

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**January 18, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Arlington Traditional School**

**Call to Order**

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 p.m. Present in addition to Judah were 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President George Rovder; Treasurer Judy Collins; Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Representative Larry Smith; NC Alternate Representative Mark Haynes; and Civic Federation delegates and alternates Suzanne Sundburg, Bob Atkins, Sam Ferro, and Dean Foster. Others in attendance included Newsletter Editor Carla dal Cais, NC Plan Update Committee Chair David Van Wagner, approximately 9 other BCA members and residents, and 5 guests.

Suzanne Sundburg took notes in the absence of Secretary Chitra Kumar.

**Arlington Police Liaison Report**

Officer Beth Lennon reported on the car break-ins that had occurred in December. Other than those break-ins and the theft of a van containing candy for members of the military, she said that there was no other significant crime in Bluemont. She told the group that most of the thefts had been from the vehicles that had been left unlocked and/or with items of value left in the plain sight. She urged all residents to lock their vehicles and to remove all items from their vehicles to reduce the chances of theft.

In response to an attendee's question, Officer Lennon stated that officers often trained/retrained the canine units in Field's Park on Wednesday evenings.

David Morrison of the Office of Emergency Management distributed pamphlets on emergency preparedness. In answer to a member's question, he said that the county's emergency radio transmitter (for AM 1700) had gone down for a couple of hours during Hurricane Irene and was now being tested weekly.

**Bluemont Junction Trail Rehabilitation/Restoration Presentation**

Environmental Landscape Supervisor Patrick Wegeng, Landscape Supervisor Lois Barb, and Invasive Plant Program Coordinator Sarah Archer presented details regarding a new initiative to rehabilitate and restore the natural areas along the Bluemont Junction Trail from its intersection with N. Fairfax Drive/I-66 through Fields Park all the way down to N. Kensington Street.

The project marks a starting point to begin implementing elements of the County's Natural Resources Management Plan drafted by former county naturalist Greg Zell. This initiative will involve the removal of invasive plant species (trees, bushes, etc.) and their replacement with more diverse native species that will better support migratory songbirds and other wildlife. In addition to improving habitat, this effort should also improve the appearance of the trail's natural corridor.

Wegeng specifically noted that there were many valuable trees and other helpful plants that would be preserved (or saved in cases where they were being threatened by invasives). In some cases, particularly along fence lines, private property owners have planted invasive species that are encroaching onto county parkland. Owners will be notified and given a chance to move their plants before the removal effort begins. In

cases where the plants cannot be moved, Wegeng and his team would notify and work with affected property owners so that together they can come up with solutions and select native replacement species that won't spread or kill other plants.

Sarah Archer noted that she and her staff would do a cost-benefit analysis on a stand of white poplars along the eastern section of the trail. While somewhat invasive, these trees are not spreading and do not pose a significant hazard and will likely be left in place.

Lois Barb described the various sections of the initiative. In Section 1, invasive species will be removed from the section of the trail stretching from I-66/N. Fairfax Drive down through Fields Park. New native trees and plants will then be installed (during the fall when they have the best chance for survival). Section 2 will cover the area between N. George Mason Drive and N. Granada Street. Section 3 covers the section from N. Granada down to the area between the trail and the homes along N. Kensington Street. Because Section 3 comprises nearly 13 acres, including the area around the train caboose, the work will be performed by AmeriCorps volunteers and county staff. It may take a year and a half to complete work in all three sections.

The initial step will be to remove invasive plant species, which should occur between February and August 2012. Some of the removal will involve pulling up vegetation manually, but chemicals similar to Roundup will be used too. In response to a question about safety, Archer said that the sprayed areas should be safe people and dogs about 4 hours after application. Staff will put up flags to mark areas that have been sprayed, and Archer said that they will put the spraying schedule online and will include her name as the contact person.

Planting will occur in the fall, likely to begin sometime in October. The new plants should have identifying tags to help the public learn what species have been planted and which types of wildlife they support.

Wegeng and Archer noted the importance of having volunteers from the community to help with this initiative. Wegeng thanked Bluemont resident and Tree Steward Hugh Robinson for his pruning and removal of invasives (he's logged at least 130 hours of volunteer work) along the trail and in county parkland. Wegeng said that it was Hugh's work that had spurred him to push his Bluemont Junction Trail rehabilitation initiative forward. Wegeng also recognized Urban Forestry Commission member Nora Palmatier and Parks Commission member and Master Naturalist Caroline Haynes (both BCA members) for their support and volunteer efforts.

Archer asked potential volunteers to notify her. She said that there would be lots of flexibility in setting up work schedules, with volunteer groups being able to work alongside staff or independently once a scope of work had been established. Wegeng asked to include a mention of the initiative and a call for volunteers in the BCA newsletter.

The next step, Wegeng said, was to develop a planting design plan, which he hopes to have ready by July 2012. He anticipates showing the plan to BCA members at the September meeting and having the membership approve it so that he can proceed with the planting in October.

In response to a question from Judah dal Cais about the proposed bocce court, Wegeng responded that as he had explained to Judah before, he (Wegeng) has no authority to install or permit the installation of recreational facilities in parks. He is limited to landscaping activities. Only the park manager has the authority to authorize the installation of a recreational element like a bocce court. He added that he knew that some residents wanted to keep plenty of open space in the area between N. Emerson and Illinois Streets (the area being considered for the proposed bocce court) along the trail for things like volleyball and other activities. Wegeng said that he did not plan to plant any more trees in that area, so his rehabilitation/restoration plan would not preclude the use of that area for recreational activities requiring open space.

### **Officer-Delegate-Representative-Committee Reports**

Treasurer Judy Collins reported that approximately 165 to 170 members still need to renew their 2012–2013 dues, and approximately 120 members have already renewed. She referenced the printed financial reports for 2010 and 2011 [see scanned attachments to the 1/18/12 Executive Board minutes] that were located on every table for members to review.

NC Plan Update Committee Chair David Van Wagner reported that draft chapters of the revised NC Plan would be posted to the BCA Website beginning in February so that BCA members and Bluemont residents would have an opportunity to review and comment on them.

Civic Federation delegate Suzanne Sundburg referred members to copies of the minutes from the January 3, 2012, Civic Federation meeting [see insert below]. She noted that the Governor's proposed state includes cuts that will shift the financial burden for some core services from the state to local governments. Fellow delegate Bob Atkins mentioned that at its March 6 meeting the Civic Federation would host a candidates' debate for those running to fill former County Board member Barbara Favola's seat in the March 27 special election.

Recap of the January 3, 2012, Civic Federation Meeting:

The Arlington Civic Federation met from 7:30 pm to approximately 9:00 pm on January 3 in Virginia Hospital Center's Hazel Auditorium. BCA delegates Suzanne Sundburg and Bob Atkins and alternate delegate Dean Foster were present.

The evening was dedicated to a question-and-answer session with the following legislative members of the Virginia Assembly: Delegate Robert Brink, Delegate Patrick Hope, Delegate Alfonso Lopez, Senator Adam Ebbin, Senator Barbara Favola, and Senator Janet Howell.

The members were asked what legislation (that would have an impact on Arlington) stood the best chance of being passed in the 2012 session. Favola noted her bill to provide grants to community college students who were transferring to a regular 4-year college. Hope replied that he would propose a bill to set up the health insurance exchanges based upon the recommendations of the Health Reform Initiative. Howell said she would push for a bill allowing in-person, no-excuses-necessary absentee

voting. Brink wants the state to establish a managed care ombudsman program to ensure that Medicaid patients have some place to appeal to if/when they believe they are being wrongfully denied care. Lopez will propose a bill establishing a small business, microenterprise investor tax credit to spur job growth. Ebbin planned to offer a bill that would allow local school boards to set their own school calendars.

Below are some of the top issues facing the legislature this year that were discussed:

- 20-20 divide in the Senate—The questions are who would control the Senate and how would the committees be set up? Would they be divided 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans, or would Republicans chair/control all committees?
- 2-year state budget—In the Governor’s proposed budget, funds are being cut from the pre-K public school initiative, from children’s health care (SCHIP), teen pregnancy prevention, child-care subsidies for poor families, etc. Funds are being added to shore up the state’s pension plan and for transportation.
- VA has decided not to apply for \$60 million in federal early education funds because it would have cost the state \$5 million to implement the program.
- 187 tax credits—In the last legislative session, a committee was set up to study/review “designer loophole” tax credits to determine how much they cost the state and whether they were effective in meeting the policy objectives for which they were designed. The committee found no information on 136 of the tax credits, some information was available on about 30 tax credits, and a reasonable amount of information was available on approximately 20 of the tax credits.
- Bills advocating prayer and further restricting abortion and anti-immigrant and anti-environment bills are expected, with no way means of blocking them in the Senate (in case of a tie, Lt. Governor Bill Bolling may cast a tie-breaking vote). Lopez stated his opposition to overturning the long-standing statewide ban against uranium mining.
- Eminent domain—A constitutional amendment to restrict the power of eminent domain has been proposed. Some are concerned about the unintended consequences that may result. Brink felt the chances of passage were good.
- Shifting the responsibility for funding core services from the state to local governments—State budget cuts will necessitate increases in local real estate taxes to keep services at the same level.

Bob Atkins drafted the following question which was posed to the legislative delegation: In the interests of transparency, do you support recorded votes at all levels of General Assembly activity including Subcommittee votes? All legislative members present indicated that they would support this change.

NC Representative Larry Smith reported that 80% of the neighbors in the 1000 block of N. Edison Street had signed the survey in favor of the proposed sidewalk, curb, and gutter project (BCA’s first-priority NC project). This project was not funded in the December NC funding round, but it did gain additional points and is in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> place in the queue. The project may or may not be funded in the June round depending upon how much money the county can allocate for NC projects.

Newsletter Editor Carla dal Cais called for February newsletter articles. NC Alternate Representative Mark Haynes suggested that she interview Renee Henninger, who runs No Place Like Home—a store that sells vintage and collectible items.

Bob Atkins asked whether BCA could post the BCA newsletter in the lobby of the new Jordan Apartments or deliver the newsletter door to door during the next neighborhood-wide newsletter distribution. He was told to contact newsletter distributor David Van Wagner and Judy Collins (the newsletter carrier for that route).

President Judah dal Cais announced the date for the first Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting for the Goodyear Tire & Auto site (650 N. Glebe Road), which will be held on January 23, 2012, 7–10 p.m., in rooms 109/111, Courthouse Plaza, located at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard.

Judah also noted that JBG had submitted a site plan amendment (SP #401) for the new building on the Bob Peck Chevrolet site (800 N. Glebe Road) to convert ground-floor retail space into office space. He said that the matter would go before the Planning Commission on January 30 and before the County Board on February 11 and told members that the BCA Executive Board would discuss the matter via e-mail and produce a letter to the County Board.

Judah also said that he would check on a question he received from BCA member Wendy Dean, who asked whether Madison Homes had purchased the 19 townhouse lots on Wilson Boulevard between N. Wakefield and Woodrow Streets.

### **BCA Tool Loaner Program**

Judah briefly reviewed the program and asked for suggestions of tools to supplement the ones already available (listed in the January 2012 BCA newsletter), keeping in mind that the tools had to have built-in safety features. A pole pruner and an edger were suggested. David Van Wagner remarked that he had a pole pruner and many other tools that others were welcome to borrow. A list of residents and the items that they are willing to lend is to be drafted.

Someone asked whether BCA has received a snowblower from the county this year. Judah said that he hadn't received one but would call the county to check on it.

### **Unfinished Business**

Mark Haynes proposed a motion in support of the initiative to rehabilitate/restore the Bluemont Junction Trail corridor. After a couple of friendly amendments were included, the final motion language read as follows: "We commend the landscaping unit and Parks and Natural Resources staff for taking on this project, and we endorse their work and urge volunteers to join their efforts to remove invasive species and replant native species."

This motion was seconded and was then approved unanimously by the membership.

Bob Atkins proposed a motion to "solicit pro bono legal assistance and authorize funds to pay filing fees in order to establish BCA as a nonprofit corporation." After discussion, in which retired attorney Dean Foster agreed to look into the matter, the motion was tabled until such time Dean could report back to the membership with details regarding the costs, changes to the bylaws, and other requirements that would be necessary.

BCA member Richard "Ritch" Viola (also a county planning section supervisor with the Dept. of Environmental Services) volunteered to help BCA apply to participate in the county's Walkabout program. The application is due by the end of February 2012. Ritch also volunteered to help plan the 2-mile route and asked BCA to pick a significant date on which to schedule the Walkabout. Ritch also asked members to send him historical and other significant sights that could be included in the route.

### **New Business**

Bluemont resident Rob Tennison asked members to consider signing up for Arlington's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training program. It is a free course that provides emergency preparedness training (including CPR certification) to Arlington County residents. The courses are held twice a year in March and October on Tuesday or Thursday evenings and two Saturdays. Participants may choose to join CERT after completing the class, but subsequent participating in CERT is not required.

### **Adjournment**

President dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9 p.m.