) continues to move forward. Judah has been in touch with the county about installing a left-turn signal at the intersection of George Mason and Wilson for the traffic heading east on Wilson. The county performed its traffic count in the morning, but the real problem is in the evening. He also would like to see BCA push the county to underground utility poles along the Wilson Boulevard sidewalk between Glebe Road and N. George Mason Drive. Utilities are being undergrounded in other parts of the county.

New Business

Judah's neighbor has the snow blower provided by the county for the neighborhood. Judah has requested a second snow blower. He is also organizing a shoveling brigade for snow removal. Volunteers should contact Judah to join the brigade. This would be a BYOS (bring your own shovel) commitment.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:05 p.m.