

Approved Minutes
BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION
General Membership Meeting
February 27, 2013

In attendance: George Rovder, President; Mark Haynes, 1st VP and Safeway Task Force Co-Chair; Dan Laredo, 2nd VP; Larry Smith, Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) Representative; Suzanne Sundburg, Civic Federation Delegate; Dean Foster and David Hughes, Civic Federation Alternate Delegates; Laura Brothers, Webmaster; Nora Palmatier, Parks & Recreation Liaison; Alan Sundburg, Bylaws Review Committee Chair; Ed Fendley, Sidewalk Safety Task Force Co-Chair; David Van Wagner, Safeway Task Force Co-Chair; and 14 other BCA members.

Rovder called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 pm.

Police Liaison Report/Q&A: Corporal Elizabeth “Beth” Lennon reported an arrest had been made in one of the recent burglaries in Bluemont. In another case, a neighbor saw suspects attempting to open a back door and didn’t report it. Lennon urged residents to call police (nonemergency line, if there’s a question) to report all suspicious activity. Countywide and in Bluemont, larcenies from vehicles are common. Lennon urged residents to keep doors locked and to remove all valuables/items from cars when not in use. Even visible charging cords for GPS units or iPods can tempt thieves. She warned that solicitors going door to door (for yard work, etc.) must have an Arlington County license w/picture ID. Unauthorized solicitors have preyed on the elderly in Bluemont. In answer to a question about the impact of a proposed reduction of police divisions from 3 to 2 and the cut of 7 community police officers in the [FY2014 budget](#), Lennon said that a letter would be coming out to explain those cuts.

President’s Report: Rovder apologized for scheduling error. Consequently, Marymount would not be presenting its [redevelopment plans](#) until the March 21 meeting. He also noted the recently elected members to the Executive Board and asked for volunteers to fill the position of Secretary, now that Mark Haynes was elected to fill the vacancy for 1st VP.

January 23, 2013 Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the January general membership meeting minutes as drafted, and the minutes were approved by voice vote.

Treasurer’s Report: In Treasurer Nancy O’Doherty’s absence, S. Sundburg repeated the report from the Executive Board meeting, stating there were 157 active BCA members with approximately \$200 in dues having been received since the last report. Last year, there were 275 active members. She reminded all lapse members to pay dues, noting that anyone who hadn’t received the blue postcard announcing the Feb. meeting had lapsed over a year ago.

Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Report: Smith noted that the January meeting was canceled, and he missed the February meeting (on Valentine’s Day). Fendley noted Larry’s conversation with county staff member Tim McIntosh who will be coming to discuss potential of selecting the Wilson Blvd. reconfiguration proposal as the BCA’s new first-priority NC project. Smith noted the lack of an active BCA project in the NC funding queue (and no funding points are accruing), saying that if the BCA were to have a project in place in time for the April deadline for the June funding round, the membership would have to have the vote in March. Smith added that whatever was approved must be a viable NC project even if the overall [Sidewalk Safety Task](#)

[Force's Wilson Blvd. reconfiguration proposal](#) ultimately is not approved/funded as a whole. It was explained to members that no projects from the draft NC Plan had been selected because NC projects require a volunteer block captain to canvass the block, obtain a sufficient number of resident signatures and support to approve the proposed project, and then shepherd the project through the NC funding/design/construction process. Despite repeated calls for new NC projects at meetings and in newsletters, no qualified projects had thus far been identified.

Civic Federation Report: S. Sundburg noted that the county board took questions after a brief set of remarks at the Feb. meeting. The most significant question concerned the continued lack of funding for a west entrance to the Ballston Metro stop. Although there is a little bit of money from proposed redevelopment project (which has been on hold since 2006), there is no money earmarked for this purpose in the county's [Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) until 2022. Board member Chris Zimmerman suggested adding a surcharge for travelers using the Ballston station to provide revenue. Sundburg also noted the county's draft zoning ordinance revisions, which CivFed's Planning & Zoning Committee members believe require further study and work. Sundburg distributed several complete copies of her reports on the zoning committee meeting and the general Civic Federation around the room [see Addenda 1 & 2].

NC Plan Update Committee Report: Van Wagner reported that he turned the [NC Plan draft](#) over to the county for a review to ensure all the required components were included. He anticipated meeting with staff on Friday and said that the 200-page document still needed to be designed to make it look nice. Eventually, the document will be posted to the BCA website, giving members and residents a final opportunity to comment on it. Van Wagner will ask the county to confirm the required comment period, but he thought it was at least 30 days. All comments will be included in the document. Then a vote will be held to approve it, and all Bluemont residents (not just members) will be eligible to vote. The NC Plan belongs to the Bluemont community, not the BCA. Van Wagner expressed his hope to receive county approval and have the text document available for member review/comment in time to advertise it in the April newsletter. One member reported difficulty in utilizing/access the comment function on the [NC Plan WordPress page](#). Another member asked the committee to provide more information to members on the approval process and a schedule or timeline of the process.

Safeway Task Force (STF) Report: Haynes relayed the details of his recent phone conversation with developer Mark Silverwood. Haynes was prompted to call Silverwood by the unannounced appearance of a drilling crew taking soil samples and surveyors taking measurements on the Safeway site. (Surveyors also were taking measurements beyond the site in the surrounding neighborhood.) Silverwood confirmed that Safeway had selected his proposal and that he had working with Safeway since last fall to draft redevelopment plans consistent with [Safeway's request for proposal](#). Silverwood characterized the survey and soil-sampling work as "due diligence" tasks being performed before the contracts with Safeway were signed. Silverwood went on to describe his design as taking up the site's full 65,000-sq ft footprint, with a 20-foot ground-floor retail level (for Safeway, Starbucks and another small retailer); 3- and 4-stories of apartments (159 units) above the retail level, including some affordable housing units, with a step-down in height toward the neighborhood; and two levels of underground parking (one for Safeway, one for apartment residents). According to Silverwood, all vehicles would enter/exit the site on N. Edison Street. An additional pedestrian entrance would be located on the N. Frederick Street side of the building. In a separate conversation, Haynes confirmed with Craig Muckle, Safeway's manager of public affairs and government relations in the eastern division,

that Safeway would keep its earlier promises to remain actively involved in negotiations and meetings between the developer and the community.

Van Wagner then presented two position statements on the redevelopment of the Safeway site. In drafting these statements, the task force relied on the 2010 NC Plan Survey results, comments from two well-attended public town hall meetings, consultations with county staff and Safeway representatives, comments posted to the STF's WordPress site, and internal task force deliberations [see Addendum 3].

Sidewalk Safety Task Force Report: Fendley followed up Smith's NCAC report, noting that he had invited county staff member Tim McIntosh to the 3/21/13 meeting to help members decide whether the Wilson Blvd. reconfiguration project would make a suitable NC project. Fendley also noted that the task force had met with Boulevard Manor Civic Association to discuss Wilson's reconfiguration. The next task force meeting will occur on 3/16/13 at Two Chefs.

Then, Fendley read the task force's recommended use of the \$127,000+/- [Peck site plan traffic-calming funds](#). The text of the motion appears below (and was discussed at the 1/23/13 meeting); this motion was seconded and passed by a voice vote:

- [Task force members] "Recommend that the BCA propose to the County that the Peck Site funds be used for traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures in the area of Wakefield, Tazewell, Vermont, and 7th Streets south of Wilson, and the adjacent Wakefield & Wilson intersection. It was noted that in making such a proposal, the BCA could share with the County proposals and comments that were received regarding safety risks, and potential traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures in this area. The County could then be encouraged to develop a more specific plan for disposition of the funds, consulting with the BCA or neighborhood residents as appropriate.

"Task Force members also recommended that, in addition to proposing the Wakefield-Tazewell-Vermont area for use of the Peck Site funds, the BCA propose that the County consider the following steps:

- Address Wilson Boulevard safety concerns via the "Complete Streets" program and other appropriate programs, pursuant to the November decision of the BCA
- Address safety concerns for the Bluemont Junction Trails crossing of Emerson Street by constructing a raised crosswalk, as was done at County initiative for the trail's crossing of Kensington Street. It was noted that the County may wish to do the same at the trail's crossing of Buchanan Street."

[Bylaws Review Committee Report:](#) Due to the late hour, A. Sundburg deferred his report to the March 21 general meeting. In answer to a member's question about the common practice of giving advance notice of controversial votes, Sundburg assured the member that the committee is reviewing that issue as well as others in its deliberations. He invited all members to attend the committee's next meeting on 3/3/13, 9 am, at Two Chefs.

Parks & Rec Liaison Report: Palmatier reported the county's plans to rebuild the picnic shelter and redo the gravel maintenance path in Lacey Woods Park, which she asked to discuss at the March meeting. There is some concern whether the shelter needs to be rebuilt and whether

the designs are in keeping with the forested section of the park. She also noted that a decision on the private Parks Enhancement Grant (PEG) application for a bocce court now rests with the [Park & Recreation Commission](#) and the [County Board](#). Palmatier noted that the association couldn't mandate whether the county will or won't install a bocce court, and it is no longer an association matter. She added that the county plans to cut \$900,000 from the parks division's [FY2014 budget](#). Per questions about possible encroachment of trees on parkland adjacent to the Jessup property, Palmatier stated that there was little she could do about the trees; that decision will be up to county staff.

A motion was made to adjourn at approximately 9:25 pm. It was seconded and passed by a voice vote.

Addendum 1

February 5, 2013, Civic Federation Meeting Highlights

Present were delegates Bob Atkins and Suzanne Sundburg and BCA member David Hughes, who has volunteered as a Civic Federation alternate delegate and is awaiting the Executive Board's confirmation.

President James Schroll notified delegates of a proposed change to budget report special rule that governs the annual county budget review meeting in April. Visit <http://civfed.com/home/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Newsletter-2013.2.pdf> (p. 2) to read a copy of the proposed change.

County Board Program

Board members made opening remarks and then answered delegates' questions. Chair Walter Tejada noted that real estate assessments are "flat," hinting that there would be some belt-tightening in the 2014 budget. He listed the following priorities for the board in 2013: 1) affordable housing, 2) 10-year plan to end homelessness, 3) fitness and healthy living, 4) urban agriculture, and 5) pedestrian/cyclist safety.

In response to questions about affordable housing and reduction of homelessness goals, the board blamed "market forces" on the loss of affordable housing. Tejada noted that the board's goals are "aspirational."

In response to a question about how the board might accelerate a west entrance to the Ballston Metro (new funds will be sought in FY2022), the board said that the "best hope" would be for a developer to propose a large project on the site (of the old INS building) and to pay for the needed infrastructure. Barring that, Chris Zimmerman suggested that a surcharge might be charged to riders using the Ballston station to obtain funding and/or Ballston Improvement District (BID) commercial members might be charged an additional tax to raise money.

One questioner expressed concern about the transfer of development rights (TDRs)—over 600,000 sq ft of density—from Long Bridge Park to the Penn Place site (in Crystal City), asking whether the zoning was designed to accommodate TDRs or vice versa. Board member Chris Zimmerman replied that this density transfer is a "tool" that is consistent with the General Land Use Plan (GLUP).

Another delegate asked the board to define what "community" meant with respect to the site plan development term "community benefits" was concerned, as her neighborhood hadn't seen any benefits from recent development and was mystified as to what these "benefits" were and who got them. The board responded that the benefits weren't always obvious and included streetscape improvements, crosswalks, contributions to affordable housing, contributions to the distributed energy plan, public art, transit subsidies, etc.

Members of the board took opposing sides (Libby Garvey on one side, the rest of board members on the other) when answering a question on the Columbia Pike streetcar. Garvey insisting that bus rapid transit should be more thoroughly investigated and that the process should be made more open to allow for public input and debate. Hynes and others insisted that the decision had already been vetted and approved by the commissions and the board and would not be reconsidered. An informational "town hall" on the streetcar will be held on March 27 at Kenmore Middle School.

A delegate living near Lee Highway expressed concern that dense redevelopment was slated for that corridor. Board members said that there was no "plan" but that "some people" are "beginning to look at a better way" for the corridor to be redeveloped. The same questioner asked when the 35-foot height limit on residentially zoned property would actually be something close to 35 feet—complaining about the excessive height of McMansions in her neighborhood. Jay Fisetite replied that height was calculated based on an "average" of the "topography" of the lot.

Homelessness Program

County staff member Tony Turnage gave a presentation on homelessness. In response to multiple questions about outsiders coming to Arlington for housing services, Turnage assured delegates that the county documents residency status by asking for eviction notices or utility bills in the client's name, finding out where clients are obtaining other services (usually, they are getting some other kind of public assistance), determining whether they have children enrolled in Arlington Public Schools, etc. For those living on the streets, county staff must be able to document that the person can be found consistently at a particular outdoor spot in Arlington for at least 90 days and are not collecting public assistance benefits elsewhere. Turnage noted that the rapid rehousing program has been successful in rehousing the chronically homeless, and he asked all present to do more to help reduce the serious problem of homelessness.

Addendum 2

February 17, 2013, Planning & Zoning Committee Meeting: Noise Ordinance

Bob Atkins, Dean Foster, and I attended the most recent meeting of the Civic Federation's Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Committee. The topic was the revised noise ordinance and the changes proposed by P&Z to correct some significant oversights and weaknesses.

I don't normally sit on P&Z but have been staying in the loop on this particular issue (at Co-Chair Martha Moore's invitation) because we've had so many chronic noise problems in Bluemont over the years: A lot of noise complaints involve activity on commercial property (typically restaurants and bars) but we've had problems associated with construction-related noise as well as the out-of-control party noise at rental/group houses.

My concern is increasing for two reasons: 1) County staff appears to be ignoring P&Z's attempts to iron out some of the problems with the county's proposed language. 2) County staff appears to be circumventing the Civic Federation entirely and bringing its original (Oct. 15, 2012) version of the revised ordinance directly to civic associations for review and comment, without incorporating a single change proposed by P&Z. **And the county board may take this up as early as its March 16 meeting.**

Why is this a problem? First, because P&Z members have in-depth knowledge of the previous ordinance and the county's proposed revisions, as well as expertise in zoning regulations. We don't. Second, if we do not respond in some way, county staff can claim that it has our tacit approval of the ordinance as the county drafted it. After all, staff has done its due diligence by visiting the civic association at its Jan. meeting and has offered to come back to answer questions and discuss the revisions. That's enough to satisfy the county's "process" requirement for approving the ordinance as currently drafted.

In a nutshell, there are two main problems with the revised ordinance as drafted by the county:

1) The revised ordinance flip-flops where noise is to be measured. Instead of measuring the noise at the receiving site, as was the previous practice, noise will henceforth be measured from the *sending* site. The ordinance is to be based on zoning "districts," but those districts that often produce a large percentage of disturbing noise (typically commercial properties) have much looser noise restrictions. Essentially, the decibel level of a noise you are experiencing outside or inside your home has been rendered irrelevant. **If a noise being produced falls within the limits of its own zoning district (where the noise originates), you have no recourse or expectation of relief under the county's version of the noise ordinance no matter how loud that noise might be, day or night.**

2) Although the county is basing its revised ordinance on zoning districts, the list of districts in the county's revised version is incomplete. Relatively new zoning categories—for example, **R-C and mixed-use zoning districts**, which are now very prevalent—**would essentially have no noise restrictions at all under the county's current draft.**

The county's draft does include language to cover dogs barking and a couple of other positive changes. But it also has removed lawn mowers, leaf blowers (all outdoor motorized lawn equipment) from the ordinance. It has removed special low-noise restrictions for areas next to hospitals and the hospice facilities. There is no special restriction on construction pile driving. (P&Z is asking, at a minimum, that pile driving be separately permitted and that affected communities be given notice.) Construction noise can exceed OSHA's limit of 85 decibels. There is no exemption to allow emergency generator use (if it exceeds ordinance limits) for single-family homes; however, there is an exemption for multifamily properties to utilize what are typically larger and noisier generators.

I know we have an ambitious agenda for Wednesday night's meeting, but this may be the membership's last opportunity to weigh in on an issue that is important to many. If nothing else, I would ask the Executive Board to take this matter up under old business and ask the membership's permission to draft a letter to the county withholding the BCA's approval of the county's revised noise ordinance (the Oct. 2012 draft) until such times as county staff reviews and provides a comprehensive response to the changes proposed by the Civic Federation's P&Z Committee.

Send comments on the ordinance to Gary Green at 703-228-3232 or codeenforcement@arlingtonva.us and copy the county board at CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us. To see an overview of the changes recommended by the P&Z Committee, visit http://www.civfed.org/Noise-6-Ordinance_Revisions_11-12-2012.pdf.

**Options A and B for the Bluemont Civic Association
Position on the Wilson Blvd Safeway Property Redevelopment**
(IMPORTANT: the first four paragraphs are common to both Options A and B)

The Bluemont neighborhood is overwhelmingly comprised of single-family and other low-density housing. The residents of Bluemont highly value this community characteristic and the lifestyle associated with it.

The residents of Bluemont have enjoyed and benefited from the location of the Safeway grocery store on Wilson Blvd and strongly support the modernization of that store and the possible addition of additional retail and services to the location. We recognize that a redevelopment of the Safeway property could bring with it additional community benefits such as a coffee shop, new green space or gathering locations, wider and more convenient sidewalks, undergrounded utilities, street trees and/or additional parking.

Further, the Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) supports the concept of a Westover-like "village center" that is small scale, pedestrian friendly and has a variety of local businesses and restaurants, and for which a re-developed Safeway could be a centerpiece. In this regard, the BCA also supports its existing local businesses.

With the exception of the edge development along Glebe Road in Ballston, there are currently no commercial buildings above two stories in the Bluemont neighborhood. We believe that a tall commercial building would be out of character in Bluemont, particularly when it is immediately adjacent to single-family residential homes. This point has been emphasized on two recent surveys of Bluemont residents.

OPTION A CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

Absent very careful planning and safeguards, a redeveloped Safeway property would bring with it increased density, traffic, parking issues in adjacent residential streets, noise, large trucks on adjoining streets accessing the loading dock and potentially serious traffic and safety concerns with the Arlington Traditional School. These impacts would negatively impact the quality of life in the Bluemont neighborhood.

Therefore, the BCA will object to redevelopment beyond the existing C-1 zoning classification unless we have strong assurances that negative impacts to the neighborhood will not occur or will be mitigated. Further, the BCA will oppose a structure higher than 45 feet under any circumstance. The BCA and Bluemont residents look forward to addressing these important issues with Safeway and its chosen developer throughout the redevelopment process.

OPTION B CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

Absent very careful planning, limits and safeguards, a redeveloped Safeway property would bring with it increased density, traffic, parking issues in adjacent residential streets, noise, large trucks on adjoining streets accessing the loading dock and potentially serious traffic and safety concerns with the Arlington Traditional School. These impacts would negatively impact the quality of life in the Bluemont neighborhood.

Therefore, the BCA objects to redevelopment beyond the existing C-1 zoning classification. The BCA and Bluemont residents look forward to addressing these important issues with Safeway and its chosen developer throughout the redevelopment process.

Background for BCA Safeway Property Redevelopment Positions A and B

Under its Charter, the Safeway Task Force (STF) has been charged with the task of helping the Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) develop a position with respect to possible Safeway redevelopment in order to help ensure that the Bluemont neighborhood is best served by any such redevelopment.

Consistent with that charge, the STF is offering "Safeway Position Statements" for a BCA membership vote that would, if adopted, be promptly issued to appropriate Arlington County and Safeway representatives and would guide the BCA in future dealings with those representatives and any eventual developer of the Safeway site. The STF derived the proposed Position Statements from BCA's 2010 Neighborhood Conservation Plan Survey, two large public Town Hall meetings, consultation with County and Safeway representatives, input through the STF website and internal deliberations.

The STF proposes that the BCA consider its recommended Position Statements in the following manner. First, the BCA conduct a vote as to the preferred option between Position Statement A and B. Next, the BCA conduct a straight up-or-down vote on whether to adopt the preferred Position Statement as a Position Statement of the BCA.