

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**  
**Final Minutes**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**November 20, 2013**  
**The Jordan, 801 N. Wakefield**

Attendance: Sign-up sheets are available from the BCA Secretary. Twenty-one attendees are listed.

Executive Board; Committee, Working Group or Task Force attending: George Rovder, President; Mark Haynes, First Vice-President; Larry Smith, Second Vice-President; Nancy ODoherty, Treasurer; Laura Kirkconnell Secretary; David Hughes, Suzanne Sundburg and Terry Serie, Civic Federation Delegates; John Lau, Webmaster; Nora Palmatier, Parks and Recreation Liaison; Ed Fendley, NCAC Alternate; David Van Wagner, Newsletter distribution and NCP Update Committee

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

**(1) Charles Meng, Executive Director, Arlington Food Assistance Center**

Thanked Bluemont residents for their support of the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC). The Safeway at 5100 Wilson is the biggest donor to the Assistance Center thanks to donations from its customers. AFAC was founded 26 years ago and served about 200 families in 1988. Today it serves 1711 families, all Arlington residents. It will feed anyone once, but requires them to go to the County Department of Human Services (DHS) to prove residence and be referred back to AFAC for further assistance. People in need of food assistance usually have other needs such as housing and medical, so DHS can evaluate the person's full needs. Once a week, AFAC clients select the kind of food their family will eat. AFAC gives out 5600 pounds of food a week, about 4 to 5 million pounds a year. Sixty percent is donated, the rest (fresh produce, milk, eggs) is bought. AFAC helps people make healthier choices about what they eat. Their clients are elderly people on fixed incomes, disabled people who lack jobs, other unemployed/under employed/minimum wage/part time workers with no benefits. A minimum wage worker in Arlington would need to work 44 hours a week just to cover the median rent of \$1600 a month. Congress has reduced funding for food assistance (SNAP) by \$5 billion, which is \$36 a month for a family of four. Because of this recent change, AFAC may be seeing its largest share of families this week. It was feeding 125 families a day. On Monday it served 186, on Tuesday 196 and on this Wednesday 165.

In response to a question, Meng explained AFAC's backpack program to provide food for homeless children in Arlington public schools to take home over the weekend. There are 300 homeless children at any one time. There is a pilot program to provide food for children with homes, but receiving free lunches, to take home on weekends and holidays as well. There are 29,000 children in Arlington's public schools. One-third receive free or reduced price lunches. AFAC does not know if it can provide food for all of them over weekends and holidays, so it started a pilot program in the neediest schools.

Meng also discussed AFAC's Plant a Row program, which gives people seeds so they can grow vegetables if they agree to give one row of produce to AFAC.

In response to a question, Meng said they received about 120,000 pounds a month in donated good, including from all major grocery stores in Arlington.

In response to another question, Meng said people could donate to AFAC by writing a check, or on line at [www.afac.org](http://www.afac.org)

In response to a question, Meng said AFAC was giving out 1600 turkeys with stuffing and 500 whole chickens.

## **(2) Approval of the Agenda and Minutes**

Members unanimously approved the agenda for this meeting, and the minutes for the October General Membership meeting.

## **(3) Reports of Officers:**

**President:** Rovder thanked the management and staff of The Jordan for allowing BCA to use their Community Room, and preparing the space.

He said the Executive Board had approved spending up to \$90 to send flowers to the Secretary and Principal of Arlington Traditional School for allowing BCA to use that facility.

**Second Vice President:** Smith noted that the old Safeway Task Force had become the new Safeway and Bluemont Village Center Task Force and would report later in the meeting. He reported that Arlington College would be offering free classes in January and March. Rover said a notice could go on the BCA website.

**Treasurer:** ODoherty passed out copies of her latest report. Noted that 80% of membership renewal payments are due next month (by December 31), which means that BCA could break even, despite increased expenses due to printing and mailing. Sundberg noted that the newsletter was over budget, so BCA needed to keep it to six pages. She said there are 296 active BCA members. There was discussion on how members could opt to receive the newsletter electronically, rather than in paper. Those wanting to opt out of paper copies should inform David Van Wagner, who handles newsletter distribution.

**Secretary:** Kirkconnell reminded all present to sign the newsletter. She reviewed the registered letter sent to all civic associations from Washington Gas, which included sample letters to customers affected by installation of gas lines, and maps of areas affected. All information in the letter sent BCA was in the letter to customers, along with additional information such as that in some cases residents need to be home when installation is done, depending on where their meter is located. The letter to BCA and sample letter to customers promised to restore affected property to as near original condition as possible. Kirkconnell circulated copies of the letter and information packet to members.

**NCAC Representative:** Fendley said the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) had accepted Bluemont's Neighborhood Conservation Plan (NCP) with some questions and comments. The plan had been well received, and was being forward to the County Board. Its acceptance by the Board would put Bluemont in a better position for NC funding. He thanked David Van Wagner for his work on the NCP.

**Civic Federation Representatives:** Sundburg reported that the Civic Federation is trying to discern what issues are most important to Civic Federation members. Civic associations along Lee Highway were concerned about piecemeal redevelopment and were pushing to develop a vision and asking the County to develop a sector plan for the Lee Highway corridor. She reported that there were differing opinions about redevelopment of the Wilson School property, but the Civic Federation supports keeping green space on that site. She said the Federation had decided not to change zoning laws to allow hen keeping in Arlington.

## **(4) Reports of Committee Chairs and Liaisons**

**Safeway and Bluemont Village Center Task Force:** Kate Mattos and Carla Aly, co-chairs referred to their Task Force report placed on the BCA website, but noted that the Task Force charter had not been posted. She read the charter and answered questions.

The Task Force chairs explained that they had held two meetings. Reading from the charter, they reviewed purpose of the task force, which included :

-- assemble quality information to inform BCA decisions, considering the requirements of the C-1 zoning currently approved for the site, which BCA's official position endorsed. The Task Force will consider what is allowed under C-1, by-right and what is desired per BCA's NCP, surveys of BCA membership and other information. They planned to have an initial outline/understanding of the parameters by January/February 2014.

-- conduct communications operations to be very transparent. They hoped to link their website with the BCA website by December 1, 2013. The Task Force will announce meetings. All its meetings will be open, highly participatory, and read-outs will be provided. Members are invited to share their thoughts and ideas with Carla. Meetings will be highly participatory, and provide read outs. The Task Force will put out one or more recommended visions for BCA members to consider or redevelopment possibilities within C-1 zoning, and by-right.

In response to a question, the Task Force chairs said the Task Force was Task looking at what was both economically and physically feasible at the site. Fendley recommended including "economically feasible" in the first bullet of the charter. Members unanimously voted to accept this change.

In response to a question, the chairs said the Task Force was looking at contiguous commercial properties along Wilson, and opposite the Safeway site, but not non-contiguous commercial properties.

The final charter, as approved unanimously by the members, is attached to these minutes. The charter includes a list of members, and notes that additional BCA members may volunteer to join the Task Force.

**Sidewalk Safety Task Force:** In earlier discussion, Second VP Larry Smith noted that according to *Arlington Now*, the County has spent money to buy back right of way to widen sidewalks, yet County staff were saying this could not be done in Bluemont. He recommended reminding the County that they had purchased right of way to widen sidewalks in areas of the County less busy than in Bluemont along Wilson Blvd. Fendley noted that BCA's position on Wilson Blvd sidewalk improvement did not adopt a proposal to support acquiring right of way because some property owners said they did not support giving up right of way for wider sidewalks. Therefore, he said, BCA would need to revisit its position before it could raise the purchase of right of way with the County. Sundberg recommended talking with property owners. Rovder said the Task Fore could look into this issue.

Haynes noted that the presentation at the September BCA General Meeting by Dennis Leach of Arlington County had been sobering about prospects for funding Wilson Blvd sidewalk improvements beyond what could be funded through the NC fund process. Officials recognized the need, but there was no mechanism for the level and type of funding needed. County staff has the traffic count numbers. It was about 14,000 to 15,000 west of George Mason. The Task Force will explore other funding options, and the traffic count numbers should help.

In response to a question, Haynes said that the cost of stone retaining walls was one of many reasons the County had for being unable to widen Wilson Blvd sidewalks. Members discussed problems with using the County street repaving problem, or missing links program to get improvements for Wilson Blvd sidewalks. The Task Force has been told by the County that Wilson was due for repaving now, but the County is not repaving as quickly as it wants too. The Task Force had hoped that when Wilson is repaved the County could use paint to reconfigure lanes along Wilson in line with BCA's recommendations, like was done along Washington Blvd. The Task Force had asked the County, which said Wilson was not on the repaving schedule. The Task Force will stay on top of this issue.

**Parks and Recreation Liaison:** Palmatier said that the tree protection barriers at Lacey Woods park. They bisect the park, and seal off Edison. The County shifted the fence a bit when Palmatier asked them to make room for strollers. The project should be done in the spring.

## **(5) Unfinished Business**

**Marymount Site Plan:** The letter discussed at the October General membership meeting was approved by the Executive Board and sent by the President. A copy is on the BCA website.

**Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) The Springs Site Plan:** Sundberg reported that civic associations (other than BCA) had expressed concerns to the Site Plan Review Committee, and hoped these would result in some adjustments to the plan. APAH hoped to take the proposal to the County Board in January.

**Penrose Group Proposal 600 Block N. Glebe:** Penrose will present to the General Membership at the December 18 meeting.. Rovder announced he would appoint a Special Committee to work with Penrose to study their proposal. Terry Serie is on the Special Committee, and will nominate other members. Rovder noted the importance of having members who live in the vicinity of the site. Rovder will send the names of the Special Committee members to the Secretary.

It was moved that the General Membership support these announced plans by the President. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Serie said she will get in touch with the nearby homeowners association. She said there were 172 townhomes within one-and-a-half blocks of the site. She hoped to collect information before the December 18 meeting. In response to a question. Serie said BCA should determine its key, critical questions. In response to discussion, the following were identified as some of the key questions:

- the impact on transportation and parking
- sufficient set back and tapering given the effect on homes next to the property
- plans for traffic from parking to use the alley, which has 17 homes along it

BCA and the homeowners association of the nearby town home complex have seats at the table during the site plan review process. Penrose has been revising its proposed footprint. There have been many comments from County Staff and there are issues with the Planning Commission. Dave Van Wagner will check whether additional meetings are planned.

## **(6) New Business:**

**Vote to approve motion posted in the newsletter approving the Commemorative Tree Program, stipulating that recognition like plaques must be small, discretely placed and funded by donors:** Palmatier explained that BCA had been asked to approve a stone plaque, which raised the question of whether BCA should approve whether people are recognized with such plaques. The County has many programs to commemorate people, so instead of having BCA vote on individuals proposed to be honored, it was proposed that BCA approve this policy approving the program in general with the stated conditions.

In response to a question, wording of the motion was changed, with a motion to change the wording being seconded and approved unanimously. The final motion as approved is attached to these minutes.

In response to questions, Palmatier explained that the motion would not encourage additional plaques, would not change anything, but was meant to give BCA a policy it could refer to when asked to approve individual plaques, in order to avoid having to decide who gets honored. Rovder explained that the policy will be published on the website, and used to answer queries on a case-by-case basis, but would not be sent to the County as a new statement of BCA policy.

The motion was approved unanimously.

**Bluemont Forward:** Ed Fendley, a member of Bluemont Forward, which is not affiliated with BCA, provided an update of Bluemont Forward activities. He said Bluemont Forward was a group of residents and business owners who support redevelopment of the Safeway site as a mixed used village center. It has been quite active with local businesses, a range of people in the County decision-making process, developers and outside experts. It has heard from decision makers working in development, the business community, County staff and senior members of the Planning Commission that redevelopment of the Safeway site would be economically feasible only if the zoning were changed to allow higher density and height as part of redevelopment of the grocery store. It cannot be done within C-1 zoning. Absent such increased height and density, there was not guarantee the grocery store would remain at the site. He said County Board member Mary Hines had share with BCA leadership that it was a non-starter to redevelop the site with C-1 zoning and a height of under 35 feet.

In response to questions, Fendley could not say when Hines had reported this to BCA leadership, nor whom in BCA leadership she had communicated this too. Rovder said she had not communicated this view to the current BCA leadership.

In response to a question, Fendley said Bluemont Forward did not favor a proposal as large as what the developer Silverwood had proposed earlier in 2013. Bluemont Forward wanted to get developers and the community to “yes,” but a developer’s proposal had to something between C-1 zoning and what Silverwood had proposed in order for Bluemont Forward to advocate for a “yes.”

In response to a question, Fendley said Bluemont Forward was looking at zoning and land use only at the Safeway site.

A member noted that developers will claim something is not economically feasible when it actually is, and has been done at other sites, e.g. digger parking underground to lower the height of a building.

In response to a question, Fendley said Bluemont Forward was an advocacy group talking to multiple developers.

A member noted that County Staff is trying to Up-GLUP the Safeway site (increased the height and density allowed under the General Land Use Plan), and that Safeway has done other stores with lower height they developers have claimed is needed at the Wilson Blvd Safeway site.

In response to a question, Fendley said Bluemont Forward favored mixed used with residential for the site, seeks overall improvement in Bluemont’s commercial corridor, believes grocery stores are unique and cherished parts of the center of Bluemont, its advocacy is for development of the Safeway site not adjacent properties, the reason for focusing on the Safeway site was its potential to serve an the anchor for a new village center in Bluemont. He recommended members check out the Bluemont Forward website for information.

Rovder adjourned the meeting at 9:16 pm.