

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes**

**Executive Board Meeting**

**August 28, 2013**

**Fire Station #2**

Attending: George Rovder, President; Mark Haynes, First Vice-President; Larry Smith, Second Vice President; Laura Kirkconnell Secretary; Nancy O'Doherty, Treasurer; Suzanne Sundburg and Terry Serie, Civic Federation Delegates; Lizbet Boroughs, volunteer liaison with residents most directly affected by BCA traffic-calming proposals near the Peck-Staples site; Ed Fendley, Sidewalk Safety Task Force Co-chair and Alternate Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Advisory Committee Representative; Dean Foster and James McMullin, Alternate Civic Federation Delegates; Richard "Ritch" Viola, Arlington County

Rovder called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. The Executive Board unanimously approved the agenda for the meeting.

**(1) Guest Speaker: Richard Viola, Planning Section County Supervisor, Arlington County DES** was on hand to discuss the use of JBG/Peck-Staples site plan traffic-calming funds for proposed projects along Wakefield/Vermont/Tazewell/7<sup>th</sup> Streets and Wilson Blvd.

Fendley reviewed why Viola had been invited to speak about the site plan traffic-calming funds: County staff had asked the Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) for ideas on use of the money that had been set aside for traffic calming and pedestrian safety in the neighborhood as part of the JBG/Peck-Staples site redevelopment. The BCA asked the Sidewalk Safety Task Force to make recommendations. The community was asked to submit proposals via e-mail and the BCA newsletter. The County recommended that the BCA request traffic-calming measures near the Peck-Staples site (Wilson and Glebe). The Task Force received many recommendations, which they sent to the BCA with a recommendation to prioritize measures near the Peck-Staples site. The Task Force suggested that the BCA seek other means to investigate recommendations for measures not near the Peck-Staples site. BCA members agreed, sent the recommendations to the County, and asked the County to vet the proposals with nearby residents. Boroughs volunteered as a liaison with the local residents. Jeff Sykes worked with the County to vet the recommendations.

Viola said the funds set aside for this this project were \$127,000. Some small projects had been identified but did not meet the standards for traffic calming, or the speed on the streets was too low to qualify for traffic-calming funds. He noted that these funds could be used for pedestrian safety and curb placement.

Boroughs discussed the dangers of the Wilson Blvd.-Vermont St. intersection, including dangers to pedestrians and cars caused by the back-up of traffic from the Wilson-Glebe intersection. The back-up for the left-turn lanes on Wilson is so long that cars are turning onto Wakefield Street (north of Wilson) and using that traffic signal to help them get a space in the queue. She asked that safety measures for the Wilson-Vermont intersection be considered. Viola said the Glebe-Wilson intersection will be rebuilt under an ongoing project, and the County would look into how that would affect the problem.

Sundburg discussed how the pedestrian light at 9<sup>th</sup> Street causes cars to back up on Glebe, which exacerbates the back-ups on Wilson Blvd. and endangers pedestrians. She noted that Transportation Commission and BCA member Ellen Armbruster had raised this matter with the County months before and that retiming of lights in the area had been previously discussed and suggested. Boroughs had suggested a turn study be performed for Wilson and Vermont, but staff informed her of pending construction. Viola promised to have a traffic engineer look into these matters.

Also noted was the fact that 28 townhomes on the site are still under construction and not yet occupied; approximately 40% of the Peck building is still unoccupied; the Montessori preschool program at The Jordan is set to begin; and the Virginia Tech conference center on the ground floor of the Peck building will begin operations in the near future. Thus, the traffic load on intersections and streets in the area will almost certainly increase.

Boroughs and Serie described how the BCA recommendation to paint lane lines on Vermont at the Wilson intersection would reduce a dangerous situation. The recommendation was for lane markings to allow a quick right turn east onto Wilson, and a

dedicated left turn lane. The street width makes this possible. Cars sometimes line up that way now, but without lane markings it only takes one vehicle to line up in the wrong place to block cars trying to turn. The BCA had raised this lane painting as a priority for funding under the 2008 Peck-Staples Site Plan study and sent the County an extensive memo with photos. Residents are concerned that the County seems to be ignoring this recommendation. The BCA had been told that the County would address this lane painting as part of these traffic-calming funds, and they urged that this lane painting be done before other projects. Viola said he had a better understanding of the lane painting request based on the information given at this meeting. He said he would get back to the BCA about the lane painting, but he noted that lane painting would not exhaust the funds. Boroughs and Serie also asked that the pedestrian crosswalks on the south side of Wilson at Vermont and Wakefield Streets be painted/repainted.

Fendley said the BCA had made a number of suggestions that did not involve lane painting. Viola said the most significant of the BCA proposals was for sidewalk on Wakefield south of Wilson, and that the sidewalk along 7<sup>th</sup> Street was also a priority for the County. Fendley noted that these improvements would coincide with the prioritized list submitted to the County by the BCA. Viola noted that residents might not favor these sidewalk projects because of the required easements, narrowing of the streets or limiting parking that would be required. He offered that the County could finish the sidewalk along Vermont with an easement or eliminating parking. Boroughs noted that Vermont already has sidewalk along the one side of the street, making it less of a safety concern than Wakefield and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. Viola agreed.

Fendley noted that BCA had voted and requested sidewalk for Wakefield, so the County should try to provide sidewalk on Wakefield and other streets that had no sidewalk on either side. If that proves not possible, the BCA can consider alternatives.

The Board and Viola concluded that the BCA's suggestions were first to paint the requested lanes at Vermont and Wilson and then to look at what could be done to add a sidewalk along Wakefield. Viola said that maybe the County could also look at signal timing.

Rovder noted that the consensus of the Board was for the County to go full speed ahead on lane painting at Vermont and Wilson, using some of the \$127,000 if needed so there is no further delay, and to report back to the BCA; that Fendley will re-send the BCA recommendations for the use of the funds, and start connecting the County with residents to consult about sidewalks on Wakefield.

Viola agreed to the Board's suggestion to do a walk-around with residents. The time set was September 14 starting at the corner of Vermont and Wilson at 9 AM.

#### **Approval of the Minutes, Executive Board special (Safeway) meeting of 07-10-13**

The Board unanimously approved the draft of the minutes without further changes.

#### **Approval of the Minutes, Executive Board meeting of 07-24-13**

The Board unanimously approved the draft of the minutes without further changes.

#### **Summary Reports of Officers:**

**President:** Rovder said he was giving the Secretary (Kirkconnell) one of the keys to the BCA's PO Box, (PO Box 5134 at Westover).

Rovder said he had named Ed Fendley as an Alternate Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee Representative. He will back up Chris Healey at NC meetings, and Rovder sent a letter to NCAC's staff liaison, Tim McIntosh. This position does not make Fendley a voting member of the Executive Board.

Rovder reported on his attendance at the Site Plan Review Meeting for the Marymount project (at Fairfax and Glebe) and said a report would appear in the next BCA newsletter. He said the Vice President of Marymount invited him to coffee, and Rovder said yes if others in the community also joined. Rovder said he would reissue the offer to Marymount and would tell the

Executive Board of the date(s). Rovder said at least two Executive Board members needed to be at this coffee. He said he told the Marymount Vice President that the BCA position on the site plan would be set by the BCA, and no one on the Executive Board can convey a position until the BCA membership has voted. Rovder asked for the Board's concurrence in calling for volunteers to serve on a Marymount Site Plan Review Committee Task Force at the BCA's September meeting, which Board members supported.

**First Vice President:** Haynes reported that the microphone and amplifier for BCA meetings would cost around \$30 to \$50. The Board unanimously voted to approve up to \$50 being spent for this purpose.

**Secretary:** Kirkconnell asked to whom she should send the agenda for Executive Board meetings prior to the meetings. The Board agreed she should send the agenda to the Executive Board distribution list, Task Force and Committee chairs, liaisons, and invited speakers.

**Treasurer:** O'Doherty said she had closed the PayPal account, which had \$42 in it. She reviewed why closing the account was the only way under PayPal procedures to get a person's private information off the account. She said she was looking at other ways to restore BCA's ability to take on-line payments. Everyone affected had been informed. She hoped that BCA's new webmaster would be able to take over the PayPal account. She also hoped the BCA membership list would be cleaned up before the next newsletter mailing. She suggested that volunteer Laura West may be able to help with the membership list, which needs to be updated and migrated to a new format because the current Excel spreadsheet format is very time consuming and cumbersome to work with.

Rovder reviewed problems with PayPal, saying that many improvements in the technology had occurred since the BCA had set up its PayPal payment system and that the current set-up did not meet the requirements of the BCA bylaws. The new online payment system will incorporate the latest features and will better serve members and the organization. Sundburg said the BCA Bylaws Review Committee would propose eliminating the pro-rating of dues payments in the bylaws to reduce the Treasurer's workload and simplify the collection of dues payments.

**Civic Federation:** Foster reported that he had written and submitted an electronic report to recap the June Civic Federation meeting and that no meetings had occurred since. Sundburg mentioned the Civic Federation Planning and Zoning Committee's work to assist County staff with the revision of the County's Noise Ordinance. The Noise Ordinance directly affects enforcement problems with outdoor seating at Union Jack's (now closed) and the Greene Turtle.

**Sidewalk Safety Task Force Chair:** Fendley said Chris Healey would talk to County staff member Tim Mackintosh who had said the spring (June) 2014 funding round might be viable for BCA's priority project (originally, the December 2013 funding round was suggested), and that the Sidewalk Safety Task Force would meet Saturday, September 21. Dennis Leach, County Director of Transportation will be at BCA's September 26 General Membership meeting.

**Safeway Task Force Chair:** Mark Haynes said he would be sending an e-mail soon to Task Force members because BCA needed to re-engage with the County to remind them of the BCA position and to see what County staff may have heard from Safeway.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

(a) **Newsletter Advertising Rates and Procedures:** Sundburg reported that once she finishes redoing the ad rate sheet, Cindy Matlack will send it to Sundburg who will forward it to the Board. Rovder thanked people for their contributions to newsletter articles. Sundburg had circulated the draft of the September issue to the Board and authors of the articles. She said she would finalize it today (August 28) unless she heard further requests for changes, because the newsletter was due to the designer on August 29.

(b) **BLPC/School Construction:** The Board unanimously voted to approve Rovder's nomination of Larry Smith as BCA's rep to the McKinley Elementary School Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC). For Ashlawn Elementary School, the BLPC does not appear to still be meeting. If it is meeting, the BCA will want a representative on that committee or any construction-related committee. Boroughs, whose child attends Ashlawn, agreed to find out whether construction-related meetings are taking place.

- (c) **Marymount Redevelopment:** Those present agreed this item had been sufficiently covered in the President’s report.
- (d) **Safeway Redevelopment:** The upcoming meeting of the Safeway Task Force was noted. Rovder invited Fendley to speak. Fendley said the non-BCA group Bluemont Forward had been reaching out to the County, Planning Commission members, Safeway, and potential developers but had nothing to report. Rovder said BCA had not meet with potential developers and asked what Bluemont Forward was hearing. Fendley said he had heard the same rumor that one or more developers were interested in the Safeway site, but Safeway had not chosen one. They all needed density to make the project work financially. The ball was in Safeway’s court. Serie asked whether developers were willing to consider retail or office space, and it was noted that Safeway does not want retail outside its store. He speculated that Safeway may want residential density in order to make money off the site and may be lobbying the County, County Board, and Planning Commission to get higher density. He explained that it was very expensive to file a site plan—between \$500,000 and \$1 million—so a developer would not file a plan until he thought he had at least 3 of the County Board members leaning to approve additional density. Safeway and its developer would hold extensive meetings and dialogs with key County staff members to ensure the County was leaning toward granting additional density before the BCA would see a proposal. Serie suggested that BCA invite County Board members one by one to BCA meetings to hear the BCA position, which reflects BCA concerns about density. He also noted that the County had eliminated the ½-mile “bulls-eye” that restricted dense redevelopment to within a half mile of Metro stations. Sundburg noted that County staff have a record of pushing for the highest density possible, including a couple of months ago when they ignored the Buckingham Community Civic Association’s NC Plan and applied R-C zoning next to a single-family residence with only one day’s notice and no discussion. The County might look at R-C zoning for the Safeway site.
- (e) **The Springs 7-29-13 Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) Meeting:** Sundburg reported that several meeting attendees had questioned the need for R-C zoning on the site. As part of the Quincy Street Addendum to the long-range plan for the entire block, this site was to have a height limit of 5 stories. R-C zoning allows for a building height of up to 95 feet (excluding any bonus density). The Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) proposes a 72-foot-high building with 104 apartments, the majority of which will be affordable. This 5-story building with its 14-foot penthouse level will sit next to a single-family home, which several attendees felt violated the spirit of the height limit in the long-range plan. Buckingham’s civic association and other residents also objected to the inadequate set-backs on all side of the site and the excessive coverage of the site with impermeable surfaces. Rovder asked for volunteers to attend the next meeting, which is in September. Larry Smith said he would attend the next meeting if he were in town.
- (f) **Marymount Redevelopment SPRC:** Smith recommended that the BCA ask for a second entrance to the Ballston metro as a community benefit in exchange for the increased density the applicant is requesting. Rovder said this redevelopment proposal would be discussed at the September 26 General Membership meeting, when members would be asked to volunteer for a task force to develop the BCA’s position. A second metro entrance would be on the list of community benefits that the BCA could consider requesting.
- (g) **Website:** The new webmaster, Jonn Lau, will provide a couple of new designs for the Executive Board to consider.
- (h) **Bylaws:** Bylaws Review Committee Chair Alan Sundburg wrote an article for the newsletter. The Committee is looking at several proposed changes to the bylaws.
- (i) **Wilson Blvd. Reconfiguration:** Those presented agreed this item had been covered sufficiently in earlier discussion.
- (j) **Newsletter:** Those present agreed that this item had been sufficiently covered in earlier discussion.
- (k) **BCA Records Management:** Kirkconnell said Rovder would be bringing her the old boxes of BCA records.
- (l) **Hen-keeping and other recommendations in the Urban Agriculture Report:** Sundburg reported that the Civic Federation was planning to poll of members at its October 1 meeting on the proposal to allow up to four hens in Arlington yards. She asked whether the Executive Board wanted delegates to take a particular position on this controversial matter. Rovder invited Fendley, a hen-keeping proponent, to talk about the recommendation and asked his opinion. After discussion, the Board

agreed that this was not an issue unique to Bluemont, so it does not require a BCA position. Fendley concurred that it would be appropriate for delegates to vote their conscience on this issue at the October Civic Federation meeting.

**New Business:**

**(a) Greene Turtle Live Entertainment and Dance Hall Permit (LEDP) permit:** Kirkconnell noted that the draft letter she circulated to the Board via e-mail was based on the July 2012 BCA letter sent when the applicant first applied for the permit. The Board approved the 2013 draft letter's reaffirmation of BCA's position. Serie urged the Board to stress moving the seating to Glebe Road, which the owner had agreed to do, but County staff had prevented. He said that moving the outdoor seating to Glebe and renewing the permit for one year were the main points. Another reason for renewing for one year is that the townhomes near the site are not even built yet, so BCA cannot assess the full impact of live entertainment on Bluemont residents. Rovder said he would send the letter after making some minor stylistic changes.

**(b) Emergency Preparedness Regional Blackout Community Exercise September 24, 2013:** Sundburg asked the BCA to send an announcement out on the listserv to advertise this September 24, 7 pm, meeting at the Arlington Central Library. The exercise is to prepare citizens for long-term electrical grid failure.

Rovder adjourned the meeting at 8:40 PM.