

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**November 16, 2011, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Arlington Traditional School**

**7:33 p.m. Call to Order**

About 12 members were present in addition to the following Executive Board members: President Judah dal Cais; 1<sup>st</sup> VP George Rovder; Treasurer Judy Collins, Secretary Chitra Kumar; Newsletter Editor Carla dal Cais; and Civic Federation delegates and alternates Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, Sandy Munnell, and Dean Foster.

**Melissa Bondi, County Board Primary Candidate (Dem.)**

Our guest speaker, Melissa Bondi, is running in the special election which will be held at the end of March or beginning of April 2012 to replace Barbara Favola's vacated County Board seat. Melissa is running as a Democrat in the primary which will be held even earlier than the special election. She gave a short speech followed by a question and answer session with BCA members.

Bondi stated that she has lived in Arlington since 1999, consistently in Clarendon area, mostly in Lyon Park. She served as a Civic Federation Delegate for the entire time. She shared her view that there are similarities between Lyon Park and Bluemont, including being on the edge of major development, and how her work on arterial transportation services is similar to what Bluemont has experienced.

At the community level, Bondi has worked on affordable housing projects and funding for preserving affordable housing, including on the Buckingham Apartments redevelopment project. In her professional life, as an employee of the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, Bondi has worked on better transportation choices, concentrating on how to meet vulnerable populations' transportation and infrastructure needs. According to Bondi, she is running for County Board because she wants to shift how planning decisions are made. She believes we are in a place where we've already seen a lot of change and the model we are basing the change on is 50 years old, like undergrounding Metro and later working to fund it. Instead, Bondi wants to be able to talk about the principles that created the standards that we adhere to in the long-term plans, rather than sticking to a standard/plan consistently for its own sake. She is also interested in maintaining a safety net for people who need help to meet their basic needs.

Below are some of the questions that members posed (the questions and answers have been condensed):

Q: What is your position on getting funds back for a western entrance to Ballston, which were dedicated to Rosslyn?

A: We need to get developer funds that are dedicated to stay dedicated.

Q: What are some things on the County Board that you think should be better?

A: Concentrating development close to transportation is good, but in terms of how individual projects get approved, I am a bit frustrated. There are a lot of meetings, which tires out community members who volunteer their time to attend all the meetings to ensure the issues we care about are retained in development plans. Forcing neighbors to attend every single meeting is flawed. Plans should be rooted in community interests, but it's hard to maintain continuity of understanding of those interests when staff changes, community participation ebbs and flows, etc.

Q: What is your position on light-rail like Columbia Pike?

A: I am a big believer in transit for the sake of transit because it gives options and improves everybody's quality of life and benefits the environment. I support the Columbia Pike streetcar initiative because it came out of a broad, transparent community planning process like the Bluemont Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Planning process. Transit development like this will only work with state and federal dollars earmarked for transportation funding. I am agnostic about whether it is the right choice for other areas—depends on the community's interests.

[To find out more about the Democratic primary candidates in the County Board race, visit <http://www.melissabondi.org> (Melissa Bondi), <http://simsforarlington.com> (Terron Sims), <http://www.libbygarvey.com> (Libby Garvey), <http://fallonforcountyboard.org> (Peter Fallon), <http://www.kim4arlington.com> (Kim Klingler), and [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/arlington-democrats-set-caucus-dates-for-county-board-candidate/2011/12/09/gIQA6l1aiO\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/arlington-democrats-set-caucus-dates-for-county-board-candidate/2011/12/09/gIQA6l1aiO_blog.html) (Elmer Lowe).]

### **Officers/Delegates/Representatives Report**

*Website update:* Sam Ferro mentioned that we will be trying to address website issues raised in previous meetings. One commitment made at the Executive Board meeting was to update the website at least five days ahead of the next meeting. Sam took an informal poll of the audience to see whether anyone had noticed problems with the Bluemontcivic.org site, such as those described during the earlier Executive Board meeting. Only Suzanne Sundburg raised her hand.

*Treasurer's report:* Judy Collins reported that about 300 members are registered as of this month; and we will soon start asking people to renew membership for 2012. Judy will present an end-of-year financial report in early 2012 for both 2010 (since a report was not given previously) and 2011.

*Secretary's report:* Chitra Kumar stated that minutes had been approved by the Executive Board for the August Executive Board and October Executive Board and General Membership meetings. They will be posted online soon.

*Newsletter:* Carla dal Cais expressed the need articles for the December newsletter by Friday, November 25. She stated that the newsletter would be shorter in December to conserve resources and time. Carla is looking for historical facts and figures for the new "Bygone Bluemont" segment.

*Recap of November 1, 2011, Arlington Civic Federation meeting ([www.civfed.org](http://www.civfed.org)):*

Civic Federation Representative, Suzanne Sundburg attended the Civic Federation meeting on November 1, 2011, and submitted this report by e-mail. Hard copies of Civic Federation meeting minutes were placed on each table for review.

The Arlington Civic Federation met from 7:30 pm to approximately 10:00 pm on November 1 in the Swanson Middle School auditorium. The meeting's primary topic was the proposed revisions to Arlington County's sign ordinance.

Controversial code enforcement actions over the previous 12 to 18 months prompted the Arlington County Board and the Civic Federation to consider how to revise and improve the county's sign ordinance. After initial input from stakeholders, the County Board now plans to review and approve just three initial changes (Phase 1) to the ordinance at its December 15 (or December 18 recess) meeting. These changes will affect sidewalk signs (the portable, sandwich-board-style signs), umbrella signs (for café tables), and parking signs (which will predominantly affect the Rosslyn area).

Civic Federation delegates were particularly concerned about the enforcement aspect of the sidewalk signs, which are often placed in the middle of the sidewalk, posing an unintended hazard to those with disabilities. According to county staff, no additional funds have been allocated for enforcement, so the Code Enforcement Office will still be relying on citizens to report violations.

The rest of the proposed ordinance changes (Phase 2) will continue to be studied, and the public will be given additional opportunity to weigh in on the matter. The County Board will not consider these changes until some time in 2012.

Of primary concern to delegates was the move to streamline and make the sign approval process more efficient by making nearly all sign approvals eligible by right with an administrative permit. Thus, the County Board would no longer hear special exception requests to accommodate unusual or creative requests.

Delegates were also disappointed to learn that this process has not been designed to consider the removal of signs illegally placed in the median by concerned citizens. And it was staff's position that the county cannot legally restrict median signs only to real-estate-related businesses—the county's view is that it must allow all businesses to place median signs, or none. Delegates quickly noted that under this new rule, there could be more than 15 business signs placed within a 1-block median strip.

Civic Federation delegates (and alternates) voted to approve a motion recommending the conditional approval of the sidewalk signs, recommending against an entirely-by-right approach to sign regulation in general, and asking the county to provide an "improved public discussion" for the changes being considered in Phase 2.

The complete motion adopted by the Arlington Civic Federation can be found at <http://www.civfed.org/ressignord1111.pdf>. Citizens may visit <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/studies/SignRegUpdate.aspx> to learn more about the ordinance-revision process and to submit comments.

*Neighborhood Conservation Plan Update Committee report:* The next NC plan meeting will be the Sunday after Thanksgiving, when the streets and sidewalks chapter will be presented.

*President's report:* Judah dal Cais reported on the following issues:

- The latest on the Goodyear site plan is that the County has asked for a through-street for Goodyear site, which the developer incorporated. However, the road that is in the developer's plan will not be wide enough for a fire truck to go through, which is a big deal for the County Board. The Board is now looking at plans for the entire area with Harris Teeter and American Service Center (the Mercedes dealership) to see whether the through-street would serve as an alley or a real street well into the future. A walk-through of the site that had been scheduled for 11/17/11 will likely be postponed to allow more time for discussion.
- Body Dynamics is due for a five-year renewal of its site plan amendment for physical therapy services. Send any adverse comments or concerns about the business's activities to Judah so he can pass them along to the County for its review.
- Neighborhood Conservation (NC) alternate Mark Haynes attended the NC Advisory Committee meeting in lieu of NC Representative Larry Smith. They are accepting micro-projects for the spring but, thereafter, will likely not have any money. A micro-project is a project of less than \$5,000 that the County would build. If we want to propose a micro-project, we need to do so very soon. Judah will come back to group with a timeline for getting ideas in after speaking with Larry.

### **Unfinished Business**

*Proposal for an Arterial Transportation Management (ATM) Phase 2 Project:*

Ed Fendley had proposed a motion/resolution to the Executive Board, in a November 3 email, that the BCA reinvigorate Phase 2 of the County's ATM project to support BCA members' previous votes in favor of building ADA-compliant sidewalks along Wilson Boulevard. Ed's suggestion will be discussed at the next BCA meeting. The purpose of the discussion would be for the BCA members to decide whether they want to move forward with Ed's suggestion. An upcoming newsletter would include text of any proposal to be voted on.

One member reminded the group that the updated NC Plan would include information that overlaps with this proposal, so BCA needs to make sure that the two documents are aligned. Members noted that David Van Wagner, NC Plan Update Committee Chair, should receive Ed's letter and his motion/resolution for the Phase 2 project. Another member mentioned that Rich Viola of the County's transportation division was seen measuring sidewalks on the north and south sides of Wilson Boulevard east of George Mason Drive, showing the County's potential interest in a Phase 2 project. Suzanne mentioned that Larry and she tried to raise this issue with County Board members at a Civic Federation and had not gotten positive responses. An alternative to widening sidewalks would be to move the telephone poles to private property. The south side of Wilson Boulevard east of George Mason Drive has more room to accomplish that goal. Two or three homeowners on the north side of Wilson would lose their driveways if the sidewalks were to be widened on that side, and a number of retaining walls would have to be replaced.

### **New Business**

*Meetings Schedule:* Judah re-introduced the topic, which was discussed at the Executive Board meeting and at meetings over the summer about how frequently BCA should hold General Membership meetings. A number of people expressed interest over the summer to reduce the number of General Membership meetings to reduce the time burden on community members. George Rovder's reading of the BCA bylaws, however, led the board to decide to hold monthly meetings. David Van Wagner's re-reading of the bylaws suggested that the BCA Executive Board had the discretion to set the meeting schedule in consultation with the General Membership.

After a fair bit of discussion about the pros and cons of having monthly meetings, a motion to continue having monthly meetings was proposed and seconded. Reasons in favor of holding monthly General Membership meetings included concerns about wanting to stay in tune with what's going on with Safeway site and keeping the frequency to foster trust among members and the Board. Options to reduce the Board's workload by limiting the number of speakers and shortening the length of the meetings were discussed.

A vote was taken with 15 for and 5 against continuing to hold monthly General Meetings in 2012 as previously scheduled. Therefore, the monthly meetings schedule will continue. Judah asked and Suzanne agreed to schedule County Board Democratic primary candidate Terron Sims as a speaker for the December meeting. Options to minimize the burden of newsletter development, such as by cutting back frequency, will be discussed later.

### **Adjournment**

Judah adjourned the meeting at 8:56 p.m.