

**Bluemont Civic Association
Draft Minutes
Executive Board Meeting
July 10, 2013
Fire Station #2**

NOTE: This off-schedule meeting of the BCA Executive Board was arranged after Safeway accepted an invitation from the BCA to discuss the next steps for Bluemont's Safeway. The sole agenda item was the discussion of Safeway's redevelopment plans for Bluemont's Safeway.

In attendance:

Avis Black, Area Real Estate Manager, Eastern Division, Safeway
Craig Muckle, Manager, Public Affairs and Government Relations
Michelle Shelton, Real Estate Representative, Eastern Division, Safeway

George Rovder, President, BCA
Mark Haynes, First Vice President, BCA
Larry Smith, Second Vice President, BCA
Suzanne Sundburg, Civic Federation Delegate
David Hughes, Civic Federation Delegate
Craig Deering, Civic Federation Alternate
And approximately 9 BCA members, including Paul Ducharme, Judy Collins, Sam and Dorothy Ferro, Bob Waffle, Patty and James Hammond, Lisa Van Wagner, and Stuart Jessup

President Rovder called the Meeting to order at approximately 6:00 pm.

The BCA representatives thanked the Safeway representatives for attending.

Rovder began the meeting by introducing the new officers and Executive Board members who were present. He recapped the process as it had occurred up to the present, noting that the BCA had learned through hearsay that developer Mark Silverwood had pulled out of the project and was subsequently able to confirm it after Haynes contacted Muckle

Avis Black reported that Safeway is "considering its options" w/regard to the redevelopment of the Bluemont store and that she had no details for us at this point.

When asked why Silverwood withdrew, Ms. Black stated that there were a variety of reasons, including the views of the Civic Association and the fact that the development will require a lot of money. She stated that Silverwood "had his reasons" and she was "not in a position to speak for him."

Executive Board members re-emphasized that there was overwhelming support in the neighborhood and in the Civic Association for Safeway and for a more modern store. It was also made clear that the Civic Association wanted to work closely with Safeway.

When asked whether Safeway was working with another developer, Black repeated that Safeway was "considering its options."

When asked whether a new developer would present an entirely new plan or would recycle the Silverwood plan, Black said that she did not know.

An attendee asked about Safeway's process, what the timeframe would be, and whether decisions would be made locally or would involve the corporate headquarters. Black responded, saying only that the corporate office must be involved.

When asked whether it would be possible to consider rebuilding the store without apartment units on top, Ms. Black said that she did not think the economics of this particular location would allow for that.

When it was pointed out that Safeway has rebuilt stores in other locations (including in the D.C. area) without living units on top, Ms. Black stated that each site must be evaluated on its own and that the Bluemont store was more of a "neighborhood" store than a regional store that draws customers from a broader area. Hence, paying for the underground parking, which she stated could cost as much as \$7 million, forced them to consider living units on top of the store.

When asked about the at-grade parking at the soon-to-be redeveloped store on King Street in Alexandria, Black said that she would "not comment" on other projects.

When asked whether Safeway would consider a store size that would be larger than the existing store, but smaller than the new standard 60,000 square foot "Lifestyle" Safeway, Ms. Black stated that was not at all likely because their customers expect a full range of services when they visit a store.

When asked what was the smallest Lifestyle store that Safeway had built, Black replied that she wasn't aware of any new stores that were not full size.

When asked how Safeway would mitigate the project's impact on the nearby residents of Carlisle Park, Black responded by saying that she didn't know what impact there would be.

When asked if Safeway is considering closing its store in Bluemont, Ms. Black said that that would be "the last decision we would ever want to make with any store," but stated that she could not speak to the Bluemont store specifically.

When asked whether Silverwood had provided information on his subsurface soil and other conditions, Black replied that she couldn't comment on that.

In a follow-up question, Black was asked specifically about the underground water flow tests performed on April 30 and if an underground stream or river was present what would happen to all that water if it were diverted by an underground garage. Black responded by saying that would be "up to the engineers" to determine.

It was noted that in the negotiations for the Peck-Staples site plan, the community sought and was granted a height limit of 50 feet to transition down to adjacent single-family homes.

When asked whether Safeway could simply put on an addition to the existing store, Black replied that the existing store comprised 25,000 sq ft and that Safeway would have to double the square footage. She said that Safeway couldn't put on enough of an addition that would be "large enough to work."

Another attendee questioned the apparent contradiction between the large number of parking spaces that seemed to undercut the argument that the proposed store would be a "neighborhood" store, as described. Black suggested that perhaps there was a difference in understanding of what was meant by the term "neighborhood."

To follow up, an attendee expressed confusion over the seeming inconsistency of Safeway's terminology of "neighborhood" versus a "regional" store. He asked why the same square footage pertained both to what Safeway calls a neighborhood and a regional store. Black responded saying that to provide full service required a certain amount of square footage. She said the existing store "does not meet the needs of most residents" and that the general trend is for customers to shop in a full-service store.

An attendee expressed concern about the impact of traffic from a larger store and asked whether Safeway's goals or requirements changed since Silverwood's withdrawal. Black said she didn't know how to answer that question, but repeated that Safeway couldn't do a store without a residential component.

In follow-up another attendee noted the community's concern about the cumulative impact of all the development in the community that Safeway's redevelopment was likely to trigger.

When asked how many levels of parking the Waterfront Safeway in DC had, Black replied that it had just one level of parking. The questioner remarked that the Waterfront store's redeveloped building stands just 40 feet taller than what has been proposed for Bluemont's store, but whereas the Waterfront store sits on top of a Metro station, Bluemont's store is approximately 1 mile from Metro.

Black was asked about the new store/site in Oakland, CA, that featured street-level and rooftop parking, no residential component, and a separate stand-alone building with other retail. Black replied that she "couldn't speak to Oakland." She also said that any structured parking situation would require a residential component to offset the cost because the store would not draw as many customers.

When asked about the imminent renovation of the Safeway in nearby Cherrydale, which would involve no residential component, Black declined to make any comment.

Rovder commented that he was hearing BCA and community members ask "Why us?" due to the very different way that Safeway was redeveloping its other properties elsewhere compared to its proposal for the Bluemont site.

He added that the old architectural drawings that had previously appeared on the BCA website were simply one member's idea of what redevelopment could look like along Bluemont's commercial corridor, but Rovder emphasized that those drawings had never

been voted on and thus had never been approved or endorsed by the BCA membership. He apologized for any confusion the drawings may have caused.

When asked if Safeway would consider some kind of “idea session” or open forum with the BCA to discuss possible design ideas, Black seemed interested in the concept but was noncommittal.

When asked whether in the next proposal Safeway would consider community feedback that had been given, Black replied that Safeway was taking the feedback into consideration.

Rovder invited member Sam Ferro to speak about a separate group in Bluemont unrelated to the civic association called Bluemont Forward. Ferro repeated the group’s URL and stated its premise that increased density in Bluemont would be good for the neighborhood.

Rovder and other encouraged Safeway to work with the BCA prior to announcing its next proposed design to help ensure neighborhood support. The Safeway representatives seemed to agree that this was a good idea.

Representatives of the BCA thanked the Safeway representatives for their attendance and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 pm.