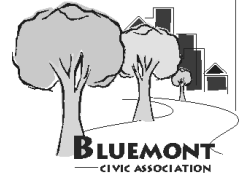


BCA News

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School Boundary Discussion in October

On October 27 at Bluemont's General Membership Meeting, Mark Macekura, special projects coordinator for Arlington Public Schools, was on hand to discuss the current Boundary Enrollment Adjustment (BEA) process being undertaken by the Arlington Public Schools (APS). This process includes all public elementary schools located in North Arlington except for Arlington Traditional School. There are a number of schools that are over capacity and others that are significantly under capacity. This effort is an attempt to even out the school enrollment numbers to meet demand and utilize as much of the available resources and school facilities as possible.

There is an official BEA Committee comprised of 44 members (four from each of the eleven schools) and two chairpersons. The committee has met weekly and will continue to meet on that schedule until it presents its recommendation to Superintendent Robert Smith in December. The BEA committee is currently committed to exploring all non-boundary options first, and would prefer to make enrollment adjustments and program changes before having to redraw lines and change existing school boundaries.

After Macekura's presentation, Bluemont neighbors asked questions about the BEA process. (Also on hand were Linda Henderson and Anne Steen, the two co-chairs of the BEA Committee.) Bluemont residents were concerned that they might be moved to another school's boundary. Questions were also raised about Arlington Traditional School (ATS) and why Bluemont's kids are not allowed to attend the school physically located in the neighborhood. Kate Mesches referred to the attempt last year by BCA's Schools Committee to open a dialogue about the ATS admissions policy with the School Board. At that time, School Board Chairman Frank Wilson would not agree to meet with Bluemont representatives. In light of Drew Model School's change in policy (to permit neighborhood children to attend Drew) that resulted from the recent South Arlington redistricting process, Kate Mesches suggested that BCA re-

new its effort to discuss the ATS admissions policy with the School Board.

Just the FAQs

Ever look at the new houses being built in Bluemont and wonder if the contractor is exceeding the height restrictions and, if so, what you can do about it? Or perhaps you would like to know who to call if your streetlights happen to grow dark? Need to contact Bluemont's Police Liaison? To find the answers to these frequently asked questions (FAQs) please check out the new FAQ section on the BCA Web site (<http://www.bluemontcivic.org>).

Washington Boulevard Sidewalk Project

In her February 19, 2004, letter to BCA, Board Chair Barbara Favola's February 19 indicated that the Washington Boulevard sidewalk would be built in the summer of 2004, and the Washington Boulevard/Patrick Henry nubs would be built in April 2004. She also indicated that the Kensington Street construction project would begin in the spring of 2004, and the 10th Street construction would take place in early spring 2004.

To date, none of these targets has been met, and only one project has been partially constructed. BCA Civic Federation Representative Bob Atkins contacted the County to inquire about the delays on Washington Boulevard.

County staff member Rich Viola responded to the inquiry. He stated that County staff is currently working to obtain the final sidewalk easements needed to construct the Washington Boulevard sidewalk. The process has taken longer than expected due to resistance from a few property owners. County staff hopes to obtain the last easement agreements in the next few weeks. They are also waiting for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to issue a right-of-way permit for the work that will be undertaken within the state roadway. If these two issues are resolved in a timely manner, Mr. Viola said he believed that construction could begin as soon as the weather permits in early

2005. He promised to continue updating the BCA on the project's status.

Other NC Project Updates

Assistant County Manager Michelle Ferguson has been regularly discussing the progress of various BCA projects with member Carl Hallinan. On October 14, she provided the following updates regarding two NC projects:

Kensington Street—The contractor began construction on October 14 and assured County staff that the project will be completed before the cold weather begins. As of October 14, the anticipated completion date was November 4th. The County has put the contractor on standby for paving in case County crews are unable to perform the paving (due to high demand).

10th Street—Dominion Virginia Power still has not given the County a firm date for the utility pole relocation. However, the street is scheduled for paving, and County staff is checking on the anticipated date.

Did You Miss the Halloween Parade?

If you missed BCA's Halloween Parade this year, you weren't alone. In fact, BCA was forced to cancel this year's Halloween Parade because no one stepped forward to chair the committee. Please help us make next year's Halloween Parade possible by volunteering to manage this special event. Step-by-step instructions are available, and no special skills or experience is necessary. For more details, please contact BCA President Judah dal Cais at jdalc@comcast.net or 703-528-1551.

I-66 Widening Study in Final Stage

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has now held two workshops and an open house to garner public feedback on the proposed options to relieve traffic on I-66 between the Rosslyn tunnel and the Dulles access road. The proposed options are roadway widening, high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes or high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, mass transit, and a no-build (do-nothing) option. In the workshops, participants were asked to review previous public comments and answer several questions. Participants identified potential sources of problems (if they decided that there were any problems), suggested possible solutions to the problems, and proposed metrics that could be used to measure a particular option's viability. (The minutes from public meetings and other developments in the study should be posted on the official VDOT Web site: <http://www.idea66.com>.)

At the workshop on October 26, VDOT facilitators effectively shut down any discussion of the 1999 DOT Appropriations Act's reversal of the 1977 Coleman Decision, which limited I-66 to four lanes. Gov-

ernor Mark Warner instructed VDOT to study options (his instructions did not include discussing any breach of agreement by the government).

The Commonwealth Transportation Board could take one or more of the following next steps: approve the study, request further details, pursue one or more options, and/or begin the environmental impact analysis.

While VDOT officials are making an effort to obtain public comment, it is important to remember that VDOT's primary mission is, and has always been, road construction. This mission is likely to shape the agency's view of the proposed options. The deadline for submitting public comments is Monday, November 15, 2004. Comments may be submitted by regular mail (Idea-66, 3900 Jermantown Road Suite 300, Fairfax VA 22030), e-mail (info@idea66.com), or telephone (866-816-4466).

If you need more information or ideas to support your letter or comments, please visit the Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation (ACST) Web site at <http://www.acst.net>. ACST, a grassroots citizen group, has been working hard to ensure that any changes to I-66 inside the beltway are part of a regional transportation plan and are done with community consensus. However, they need more neighborhood residents to get involved while there is still time.

Mixed Messages at Candidates Night

Candidate's Night (co-sponsored by BCA) was held on October 27. The candidates expressed mixed messages regarding some of BCA's high-priority issues.

One winning School Board candidate, Libby Garvey, appeared to be committed to the redrawing of North Arlington elementary school boundaries. When asked directly about the possibility of including a neighborhood-priority admittance policy for Arlington Traditional School (ATS), she responded that she was willing to listen to any option that would help address the perceived school-overcrowding issue.

The other winning candidate, Frank Wilson, minced no words in ruling out any changes to the ATS admittance policy. Mr. Wilson also appears absolutely committed to a redrawing of school boundaries.

Both of the unsuccessful candidates, Mr. Barker and Mr. Wheldon, were strongly critical of the boundary-change process and questioned the Arlington Public School (APS) statistics that supposedly show the need for changes. Both candidates also expressed support not only for opening up ATS to Bluemont children, but also for making all APS programs available to any student/family.

There was somewhat better news on the County

Board front. Winning candidate Barbara Favola appeared to be in favor of speed-control measures after having recently visited the newly opened Powhatan Springs skate park. She reported that she was shocked to discover there were serious speeding and pedestrian-safety issues on Wilson Boulevard. (You may have noticed the new crosswalks and a light that were installed near the park after it had been open for less than two months.) Representatives of BCA, and others, have been working for YEARS to get the County to pay attention to these problems.

What's the bottom line for BCA? It is citizen involvement. We need BCA members to contact all School Board members AND all County Board members regarding issues that are important to the neighborhood. Write letters, send e-mails, make phone calls, and do it often. It appears that our elected officials will only respond to the "squeaky wheel." Let's make sure we squeak loudly enough and long enough to be heard!

Proposed Lot Coverage Restrictions

In an e-mail dated October 25, Patrick A. Smaldore Jr. gave BCA an update on Civic Federation activities regarding the lot coverage issue. He reported that three years ago, the Civic Federation Planning Commission's Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC) developed three proposed options for reducing lot coverage, with the goal of preventing McMansions and excessive infill. At the request of County staff, the Civic Federation held a forum at which proponents and opponents presented the pros and cons of each option. The Civic Federation's Planning & Zoning Committee prepared a survey to capture audience support and found no consensus.

ZORC Recommendations

In September 2004, ZORC issued a new set of recommendations that appear on the County Web site at <http://www.arlingtonva.us>. (Search for "ZORC Coverage Report 9-9-04" and click to download.) The new ZORC recommendations would reduce the current lot coverage of 56% for each of five zoning categories, as shown below, along with ZORC's estimates of the percent of homes that will be nonconforming should the new standards be adopted.

- 45% for R-5 zoned properties (minimum lot size 5,000 square feet; 10% will be nonconforming)
- 40% for R-6 zoned properties (6,000 square feet; 5% will be nonconforming)
- 35% for R-8 zoned properties (minimum lot size 8,000 square feet; 8% will be nonconforming)
- 32% for R-10 zoned properties (minimum lot size 10,000 square feet; 10% will be nonconforming)

- 20% for R-20 zoned properties (minimum lot size 20,000 square feet; 22% will be nonconforming)

The ZORC recommendations also make a few changes to what counts as "coverage." Coverage has always been more than the footprint of the house and garage, and the recommendations propose some bonuses for items like front porches and detached garages.

Status of the ZORC Recommendations

When the September version of the ZORC report was released, it was anticipated that the County Manager would advertise an ordinance change for lot coverage and the County Board would vote on it sometime in December. As of this writing, the County Manager is not yet ready to advertise a change to the existing ordinance. Like the initial ZORC options, the latest recommendations have produced some opposition from homeowners and developers. After talking with NCAC, a civic association, and some concerned homeowners, County staff has begun looking at alternatives that would affect fewer existing properties.

This is not to say that the ZORC recommendations are off the table: It's possible that the County Manager will eventually advertise the ZORC proposal and also offer the County Board some less comprehensive options, such as coverage restrictions on new houses or teardowns.

Civic Federation Activities

The Civic Federation Planning & Zoning Committee is preparing to do extensive work on the proposed lot coverage changes. It is already researching any possible unintended consequences on insurance and refinancing for properties that will be nonconforming if the restrictions are enacted. If the County Manager advertises the ZORC recommendations, the committee will hold a public forum on the issue to gather input and reaction.

County staff is developing a process to answer questions about individual properties. However, all of this will take time, therefore the committee has also recommended that a County Board vote be scheduled to give property owners several months to understand the impact of the advertised proposals. All Civic Federation delegates and concerned citizens are invited to join the Planning & Zoning Committee to consider the proposed lot coverage ordinance changes. Delegates and citizens may participate on this topic without expectation that they must stay on the committee for other issues. Delegates and citizens who would like to join this committee, should send an e-mail to one of the addresses below:

bill@civfed.org or martha@civfed.org.

Did BCA Deliver?

In September, BCA newsletter distributors (volunteers) were asked to hand-deliver newsletters to all residents living within BCA boundaries as part of its community outreach. (Usually, the BCA newsletter is mailed to current members only, due to cost constraints.) If for some reason you did NOT receive a copy of the September newsletter, would you please contact Judy Collins at jc.swings@verizon.net or 703-276-0124. If newsletters were not being delivered as requested, she would like to make alternate arrangements in the future.

BCA Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. at Arlington Traditional School, 855 N. Edison Street

Mon, 11/15, Deadline to submit I-66 widening comments to VDOT

*Wed, 11/17, General Membership meeting

*Tues, 12/7, Executive Board meeting (all members welcome)

*Wed, 12/15, General Membership meeting

*Dates have been adjusted for the holidays



Bluemont Civic Association

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|---|--------------------------------------|
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| Newsletter Distribution | Judy Collins |
| Wilson Boulevard Safety | Bob Waffle |
| Wilson Boulevard Revitalization | Judah Dal Cais |
| Ballston Partnership | Talmadge Williams |
| Metro Liaison | Henry McFarland |

Civic Federation Representatives

| | |
|--|---|
| Delegates Bob Atkins Ed Fendley | Alternates Adrienne Pilot Ellen Armbruster |
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