###### Bluemont Civic Association

*Representing Neighborhoods in and around Arlington Traditional School, Lacey Woods Park, Bon Air, Fields Park, Balls Crossing, West Ballston, and all along the former Bluemont Division of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad*

#### P.O. Box 5134 Arlington, Virginia 22205

**www.bluemontcivic.org**

**Minutes: November 16, 2022, General Membership Meeting**

Via Zoom and in Key School Library

7:30 PM

1. The President announced that a quorum was present.
2. The President read the Politeness Statement.
3. Members approved the minutes of the October General Membership meeting.
4. Michael Keen, Human Services Specialist at the Department of Human Services, described his case management work with homeless individuals between the ages of 18 and 60. Many individuals have severe mental illness. Keen has found that individuals who accept assistance voluntarily have the best outcomes. Basic human needs of water, warmth, and electricity will often bring people to accept assistance. Keen worked with Arlington County Police Department for 17 years before taking his current role and has a family history with homelessness.

Keen works with various organizations, including Path Forward, Doorways (which assists victims of domestic abuse), a residential center, and an organization that works with families.

Challenges to providing assistance are space, screening and residency requirements, the limited number of nights (4) that an individual can get stay in a shelter during cold nights, and mental illness. Rising living expenses have contributed to a full eviction docket in Arlington through March. Poor credit and eviction history make it difficult for some to secure housing. Keen visits encampments, and he approaches panhandlers. He knows many homeless people by name. There have been many resignations in the human services field. Referrals to Keen are increasing. Nationwide, there are significantly fewer beds devoted to mental illness today than in the 1970s, and migration from the south is stretches resources thinly. Police are trained in conflict de-escalation and dispute resolution. Victims can always ask for a police report to be filed and for applicable criminal charges to be pursued.

Corporal Mark Francis of Arlington County Police Department’s Community Outreach Unit described ACPD’s approach to people with mental illness. Officers have discretion to work with victim storekeepers, for example, when punishment is not the best option. Behaviors that make people uncomfortable may not amount to a crime. Police intervene when an individual is a danger to self or to others. Although police can compel a person into services, they see better outcomes when individuals seek services voluntarily. Police may take people to mental health facilities in any part of the commonwealth, sometimes a great distance away.

A local business owner (Mike Groves of Federal Lock and Safe) raised concerns about harassment of his employees by a homeless individual who has left human waste on the property and who has been seen on video surveillance with a knife. He expressed frustration with the police response. Another Bluemont resident expressed concern for neighbors’ safety if this issue isn’t addressed.

Corporal Francis explained that issuing a Virginia Uniform Summons may be the appropriate police response, but that does not involve taking the person into custody. He had not heard complaints from 7-Eleven or Fed Lock or Safeway, and he encouraged them to complain to the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s office. Anyone can go to a Magistrate’s office to report the brandishing of a weapon. Corporal Francis noted an increase in the threshold amount of a felony ($999) in the Commonwealth. Francis and Keen said that anyone can call 911 or the police non-emergency line, as appropriate. Keen and Francis acknowledged that the number of people living on the street is increasing; they are doing all that they can in their respective roles.

 5. **Summary Reports of Executive Board Officers, Civic Federation Delegates, BCA Committees.**

The President **Henry McFarland** discussed changes to the **Macy’s Site Plan** review, which include reduced impervious surfaces, turning restrictions for better visibility of pedestrians, the number of total units, and the number of affordable units.

The President reported that consultations are underway concerning a potential **new park** at N. Harrison St. at the Route 66 overpass.

The President reported that County Board members de Ferranti and Garvey have expressed support for a compromise on the **Missing Middle** project that would allow the by-right building of up to 6 units.

The President noted that the **Halloween Parade** was a success. He expressed his appreciation to all who helped, especially the Cochranes of Dovetail Properties & Design, who sponsored the event.

The **Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (ArNAC, formerly NCAC) representative** reported that at the last meeting, the main topic was making the submissions process easier.

The **Civic Federation** delegate reported that the Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER) resolution passed concerning increasing the County Board from 5 to 7 members; proposing rank choice voting for all contests, not merely primaries; paying Board members a full-time rather than part-time salary; and bringing back the “Arlington Way,” which involved extensive consultation. [Information about the meeting is at <https://www.civfed.org>]

The **Treasurer** reported that the BCA bank account’s balance was $1,763.28, unchanged from the last meeting.

 **6. Redesign of Upper Bluemont Park**

The President called for a vote on the draft motion on the redesign of Upper Bluemont Park. The motion, expressing the belief that BCA considers Concept 2 to be superior to Concept 1, was adopted by a vote of 5 for, 0 against, 5 abstaining.

 **7. Adjourned** at approximately 9:00 pm

Minutes prepared by Dorothy Patton