

## **MEETING MINUTES**

Bluemont Civic Association (BCA)

Executive Board Meeting

May 14, 2002 at Arlington Traditional School

Return Comments/Corrections to John Huennekens jhuenn@gwu.edu

## **ATTENDEES**

BCA Executive Board -- Robert Atkins, Bernie Berne, Win Boerckel, Carl Hallinan, John Huennekens, Adrienne Pilot, Margot M Thomas, Talmadge Williams

## **AGENDA TOPICS:**

- 1) Ballston Gateway, Proposed Amendment to Site Plan to replace hotel bldg with apartment.
- 2) BCA Nomination Committee
- 3) Calendar for fall NC project funding cycle
- 4) Committee Updates and New Business

### **1) BALLSTON GATEWAY, SITE PLAN AMENDMENT**

In February, the JBG Companies, developers of the Ballston Gateway project at the southeast corner of Glebe Rd and Fairfax Dr, applied for an amendment to the project's approved site plan. The current site plan allows 3 buildings - an office building with ground floor retail and an entrance to Metro at the corner of Glebe and Fairfax, a hotel further down Glebe at the south end of the site, and a hi-rise residential building in the interior of the site behind the Immigration Service and next to the Jefferson. The residential building's height is similar to the Jefferson, the hotel and office buildings are lower - more like the NRECA building.

Parking for the development is underground beneath the entire site. There is a system of interior roads for vehicles using the garage, making deliveries, dropping off passengers, etc. Access is from Fairfax Dr, mid-block off of Glebe, and at the southeast corner of the site off of Glebe. The front court of the residential building's entry provides a pedestrian plaza in the middle of the site.

Three representatives from the JBG Company - Desmond Dixon, Ken Finkelstein, and Tim Sampson (architect, project manager, and zoning attorney, respectively) brought along a model of the proposed Ballston Gateway development and gave a presentation on the proposed change to the site plan.

JBG's proposed Site Plan Amendment, would delete the hotel and substitute a residential building of similar height and size (235,000± sq.ft.). Instead of 325 rooms and conference facilities, there would be 250 dwelling units. The footprint of the residential building would be smaller than the hotel, increasing the area of pedestrian spaces in the interior of the block. The Glebe Rd façade of the residences would be similar to the hotel's and is intended to complement the office building's in scale, materials, mass, etc. JBG said there would be 1-1/8 parking spaces for the first 200 dwelling units, and none for the next 50 (= 225 spaces for 250 d.u.). After their presentation, the JBG representatives opened the floor for questions and comments.

Bernie Berne noted that the "visual axis" along the "9<sup>th</sup> Street Greenway" is terminated before reaching Glebe Rd, by the residential building. There was some discussion as to what the 9<sup>th</sup> St Greenway is. Apparently the Ballston and Virginia Square sector plans call for 9<sup>th</sup> St to provide a pedestrian route (greenway) between the two Metro stations. Previous developments have extended the greenway west to the Gateway site. It is now possible to stand near Quincy St and look westward to the Gateway site (visual axis). The JBG reps noted that the approved hotel building also blocks the visual axis.

Carl Hallinan asked how the Gateway development relates to the Ballston Sector Plan, and noted that any site plan involves a collection of trade-offs and agreements in order to gain approval. He wondered whether the residences-for-hotel swap would negate some of those previous deals and force a reconsideration of earlier issues. Some discussion ensued regarding the desirability of having a full-service hotel in Ballston. The Ballston Partnership has identified the construction of a full-service hotel as a key priority due to the complaints by some of its members about the current lack of such a facility. As Ballston builds up, the number of potential sites for a full-service hotel is declining. It was noted that the provision of a full-service hotel by the Gateway project was one of the benefits that probably justified some of the trade-offs during the previous site plan negotiations.

Win Boerckel asked what were the benefits to the Bluemont neighborhood from the proposed amendment. The JBG reps replied that the benefits were of an economic development nature - jobs, commercial property tax revenue, and business and sales tax revenue from the occupants of the

development.

Bob Atkins asked whether the residential units would be condos or rental. JBG replied "probably rental". Adrienne Pilot asked what the mix of apartment sizes would be. JBG replied that about 35% would be 2 bedroom, the rest 1 bedroom (which may include efficiencies or studio units).

Margot Thomas asked how many parking spaces are called for in the existing site plan. My notes say the JBG reply was 450/462 for 411 units in the approved hi-rise, and 272 for 257 (for the proposed building? Conflicts with above). Bernie Berne said that the county shouldn't require a lot of parking spaces because this is supposed to be a transit-oriented development, and that if you don't build it the renters will be less likely to own cars. Margot Thomas commented that a lack of parking spaces in the building would likely cause the tenants to park the cars on adjacent streets.

Talmadge Williams asked that the group turn their discussion away from the features of the proposed residential building and back to the question of why should the hotel be deleted. He reiterated that the hotel is an important Ballston priority and questioned the benefit to the county of building another hi-rise apartment. JBG replied that they are still interested in getting a hotel built, and are trying to find a firm that is interested. Apparently, the hotel industry is still suffering from the effects of September 11 and there haven't been any takers for the Gateway site. JBG is pursuing the residence option as a "Plan B" backup.

Carl Hallinan recalled that the BCA's previous action with regard to the Gateway project was a vote that was broadly in support of the current site plan, although with some comments and conditions. He noted that only some of BCA's recommendations were followed on the earlier site plan.

Bob Atkins stated that even if BCA doesn't want a residential building, the County Board may disagree and approve the amendment. Therefore, he felt that it is important for BCA to go on record with what it would like to see in the proposed residential building.

\*Motion\* made by Carl Hallinan and seconded by Margot Thomas

Some discussion on the wording and friendly amendments accepted

" That the BCA urges Arlington County to work with the developer of Ballston Gateway, to facilitate the construction of a hotel, as described in the existing site plan that was approved on December 15, 1999. "

\*Motion Approved\* (4-0 -- with only Executive Board members voting)

## 2) BCA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Adrienne Pilot, Gerry Procanick, and Bob Atkins comprise the Nominating Committee, charged with filling a full slate of candidates for BCA offices during the upcoming year. Voting will take place at the June General Membership meeting. The Nominating Committee reported that they will have a full slate of nominees published in the next newsletter before the June meeting.

## 3) NC PROJECTS, FALL CALENDAR

Margot Thomas reported that the residents of 5<sup>th</sup> St between Frederick and Greenbrier to decide whether or not they would like to modify the scope of their proposed project. Meanwhile, residents of 7<sup>th</sup> St and Buchanan are trying to complete the petition process. The objective is to have both groups finish their petitions and finalize the design scope of their projects by September. County staff will refine the design scope and develop a budget estimate.

The calendar for fall funding approvals calls for all neighborhoods to send a letter by the end of September to the NC staff, that notifies them of the neighborhood's intent to submit projects for funding consideration. The membership of BCA must approve and prioritize the projects in October. After that, the projects are on the list for consideration by the NCAC and will be ranked among all the other projects submitted within the county. The NCAC will then vote on how many projects to recommend for funding approval by the County Board.

## 4) COMMITTEE UPDATES AND NEW BUSINESS

a) -- Carl Hallinan reported on the Wilson Boulevard Committee, which is planning a charette on June 8 (note: later revised to June 11) that will allow all interested parties to form a vision of what the neighborhood would like to see for its commercial district. A planning meeting to organize the charette will take place at Carl's house this Thursday (May 16).

b) -- Win Boerckel reported on the Powhatan Springs Park. He participates in a county working group that is considering aspects of the park's development, having become involved originally after a request for BCA input on a proposal to build a bike trail between Bluemont and Powhatan Springs parks. He reported that the working group is now considering how the skate park will be operated, and noted that there is a great deal of

conflict between the skaters and nearby residents.

c) -- Margot Thomas brought up a new issue regarding the amount of funds available for NC projects in the County Manager's proposed Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Ron Carlee has proposed that various neighborhood categories such as sidewalks, and traffic calming be combined under the NC umbrella, but has not recommended an increase in funding. She noted that the Jefferson St sidewalk project has disappeared from the CIP. She urged that all present send a protest letter to the County Board and provided a sample. Bob Atkins suggested that the NCAC should try to get the Civic Federation to endorse their call for increased NC funding.

d) -- Bernie Berne commented that once upon a time Dick Work?, a county staff employee, said that he would come to a BCA meeting to speak about the Bluemont railroad exhibit. He suggested that we try to get him to fulfill his promise. Apparently, an inadequate sum of money was once designated for installing an exhibit near the caboose. It is not clear whether that money is still encumbered in some budget account, or whether it has been reallocated to some other use.

e) -- Talmadge Williams presented an idea that the July newsletter be delivered with a small American flag. He said he'd look into where to procure small American flags.

f) -- In another item related to NC funding, Margot noted that the NCAC was taking out an ad in the Sun Gazette urging citizen support of an increased CIP budget. The share apportioned to Bluemont was \$43.53.

\*Motion\* made and seconded

" That BCA contribute \$100 towards the purchase of said ad. "

\*Motion Approved\* unanimously