

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**March 28, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Arlington Traditional School**

**Call to Order**

Vice-President George Rovder called the meeting to order at approximately 7:40 p.m. Present in addition to George were Secretary Chitra Kumar; Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Representative Larry Smith; and Civic Federation delegates and alternates Suzanne Sundburg, Bob Atkins, Sam Ferro, and Dean Foster. Others in attendance included NC Plan Update Committee Chair David Van Wagner and BCA members Caroline Haynes, Alan Sundburg, David R. Hughes, Allen Wood, Lisa Everhardt, Marsha Lederman, Maura Quinn, Tasos Sgardelis, John Graf, Laura Brothers, and Allen Norton.

**Approval of February 22, 2012, Meeting Minutes**

The group decided to defer approval of the February General Membership Meeting minutes pending review by BCA members who could answer questions about the content of the minutes.

**Neighborhood Conservation Plan (NCP) Committee Presentation**

David Van Wagner kicked off another presentation by the NCP Committee by saying that, so far, the Committee has received two comments on the chapters posted last month, the executive summary/history/intro section and the urban forestry chapter. He reminded the group that the two ways to comment on the NCP are by clicking on the NCP link at [www.bluemontcivic.org](http://www.bluemontcivic.org) or by going directly to <http://bluemontncp.wordpress.com>. He also noted that two more chapters would be posted after the meeting: Public Facilities and Housing.

The Public Facilities chapter was presented by Caroline Haynes (it includes schools; police, fire, and public safety facilities; the bike trails; and parks and other open spaces). Caroline explained that much of the chapter was taken from existing information in the previous NC Plan, and her committee had added more new research. There was not a lot in the neighborhood survey to rely on. When asked which park facilities were used most, the BCA survey showed that walking/jogging trails were at 93% usage (passive recreation) versus ball fields, etc. between 10% and 25% usage (active recreation). However, the County spent little money on passive recreation and much more on active recreation, or the built environment. Caroline went on to explain that Bon Air Rose Garden seems to get conflicting responses in the neighborhood survey. Some love it and others believe it takes too many resources for upkeep. Fields Park is another recreation site, which 84% said they never or infrequently used. The BCA surveys showed that 69% of residents are very interested in acquiring new parkland, which generally tracks with strong support County wide for acquiring more parkland.

One recommendation from the last NCP was for police patrol of the bike trails. The NCP Committee gathered some data from police about whether there were any problems on the trails in the recent past. The police believe the bike trails are very safe, evidenced by the fact that in 2011, there were only five reports of problems — four reports of graffiti and one of a stolen cell phone.

Member Allen Wood asked whether we could add something in the updated NCP about

reducing the ambulance fee charged, given our proximity to the fire station and the Virginia Hospital Center. It was suggested that if the questioner wanted to do some research on the issue, it may be something to include.

Next, the Housing chapter was presented by Lisa Everhart. Housing is new as a stand-alone section of the NCP. Lisa stated that the Committee looked forward to comments on what should be included in addition to what is provided in the NCP handbook. The handbook mentions, housing changes, possible trends (affordable housing, rental converted to condos, single-family housing to more dense), assessed property values, and tear-downs. Within the Bluemont neighborhood, we have seen substantial in-fill. There was an inquiry about the number of foreclosures.

The chapter also discusses The Jordan as a part of our neighborhood's affordable housing as well as a short section on historical homes, which will be expanded to include the post-World War II build-out. Also, Lisa reviewed neighborhood survey responses and narrative responses, especially as they related to commercial development and zoning of large structures (three-stories or higher). There is some degree of overlap with the Urban Forestry chapter and the chapter on transportation, for example, in the discussion of encouraging residents with yards to install rain gardens. The Housing chapter cross-references the land use and zoning section and historic preservation section.

Two recommendations mentioned in the County handbook (which is serving as a model for the NCP's update) dealt with problem homes/areas (trash, overgrown yards/landscaping) and affordable housing. One other way to track condition of homes is through County Code Enforcement complaint files. Related to affordable housing, residents may want to consider affordable housing goals as a part of mixed-use development. Two-thirds of NC survey respondents said affordable housing was important to very important. It's also a county goal to establish more affordable housing across Arlington County.

Several questions were asked about the balance in tone and reporting of results of survey. Larry Smith stated that the plan shouldn't imply to County that Bluemont recommends clamping down on development indiscriminately. It was noted that pages 5-6 of the Housing chapter discuss the NC survey results, and the survey results and narrative comments are posted online, if people want to review the discussion of results in detail. Lisa shared that many photos are included in the chapter. A participant cautioned that BCA be ready to answer how photos tie into the recommendations presented in the chapter.

Van Wagner wrapped up by thanking the group. Suzanne reminded the Committee to ask Treasurer Judy Collins for reimbursement of any copies made.

### **Officer, Delegate, and Representative Reports**

NC Representative Larry Smith reminded the group about the situation with micro-projects. May 1 (or June 1) is the deadline for another round of micro-projects. Larry suggested we put the idea of a kiosk to a vote, recommending two to three locations. A suggestion was made to have a delivery location for County compost as a micro-project. Larry Smith suggested we could easily drive up to the Marymount compost pick-up point and also that the idea may also require some engineering, which is not allowed in eligible micro-projects. Another idea expressed by a participant was installing more recycling receptacles.

Because these new ideas had not previously been discussed, Larry suggested we move ahead with a motion to advertise to the BCA membership a motion to approve a kiosk with the exact location to be determined. Some location suggestions included the area near the bus stops or by the Bikeshare stop — in vicinity of Wilson Blvd. and N. George Mason Dr. Some concern was expressed about managing and upkeeping the kiosks adequately. One member raised the point that there are two other kiosks run by other Civic Associations: Quincy Park and Westover. Larry was requested to look into how other civic associations manage these kiosks.

Larry also discussed the N. 8<sup>th</sup> Road project between N. Frederick and Greenbrier Streets on the south side. Tim McIntosh, the County staff member responsible for coordinating with the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC), suggested that County complete the sidewalk on the south side of N. 8<sup>th</sup> Road, which is now incomplete. This could be achieved out of missing links program. While BCA Executive Board members agreed to supporting this via email, Suzanne Sundburg expressed concern with Judah dal Cais filling out the Missing Links application because it is supposed to originate from the homeowner and only approved by BCA President. In this case, the homeowner may not have been notified of the work proposed to affect his property. One meeting participant stated that Tim McIntosh believes no private property would be affected. However, based on previous her conversations with the homeowner, the steepness of the slope (which would require engineering), and the fact that block captain Carl Drummond had asked only for curb and gutter and not a sidewalk in that location, Suzanne believes that fact is not as clear. Hence, a motion was made and seconded for Judah not to fill out the Missing Links application in lieu of the homeowner. Instead, the group suggested the County handle the issue themselves. *[President Judah dal Cais later clarified that anyone on 8<sup>th</sup> Road could request help from the Missing Links program just as Curt Rich had already. If the majority of the homeowners sign the application (which Rich had over 75%?), and the BCA signs the application, then it is forwarded to Arlington County.]*

### **June Elections and Nomination Committee**

Bob Atkins and John Herickhoff are looking for more guidance from Judah and others on what should be done by the Nomination Committee so that they could publish appropriate information in the newsletter. Bob also raised the need for a third committee member and a vote on the composition of the committee, according to the bylaws. Chitra Kumar, who is not running for Secretary again, volunteered to be the third member. The three-member committee was approved by a vote of the membership.

Suzanne Sundburg reported on the Civic Federation's March meeting and handed out her notes (the handout is incorporated below).

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### **Highlights of 3/6/12 Civic Federation Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:30 pm with BCA Delegates Bob Atkins, Sandy Munnell, and Suzanne Sundburg in attendance.

Two member organizations were dropped from the Civic Federation for nonpayment of dues: Arlington Historical Society and Alpha Kappa Gamma.

### **School Board Presentation**

The School Board made a presentation and took delegate questions. The proposed

school budget for fiscal year (FY) 2013 is \$493.8 million, with 80% of that amount covering employee compensation and benefits. Arlington Public Schools (APS) is the county's second largest employer after the federal government. The School Board is awaiting the results of the state's efficiency review of APS operations, which should be available this spring.

The average cost per pupil per year rose 4.2% to \$18,047 over FY 2011. The Superintendent proposed an across-the-board increase in class size by one student to constrain costs and help cope with overenrollment in many schools. [Note: The School Board has since rejected that idea.]

The County Manager's Office worked with APS staff on the revenue-sharing agreement but could not come up with a plan, so essentially there is no longer a formal agreement. Nonetheless, School Board members directed the Superintendent to align his budget with the 46.1% share of county tax revenue that is earmarked for schools.

There will be no step or other employee compensation increases for the next four years. School Board members did not believe that the recent loss of many senior school staff members was significant (many are retiring). The Superintendent's salary is dictated by contract, so he doesn't receive increases in the way other school system employees do.

Board members said that they would not make any school boundary adjustments in the short term to relieve the overenrollment problems. Over the long term, boundaries will be adjusted when new schools come online. The Board discussed the calculations used to project enrollment and said that "no one" predicted the current increase in enrollment.

Sandy Munnell asked Board members whether they were committed to a 1 to 1 ratio or a 5 to 1 ratio for the number of computers in the classroom. Board members support the 1 to 1 ratio but noted the problem of finding the money to pay for it. Also, the school system's computer network suffered a crash last year and needs a significant amount of upgrade to handle more traffic. There are security/firewall problems associated with allowing students to bring computers from home.

### **County Board Candidates' Forum**

Member delegates asked candidates Audrey Clement (G), Libby Garvey (D), and Mark Kelly (R) a number of questions. In response to a question about the county-school revenue-sharing agreement, Kelly said that he would recommend revisiting the revenue-sharing agreement and putting the schools' budget online for transparency. He also recommended establishing an Office of Inspector General that would be able to review county and school budgets to make sure county residents were getting the best value for their tax dollars. Clement said she would recommend upping the school's share of tax revenue to 50% (up from the 46.1% currently received). Garvey said she would like to see a cost-benefit analysis of county programs (like the one already established in the school system) to review their effectiveness.

When asked what cuts they would make to the county budget, Clement said she would eliminate the trolley and beef up bus service along Columbia Pike at one quarter the cost of the trolley. She also recommended nixing the proposed Long Bridge Park Aquatics Center and the black box theater on Fairfax Drive. Kelly said he would not add the 37 new full-time equivalent (FTE) employee slots proposed by the County Manager; he would nix the purchase of the building to house the homeless shelter and county staff (at 40% above its assessed value). Kelly also recommended cutting the tax rate

and cutting funds to the Artisphere. He also advocated more transparency with respect to “closeout funds”—tax revenue that is unallocated and unspent at the end of the fiscal year. Garvey said that it was “not the job” of board members to look at “line items” in the county budget. Just as she has done on the School Board, she recommended “hiring good people” and letting them make the determination on what should be included in the budget. She said that she “questioned” why the county’s emergency reserve funds were “so high.”

In response to a question about their support for the Columbia Pike trolley, Clement opposed the trolley for cost reasons and due to the fact that the accompanying redevelopment would spur loss of affordable housing along the Pike. She noted that of the 1,000 new units built along Columbia Pike in the past two years, all were “luxury” units. Kelly, too, rejected the trolley, describing the project as a “boondoggle” and saying that it would kill off all the market-rate affordable rental units (MARKs) along the Pike. He noted that the county has lost 2/3 of its affordable housing stock over the past two decades. Garvey said that she had several “questions” about the trolley.

### **Sustainability Presentation**

There was a short presentation on sustainability with respect to the plan recommended by the Energy Task Force and approved by the County Board. The plan’s goals include making new and existing buildings more efficient, creating a “district energy” utility company, improving transportation, and increasing the use of solar panels. The district energy plan would create a system to heat/cool buildings in a defined area by constructing a plant to heat/cool water that would then be pumped through the buildings.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:40 pm.

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### **Lubber Run Foundation** — Marsha Lederman and Trisha Freeman:

Marsha and Trisha described how efforts by a committed group saved Lubber Run Amphitheater from being shut down. The Lubber Run Foundation was able to support nine performances last year with 2,400 people who attended Lubber Run Amphitheater concerts last year. They collected some money from the onsite wishing well. This year, the performance season is starting June 15 and will last through the first weekend in August. They have an ongoing line item in the County budget to keep programming going. However, County funding doesn’t cover everything they would like to do, like community acts. The Foundation is hoping to get \$150 pledge of support from each civic association. The Foundation has filed for 501(c)(3) status. They would love to have more community involvement in the form of volunteers and participants.

BCA members suggested a few nonfinancial forms of support, which Marsha and Trisha expressed gratitude for. One was a motion to add a link from the BCA website to the Foundation’s site to promote Amphitheater performances. Another was an offer to put an article or blurb in an upcoming BCA newsletter to announce performances. Finally, there was a motion to formally thank the County Board for including the Amphitheater in the County’s General Fund (operating) budget.

### **Unfinished Business**

No one in attendance had additional information from Judah on his idea of having a

Costco or BJ's membership card as an incentive for BCA membership.  
No other unfinished business was discussed.

### **New Business**

Based on the group's discussion, Suzanne raised the following funding motions so they could be advertised before the next meeting:

- Motion to contribute \$100 to Ashlawn Elementary School for its community day moon bounce (this was raised after some discussion that contributions to Ashlawn were originally made with the understanding that it was a one-time deal, yet the requests have been coming annually)
- Motion to advertise a \$100 budget for the Neighborhood Day barbecue
- Motion to advertise a \$150 donation to Lubber Run Amphitheater and a link from BCA's website to Lubber Run Foundation's (as a 501(c)(3) that benefits our community).

The following nonmonetary motions were also made:

- To advertise linking with the planetarium foundation (a 501(c)(3) organization) as another community resource.
- To advertise a motion to authorize our officers to testify at hearings and write in letters of support for issues during the (10-year) County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process, such as a west entrance to Ballston Metro. Our priorities need to be out front. Need to start talking about details at the next meeting.

[After the meeting, the following language for the above-noted motions was circulated via email to the Executive Board, and a request was made to advertise these motions on the BCA listserv]:

1. [Motion to approve a budget of up to \\$100 for food and supplies for the Neighborhood Day barbecue.](#)
2. [Motion to approve a contribution of up to \\$100 to Ashlawn Elementary School for its Fun Fair event.](#)
3. [Motion to approve a contribution of up to \\$150 to Lubber Run Amphitheater Foundation 501\(c\)\(3\) for supplemental programming.](#)
4. [Motion to approve adding a website link for the Lubber Run Amphitheater Foundation 501\(c\)\(3\) to the BCA Website.](#)
5. [Motion to approve adding a website link for the Friends of Arlington's Planetarium 501\(c\)\(3\) nonprofit organization to the BCA Website.](#)
6. [Motion to authorize BCA officers to advocate on behalf of Bluemont Civic Association members that projects like the west entrance to the Ballston Metro station and other projects of importance to Bluemont be included in the Fiscal Year 2013–2022 Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\) bond issue.](#)
7. [Motion to request a notice kiosk as a microproject, with the stipulation that if the microproject is approved, the kiosk will be placed in a high-traffic area within one of the parks near the intersection of N. George Mason Drive and Wilson Boulevard.](#)

**Adjournment**

Vice-President George Rovder adjourned the meeting at about 9:00 p.m.