

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
February 22, 2012, 7:30 p.m.
Arlington Traditional School

Call to Order

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 p.m. Present in addition to Judah were 1st Vice President George Rovder; Treasurer Judy Collins; Secretary Chitra Kumar; Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Representative Larry Smith and Alternate Representative Mark Haynes; and Civic Federation delegates and alternates Suzanne Sundburg, Sam Ferro, and Dean Foster. Others in attendance included NC Plan Update Committee Chair David Van Wagner, and BCA members John Herickhoff, Caroline Haynes, Alan Sundburg, Laura Brothers, Penny Holland, David R. Hughes, Allen Wood, and Reevesland Learning Center Representative Joan Horwitt. [Note: Joan Horwitt lives in the Boulevard Manor neighborhood.]

Approval of Meeting Minutes

December General Membership meeting minutes were approved by the membership (not voted on in January). The membership also approved the January 18, 2012, General Membership minutes (taken by Suzanne Sundburg) with no changes.

Neighborhood Conservation Plan (NCP) Committee Presentation

The General Membership Meeting began with an update from members of the Neighborhood Conservation Plan Committee. Committee Chair David Van Wagner began by explaining the history of the NCP and that committee members are using a template provided by the County to draft Bluemont's new NC Plan. Each section is being updated by various people, and chapters will be presented as they become available over time. Handouts of the text were provided at the meeting, and these documents are also posted on the NCP Website at <http://bluemontncp.wordpress.com> (a link is provided on the BCA Website at www.bluemontcivic.org).

David Van Wagner and David Hughes updated the first chapter, which includes the following sections: an Introduction with Background & Demographic Information, an Executive Summary section, and a History of Bluemont section. David Hughes went on to describe the contents of the first chapter. Results from the neighborhood survey, conducted in 2010 are provided in the chapter. As other substantive chapters of the updated NC Plan are completed, the committee will roll summaries of those chapters into the Executive Summary. A U.S. Census Bureau data summary is provided in the Introduction, including these data points: the number of Bluemont residents under age 18 has increased considerably, single-person households have dropped by 12.7%, and households with four or more people jumped by 36.8%.

Hughes emphasized the committee's openness to comments and corrections. Comments can be submitted in one of several ways, all of which are provided on the NCP Website. Methods include emailing Van Wagner and Hughes at bluemontncp@gmail.com, entering into the web-based form available at <http://bluemontncp.wordpress.com>, or by contacting Hughes directly at davhughes@comcast.net. The best method for delivering line edits would be to email them directly to bluemontncp@gmail.com. David Van Wagner mentioned that a large portion of the history section, which he mainly authored, was taken from the old NCP. He noted that many facts were not well cited in the old version, and he took care to go

back the Arlington Central Library's Virginia Room to find supporting citations (documentation) or omit information when supporting citations could not be found. He asked that if changes/additions are requested, references/citations be provided.

Caroline Haynes shared the chapter she worked on, Urban Forestry. Data were taken mostly from the County's latest urban tree canopy report (survey). In short, the tree canopy has suffered losses recently in part because of storms and development. Bluemont could do better with trees along neighborhood streets and private lands, but it does well with the amount of tree canopy in its parkland. Bluemont residents have participated actively in the tree canopy fund project by planting trees on private property. The tree canopy fund is a fund in which developers can deposit money if they don't have room for trees on a site they are redeveloping. This chapter also discusses invasive species.

Van Wagner wrapped up the presentation by stating that the committee intends to roll out additional chapters in March and April. There is a need for additional committee members to take on specific chapters, including Historic Preservation and Zoning. Please contact bluemontncp@gmail.com if you are interested in joining. Van Wagner also mentioned that the Arlington Central Library's Virginia Room has BCA minutes up until 1999. He asked if anyone had any papers that could be shared with the library for posterity. Judah and Suzanne stated that the best place to obtain these materials was the BCA Website and that a disk (CD/DVD) could be burned to provide complete copies of all BCA minutes from 1999 up through the present.

Officer, Delegate, and Representative Reports

NC Representative Larry Smith stated that the 1000 block of N. Edison Street is our priority project and that the surveyors were out looking at it. He said the County would probably come out with a plan for neighbors to review.

NC Alternative Mark Haynes added that at the last Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) meeting, Civic Associations were solicited to support a \$12 million bond issue instead of \$9 million bond issue for NC projects. Judah dal Cais wrote a letter of support and sent it to them.

Larry Smith noted that additional funding is available for another round of micro-projects. As a reminder, micro-projects are those costing less than \$10,000 that do not need any professional architectural or planning work. Other funded micro-projects are listed on Arlington County's Website.

Civic Federation Delegate and Newsletter Designer Sam Ferro reported that he is trying to notify all the advertisers about the early advertising deadline for the joint March/April newsletter. He has gotten a few responses so far. He also mentioned that the neighborhood-wide newsletter distribution has grown to more than 2,300.

Treasurer Judy Collins reported that over 190 people have paid dues for 2012. A number of 2011 members whose membership had lapsed re-subscribed after receiving the January newsletter.

Civic Federation Alternates Suzanne Sundburg and Dean Foster provided an update (handed out and incorporated below). Suzanne also talked about updates to the Beaver Pond rehabilitation plan. An option has been selected. Lack of funds may limit what the County can do.

President Judah dal Cais sent a letter on behalf of BCA regarding the 800 N. Glebe Road (the Peck site) site plan amendment. The letter said that BCA would “not object” to the proposed conversion of 1,500 sq. ft. of ground-floor retail space to office space, but it also asked the County to determine whether the Virginia Tech building was following the retail plan requirements in its site plan conditions. (See the February 2012 Executive Board Meeting minutes for further details.)

Judah reported that he went to two long-term planning committee meetings that discussed redevelopment plans for the Goodyear-Harris Teeter site. One idea is to have a new cut-through street connecting N. Thomas and N. Tazewell Streets. The discussions also covered improving N. Glebe Road up to Route 50 to make it more pedestrian-friendly, as it is further north, and County staff was asked to look into options. Further, Judah mentioned that the Harris Teeter might be moving to the current adjacent site of American Service Center (ASC). The meetings’ attendees discussed a lot of scenarios of what could be built on the existing sites if ASC shifts over to the west side of Glebe and consolidates all their operations into one building.

Other topics mentioned by Judah included the following:

- The April BCA meeting speaker will be from the Ballston Business Improvement District (BID), and he is waiting for another speaker to confirm; and
- Nothing from JBG or Safeway to report.

John Herickhoff responded to an earlier question from Larry Smith about the 800 N. Glebe Road site plan amendment and VA Tech retail space. John clarified that the current site plan does not constrain them from doing anything they want with the space.

Recap of the February 7, 2012, Civic Federation Meeting:

The Arlington Civic Federation met from 7:30 pm to approximately 9:30 pm in Virginia Hospital Center’s Hazel Auditorium. BCA delegates Suzanne Sundburg and Bob Atkins and alternate delegates Dean Foster and Sandy Munnell were present.

County Board Q&A

The question-and-answer session with members of the Arlington County Board focused largely on budget priorities for the 2013 fiscal year and the upcoming Capital Improvement Program (CIP) bond referendum. (The next CIP will cover a 10-year period.) The County Board largely declined to discuss budget priorities or to say how they would allocate limited bond capacity until after they had reviewed the County Manager’s proposed budget later in the month. Jay Fisette did note that keeping a AAA bond rating continued to be a high priority.

With respect to the schools, the Board members noted recent efforts by county staff to work together with school officials in order to come up with solutions to address the capacity issue. Families with students attending Arlington Public Schools make up only 20% of the county’s population. The Board is striving for to balance needs without creating big winners or big losers as far as the use of facilities is concerned.

Board members discussed the loss of affordable housing, particularly along Columbia Pike. Few new ideas were mentioned, and the Board was waiting to review staff

recommendations on new “tools” that might help stem the loss. Chris Zimmerman noted that a combination of strategies would have to be used, as there was no one solution that would solve the problem.

Responding to a question about the poor condition of a section of N. Glebe Road (a state-maintained road), Board members said that the state has not had adequate funds for road maintenance in a long time. The county does what it can to make temporary repairs to state-maintained roads. But Board members did not foresee the situation improving in the near term. The gas tax (a prime source of road-maintenance funds) has not been raised since 1986, and the Virginia General Assembly cut all dedicated funding for transit in January. Metro/WMATA is the only public transit system in the nation without a dedicated funding stream.

Storm-Water Management and Water Quality

Watershed Outreach Coordinator Aileen Winquist discussed the new Virginia storm-water management regulations with which Arlington must comply in 2014. Arlington has lost about half of its original stream network to development. Sediment from erosion is a major pollutant, and the number one source of biological contamination is dog waste. Arlington has a sanitary sewer system (that sends residential and commercial wastewater to the wastewater treatment facility) and a separate storm-water sewer system that dumps untreated runoff from streets, sidewalks and other impervious surfaces directly into Arlington’s streams, which then flow into the Potomac River.

To help the county meet the more stringent regulatory requirements to reduce storm-water runoff and improve water quality, the county has started the StormwaterWise Landscapes Program. County staff will conduct a storm-water assessment of each participant’s property and will provide a written report with a property map and a list of site-specific recommendations for reducing storm-water runoff. If participants implement at least one of the recommendations, they are eligible to be reimbursed for up to 50% of the installation. To participate in the program, you must apply by **February 29, 2012**. Visit www.arlingtonva.us/stormwaterwise for details online.

Arlington Economic Development (AED) Takes Over Artisphere

County Director of Cultural Affairs Karen Vasquez reviewed the new business plan for Artisphere. Expenses have been slashed but it will still cost county taxpayers \$1.6 million annually to keep Artisphere’s doors open. AED hopes that the new business plan and new shows like the Frida Kahlo exhibit will help Artisphere get off the ground. It was noted that it would take sustained fundraising of \$3 million per year in order to shift Artisphere operations from the county to a nonprofit.

Joan Horwitt, Reevesland Farm Update

Arlington County bought property from Nelson Reeves’ three heirs in 2001, when he died at age 100. He was an avid gardener. When the County bought it, they boarded up the house and let the garden become grass. Then, the County paid for an assessment of the property and decided to make it a historic site, going through the historic preservation process. Joan got involved as a volunteer when she was promoting “Lawns 2 Lettuce 4 Lunch,” growing lettuce instead of grass in neighborhoods and supplying the produce to Ashlawn Elementary School. In 2010, 200 families participated in the program. In 2011, BCA members voted to support a plan to have a garden and learning center (motto: “growing food, knowledge and community”) at the site.

Now there is more interest in the property. Shingles were replaced to fix the leaky roof. In 2010, a new assessment of the house was done, which said that the house is still structurally sound even though there has been water damage from the leaky roof.

Now Joan's organization has 501(c)(3) status and is collaborating with community partners to make it into the "Reevesland Learning Center". In the County public budget hearing (Tuesday, March 20, 7:00 pm, at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard), Joan's organization is advocating for some funding to rehabilitate the house so it is not sitting vacant and boarded up for another year. Regardless, the outside of the house is being used. There will be a public meeting on March 8 at Walter Reed Community Center in South Arlington to go over the assessment and the request for proposals for the house's renovation. By showing up to a County meeting, BCA members would help the County see that Reevesland Learning Center is the best use for the house and possibly provide some funds for the cause. Joan also invited BCA members to participate in the lettuce-planting program.

Unfinished Business

Dean Foster reported on his findings from researching trends in incorporation of Civic Associations (CAs). Only a few CAs have been incorporated, usually because they have financial obligations, such as renting or owning property. He also noted that in 2004, a developer sued Alexandria City and at least one civic association because the developer disagreed with a decision that was made. That lawsuit went on for two years. Although the court eventually found in favor of the City's decision on the matter, the lawsuit was expensive and could have ended up with civic association members being held personally liable for a potential judgment, if the developer had won as the association was not incorporated. BCA has few potential sources of liability. The group discussed the Tool Loaner Program, one such potential source of liability, stating that it is the only program for which the BCA owns property. It was suggested that BCA mitigate potential liability by creating a release form for the use of the tools rather than move to incorporate the BCA for this purpose.

New Business

Judah took a quick poll of whether members supported the idea of having a Costco or BJ's membership card as an incentive for BCA membership. There were many questions about the benefits and stipulations that come along with membership. Judah agreed to re-propose the idea with more details at a future date.

Adjournment

President dal Cais adjourned the meeting at 9:04 p.m.