

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, April 27, 2011, 7:30 p.m.
Arlington Traditional School

Call to Order and Attendance

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, Judah dal Cais, Mary Thorne, Matt Fehling, Talmadge Williams, Larry Smith, David Van Wagner, Jim Thorne, 21 Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members and 7 non-members.

Arlington County Police Liaison — Corporal Elizabeth “Beth” Lennon

Things have been pretty quiet. We are entering the period where door-to-door solicitors become more active. Lennon advises not opening the door to solicitors. While some of them are honest and carry the required permits, others go from state to state running soliciting scams. The police are using unmarked vehicles to patrol the bike path. The new noise code is in draft form. From her experience, Lennon finds that a single visit by the police to a residence with excessive noise is usually adequate. Feel free to e-mail Corporal Lennon at elennon@arlingtonva.

Approval of Minutes for 1/19/2011

Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 1/19/11 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 1/19/11 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 1/19/11 minutes as drafted.

County Board Member — Mary Hynes

Hynes has lived near the Clarendon metro stop for 33 years and has served on the County Board since January 2008. She previously served on the School Board for many years, and she now also serves on Metro’s board. While on the County Board she is focusing on two main areas: capital maintenance and improvements and monitoring the impact of capital improvement projects. As a first step, she requested a study of the overall needs in the county. It would cost \$50 million to bring everything—all facilities—to a state of good repair.

With only approximately \$7 million available annually, Hynes has pulled citizens together to make recommendations regarding parks and other facilities. They are expected to report back to the Board in October. Parks and other facilities are the two areas most dependent on bonds for funding. The water control plant is being upgraded now. A facility is defined as any building ranging from a school to a park pavilion.

Crystal City

The County Board has now approved a new Crystal City Sector Plan in response to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission’s decision to move DOD-related offices out of Crystal City. As a result of BRAC, many of the military personnel are being relocated from Crystal City. The County’s plan calls for doubling the density in this neighborhood within 40 years. The new Crystal City will be more balanced between residential and commercial development. Neighbors are concerned that the infrastructure is not in place to support the projected growth. With an eye to

infrastructure concerns, a streetcar will connect Columbia Pike with Crystal City. Crystal City has the largest tax revenue in the county. The funding for the streetcar will come from a special new tax called a TIF (collected through the new Tax Increment Finance District created in Crystal City) that sets aside some of the increased revenues generated by the greater density to improve and maintain infrastructure in that particular district.

Clarendon

As a Clarendon resident, Hynes discussed the challenges of having mixed-use development located next to residential neighborhoods. Clarendon is a very lively area, which does not always make for a harmonious situation between the youthful partiers and nearby residents. Fredericksburg has a similar situation due to the many Mary Washington college students in that area. Training sessions have been held in Fredericksburg to make sure the relevant stakeholders are clear on legal limits, causes for citations, etc. The plan is to replicate this training in Clarendon.

Schools

Arlington Public Schools is expecting the largest influx of students since the 1960s in the next five years. The School Board owns the land where the schools are located. They cannot dispose of this land without the approval of the County Board. The Board is very unlikely to sell any publicly owned land. There was a question of whether the land that Arlington Traditional School sits on would be sold. This seems highly unlikely given the facts above.

Bluemont

The question was raised as to what Bluemont needs to do to get a piece of the budgeting pie to provide safer sidewalks and other infrastructure improvements. Under the current system, developers sometimes pay for these types of improvements (called “community benefits”) in areas adjacent to major site plans in exchange for added height and density (called “bonus density”) on a particular site. The Neighborhood Conservation (NC) program also channels neighborhood infrastructure projects (curb, gutter, sidewalk, lighting, etc.) into a funding queue, which can take up to a decade for completion. Much concern was expressed regarding the County’s plans to meet Bluemont’s growing need for infrastructure improvements. Earlier zoning and land-use planning called for dense redevelopment to occur on the only the east side of Glebe Road, but that is clearly no longer the case. Hynes promised to look into the question of funding promised for the west entrance to the Ballston metro (something that might benefit Bluemont residents), since previous funding dedicated for that entrance has twice been shifted to the Rosslyn Metro station. Hynes noted that the County Board cannot rely solely on developer contributions for infrastructure improvements and to keep Arlington’s existing infrastructure in sound condition, and she is trying to persuade her colleagues to explore other funding sources.

Hynes is a proponent of investing in capital improvement and maintenance. With the current budget shortfall it is not clear where these funds will come from. Perhaps higher taxes could generate a pot of money for these projects. This would make possible faster resolution of safety issues such as inadequate street lighting and narrow or non-existent sidewalks. She recommends that BCA focus on the vision for the future given the likelihood of further development within its boundaries. She sees this development as

an opportunity for residents to gain types of neighborhood-serving businesses that are now lacking. She and the County Board are looking for strategies to help retain existing local businesses when redevelopment occurs. Hynes urged the group to organize and talk to elected officials.

Presentation of Revised Bluemont Village Center Designs – Ryan Arnold

Ryan Arnold is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan's architecture program; his mother lives in Bluemont. Working with Judah dal Cais, he has improved on Jane Kim's 2010 designs for the Bluemont village center by providing a visual concept that was first unveiled to the membership at the January 17, 2011, meeting. One overall goal of updating the Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Plan is to provide a framework that will guide the transformation of Bluemont's commercial sector into a walkable focal point for the neighborhood and a source of pride for the community.

Arnold's presentation at the April meeting focused on newly revised designs for the Safeway site with a focus on walkability. These new designs featured a 5-story building on the Safeway site (as opposed to the 3-story design unveiled in January). Parallel street parking shown in the designs would be used to help separate moving traffic from pedestrians to encourage more people to walk.

A number of neighbors and business owners who attended the April meeting commented that prior to reading the April neighborhood-wide newsletter, they were unaware of BCA's efforts to update Bluemont's NC Plan and/or to incorporate the development guidelines for a revitalized village center into the NC Plan. Some attendees objected to the designs that were presented, and there were many questions.

It was explained that discussions regarding the redevelopment of the current Safeway site arose out of 1) a need to update the Neighborhood Conservation Plan from the 1999 version and 2) recent redevelopment within and adjacent to BCA borders. The project to update Bluemont's NC Plan started in December 2008. The process included two neighborhood-wide surveys and was the subject of numerous BCA meeting discussions and several newsletter articles. The basis for the designs came from input collected at Jane Kim's design forum that was held in February 2010 and from answers to the 2010 NC survey.

It was further explained that President dal Cais and Arnold met with representatives of JBG (a large development company), after the designs' presentation to the membership in January, in order to obtain feedback on the plans' feasibility. According to JBG, the plans would be financially feasible for a developer if there were residential units above the street-level retail. JBG also noted that four stories would be the minimum height considered by a developer.

It is hoped that greater density in the village center might help attract more frequent bus service, and that the increased tax revenue gained from the added height and density would result in new funding for projects such as widening sidewalks.

Both dal Cais and Arnold noted that the Safeway designs being presented were just a starting point to open up the discussion and that they looked forward to working with the community on this issue. President dal Cais also promised to provide answers to

additional frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the BCA Website in response to the request for more information.

Reports from Officers & Representatives

Vice President Matt Fehling reported that he and Dave Leichtman were still working to get the online payment system for dues renewal up and running. As a result of the lengthy discussions and the need to vacate the school premises, the following items were tabled until the May 25 meeting:

- 1) Call for 2011–2012 Candidates & Appoint Nominating Committee (3 volunteers needed) to Prepare for BCA Elections on June 22
- 2) Reports from Officers & Representatives
- 3) Other Old Business
 - a) Vote on motion to donate \$100 to Arlington's Planetarium Foundation
 - b) Vote on Executive Board motion to allocate \$150 for the May 24 BBQ. Call for volunteers to assist with setup and cleanup.
 - c) Vote on bocce court proposal

Other New Business

- a) Discuss/vote on Ashlawn Elementary School's donation request
- b) Set deadline for June newsletter & assign articles

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:25 p.m.