

**Bluemont Civic Association
Executive Board Meeting
November 14, 2006, 7:00 p.m.
Arlington Traditional School**

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:10 p.m.

In attendance were Judah dal Cais, Carl Drummond, Wendy Dean, Suzanne Sundburg, Lloyd Douglas, Judy Collins, Kate Mesches, Terry Serie, Craig Deering and Lisa Byington.

Review/Approval of 10/10/06 Minutes

Secretary Lisa Byington provided minutes from the October Executive Board meeting held on October 10, 2006. The minutes incorporated comments provided earlier by several Executive Board officers who had attended the October 10th meeting. Treasurer Judy Collins suggested one additional amendment to the minutes, which Secretary Byington agreed to make. A motion to approve the minutes, as amended, was made and seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes. The final minutes are to be distributed to the Executive Board and posted on the BCA Website.

November Newsletter

Newsletter editor Suzanne Sundburg distributed draft layout for the November newsletter. Corrections to the newsletter must be sent to newsletter designer Sam Ferro no later than November 15, 2006, to ensure sufficient time for the newsletter to be printed.

Treasurer Collins reported that she had received checks to pay for a number of advertisements for the newsletter and also reported the list of advertisers whose bills are outstanding. The Executive Board stated the need to ensure that checks are received for ads before the ads are placed in the newsletter.

December Newsletter

Sundburg stated that the December newsletter needs to be in the mail by December 14, 2006, to ensure sufficient notice to members about the December general membership meeting scheduled for December 20, 2006. All article text must be submitted to Sundburg by December 5th, and she will submit the articles to Ferro for layout by December 6th. Sundburg agreed to include in the December newsletter a request for a volunteer from the community to serve as manager for the advertisements for the newsletter.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Commission (NCAC) Update

NCAC Representative Wendy Dean reported that Arlington's proposed bonds passed in the general election held on November 7th. The bond money will be used to finish the 31 already approved/bonded projects in the pipeline from 2002 to 2004. Approximately \$5 million will remain for new projects. However, according to County staff, the most formidable obstacle facing new NC projects is the fact that Department of

Environmental Services (DES) Engineering is short-staffed. DES Engineering has a difficult time competing for qualified engineers when paying County salaries. As a result, projects are taking too long to be built because of insufficient resources at DES Engineering. Accordingly, the NC team suggests that, going forward, NC projects be limited to small (less than \$100,000) projects that do not require involvement from DES Engineering. Several BCA Executive Board members expressed concern that small projects — such as street lighting, parks improvements, minor traffic calming, and small missing link curb ramp projects — would be insufficient to provide the types of improvements that neighborhoods need.

Treasurer Report

Treasurer Judy Collins reported that BCA has \$2,800 in the bank as a result of several payments she has received for advertisements that are run in the monthly newsletter. BCA has approximately 288 dues-paying members. President dal Cais asked that Collins request a \$250 discount on printing costs for the newsletter in return for free monthly advertising in the newsletter. Collins has received a few new membership applications following the neighborhood-wide newsletter distribution conducted in September.

Update on Proposed Redevelopment of Ballston Row

Secretary Lisa Byington reported on the meeting between Larry Wingard, the president of HJL Properties, and several members of the BCA Executive Board (in addition to Byington, Bob Atkins, Suzanne Sundburg, Terry Serie and Judy Collins attended) on November 3, 2006. HJL Properties is considering replacing two garden-style apartment buildings on N. Buchanan Street between Fairfax Drive and N. 9th Street with 16 townhouses. According to Arlington County's Zoning Department, the proposed redevelopment is "by-right," so no further approval from the County is required.

The BCA Executive Board members expressed concern to Wingard about preserving the many mature and healthy trees on the site. Although there are some unhealthy trees that can and should be removed, there are approximately 8 trees that add character to the neighborhood and would also add to the property value of the new townhouses. Although HJL has not yet developed a landscaping plan for the site, Wingard agreed to work with BCA and the neighborhood to address our concerns. Wingard also reported that, due to the changing real estate market, HJL has postponed for at least 6 months its redevelopment plans. HJL will reassess the market and reconsider its plan in 6 months.

Other New Business

Vice President Drummond reported that a BCA neighbors (Renee Haire and Tim Lynch) had requested that BCA provide a letter to Arlington County stating that it had no objection to their proposed zoning variance for a new porch. In President dal Cais's absence and in accordance with established BCA policy, Drummond prepared a letter stating that BCA takes no formal position on individual homeowners' zoning variance requests. The letter further noted that if and when BCA decided to change its policy, it would notify the County's zoning office. Dal Cais, Drummond and others present noted

that civic association approval is not required in order for Arlington County to rule on a variance request.

Comment: Lisa, this rewrite may not be exact, but its done from memory. Carl definitely wrote this letter because I reviewed it. I can give you additional background if you would like.

Other Old Business

President dal Cais reported that the Arlington County Parks Department has proposed to decrease the landscaping at the Constitution bell on the corner of Wilson Boulevard and N. George Mason Drive. The Parks Department believes that the Arterial Traffic Management (ATM) enhancements for that corner have negatively affected the landscaping plan. During the ATM redevelopment, County staff erroneously situated a large electrical box directly in front of the bell and the landscaping. The Parks Department will attend BCA's meeting on November 29, 2006, to discuss the new landscaping proposal for the corner. (Note: the Parks Department wishes to reduce the planned landscaping for this corner now that the electrical box is present.) President dal Cais stated that the County should move the electrical box, as it was a County error, and the current landscaping plan should continue as originally planned.

Comment: Lisa, there's no tower, just a bell.

BCA member Kate Mesches reported that she has submitted the application for a parks enhancement grant to connect an unconnected portion of trail off of N. Harrison St., just north of the I-66 overpass to the Custis Trail. (As noted in earlier minutes, the BCA Executive Board had voted to support Mesches' application for the grant.) The Parks Department reviewed the grant application at the end of the October and will decide in December whether to recommend the grant to the County Board. The County Board, which generally follows the recommendations of the Parks Department, will make grant decisions in January 2007.

JBG Presentation on Its Proposed Redevelopment of the Peck/Staples Site

JBG's representatives reported that their application to redevelop the Peck/Staples site, which had been initially submitted on June 24, 2006, was approved for submission on November 7, 2006. JBG's counsel stated that the County had tentatively scheduled JBG's proposal for the first Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting on December 14, 2006, and a second meeting on January 8, 2006.

JBG summarized key aspects of the proposal:

- Both proposed buildings will be primarily office space. It is rumored that the smaller office building will be occupied by Virginia Tech, but JBG declined to confirm this rumor.
- The larger proposed office building (12 stories) on the Pecks site is expected to have all retail on the first floor.
- The smaller proposed office building (8 stories) on the Staples site has a slightly smaller footprint to more closely follow the line of Glebe Road, but the overall density is the same. The smaller office building is to have below-ground retail space, which JBG has not included into the density or other calculations.
- JBG is uncertain whether any retail services will be located in the smaller office building, because of its negotiations with a prospective tenant. Instead,

Comment: Not sure if below-ground retail will be in the larger or smaller building, but it is definitely planned for one of them, and JBG wants to ignore it when calculating permitted density or other items of the plan. Wendy may be able to clarify.

JBG and the tenant are negotiating the possible inclusion of a public forum area for technology and educational display/events.

- The green space between the two office buildings now has a landscaping plan.
- The southwest corner of the larger office building has a cut-out above the first 5 floors, in an attempt to have the back of the building be closer in size to the townhouses and the single-family homes on Wakefield. JBG believes that this cut-out makes the building look shorter when approaching it from the west on Wilson Boulevard, although several BCA members expressed skepticism. The cut-out does not affect the overall density in the building, and in answer to a member's question, JBG stated that it would not alter its density request.
- The front of the larger office building, which is situated at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road, is a 10-story silo that juts out over the sidewalk. The first-floor arcade is recessed 12 feet from the top of the silo, to make the street level area appear more open.
- The 4-story townhouses will be red brick, with front doors facing the walkways that connect Wakefield Street to the rest of the site and back doors that face the autoport area to access the townhouse garages. The autoport areas will be gated.
- The townhouse walkways will provide the public with a path through the townhouses and into the green space area of the site. JBG committed that the walkways be protected by a public access easement to ensure that later townhouse owners or the homeowners association (HOA) is not able to close the walkways to the public.
- JBG stated that the townhouses would likely convey fee-simple absolute with an HOA, but JBG reserved the right to change the ownership structure to condominiums. JBG stated that any changes to such ownership rights would not affect the proposed design, size or density of the townhouses.
- The JBG plan includes a proposed midblock pedestrian cross-walk from the green space to the southwest end of Vermont Street. JBG has had discussions with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) about the feasibility of the midblock cross-walk (VDOT, which maintains Glebe Road, has historically been concerned about anything that impedes the flow of vehicular traffic on Glebe Road), and VDOT has not rejected the cross-walk outright. JBG hopes to have more to report on the cross-walk at the first SPRC meeting.
- Parking is proposed for only the west side of Wakefield, in front of the single-family homes and across the street from the new townhouses. NC Representative Dean pointed out that the west side of Wakefield has no curb, gutter or sidewalk and is not conducive to parking. Rather, residents of N. Wakefield St. currently park on the east side of N. Wakefield, abutting the back of the Peck/Staples site.

JBG's representatives acknowledged that the latest version of the redevelopment proposal does not incorporate all of BCA's concerns, but they believe it is "in general

conformance” with the land-use plan. Specifically, JBG is asking the County to increase zoning and density to C.O 2.5 (which, with bonus density for green building credits, would increase the density/floor area ratio [FAR] to 2.75), to purportedly conform to the zoning/density levels of nearby commercial properties. Although the site contains a variety of lower density commercial and residential zoning and is not zoned at the same levels as adjoining commercial properties, JBG believes that it will be able to convince the County Board that it should be. (Note: JBG is also asking the County to change the existing General Land Use Plan [GLUP] to accommodate its wish for additional height and density, which would not be allowed under the current GLUP.) A BCA member pointed out that the height and density of the neighboring Regent building cannot be cited as precedent because it was a special zoning granted in exchange for fulfillment of the County’s wish for hotel space at this site (i.e., the Westin). Brooks Blake, of JBG, replied that a County Board member had made this claim at a public meeting and that he wouldn’t comment upon its applicability. Brooks further reported that JBG has been meeting with County staff and that he does not expect the proposal to be rejected outright.

Comment: Wendy, can you confirm my edits on zoning, etc., for accuracy and completeness? Thanks.

Comment: I’m not a board member, just a regular member.

JBG expects that BCA’s concerns are more likely to be addressed between the first and second SPRC meetings, after JBG makes its initial presentation to the Site Plan Review Committee at the first SPRC meeting. Thus far, JBG’s focus has been on addressing the County’s technical and administrative comments to its proposal so that it could be formally accepted for review by the County. Although it has been meeting with BCA over the last 6 months, JBG stated that it will not respond to BCA’s concerns until after the SPRC process is underway.

In response to members’ questions, JBG explained that the driveway to the property accessible from southbound Glebe Road is for two-way traffic. However, because that driveway will border the proposed green space and will be the main pedestrian thoroughfare between the two buildings, JBG acknowledged that most car traffic will likely prefer to enter the site via the entrance off of west-bound Wilson Boulevard near N. Wakefield Street. JBG expects that the County will begin to address transportation issues at the first SPRC meeting. In response to a question from a BCA member, JBG stated that it has had no discussions with VDOT about any changes to Glebe Road to address the additional traffic. A member noted that realignment of the pedestrian crosswalk across Glebe Road along the north side of Wilson Boulevard has already begun, to connect the Peck site to the new NRECA site.

A number of BCA members and Executive Board members asked questions about ways to shorten one or both of the office buildings on the site. One member asked about the possibility of making both buildings 10 stories (rather than 12 and 8 stories as currently proposed). JBG’s architects expressed concern that buildings of equal height would reduce the dramatic effect of the larger office building. The larger office building on the Peck corner is considered to be the gateway to Ballston, and the architects believe that a taller building is necessary to create that effect. In addition, the JBG architects believe that, because of its width and because of the overhang of the silo, the larger office building must be tall to prevent it from looking too squat.

BCA members also expressed concern that the dramatic effect of the larger office building is only visible from the east. The view from the west is considered by many to be tall, flat and unattractive, and not in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood that begins on the west side of Wakefield Street.

As for a timeline, JBG hopes to break ground by the end of 2008 and would like to conduct construction of the buildings at the same time (because of the large garage under both buildings and the green space). The Staples lease runs until February 2009, so JBG is in negotiations for it to be included as part of the redevelopment and perhaps to be an underground tenant in the larger office building. JBG is requesting an exclusion for any density for the below-grade retail when calculating the total density of the building. Currently, the density for the large office building is proposed to be 25,500 square feet.

Comment: Can't remember whether the underground retail space is to be in the larger or smaller building.

After JBG's representatives left, the Executive Board continued to discuss the JBG proposal. Many Executive Board members expressed concern about the County scheduling two SPRC meeting so close together and over the holidays. BCA members and neighbors may be unable to attend the SPRC meetings, which means neighborhood concerns may not be heard by the County Board. Terry Serie, the BCA Information Coordinator for the Peck/Staples proposed redevelopment suggested that BCA send a letter to the County conveying its concerns about the schedule for the SPRC meetings. A motion was made and seconded to authorize Serie to send such a letter. The motion approving the letter was approved unanimously by the Executive Board.

Serie also proposed the following resolution urging the Peck/Staples Site Plan Applicant to provide timely plan information to the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) to civic associations, homeowner associations and neighborhood residents:

Whereas: The Bluemont Civic Association (BCA), homeowner organizations and other parties desire to provide the site plan applicant, the SPRC and related Arlington County commissions with knowledgeable and meaningful input on potential issues, concerns and priorities and,

Whereas: Input from the community is encouraged by the SPRC Guide, and

Whereas: Site plan information available for public review at the County Planning Office and the Central Library is not available during evening hours six out of seven days, and available on the weekend only at the Central Library on Sunday.

Be it therefore resolved that:

1. The BCA encourages the Peck/Staples site plan applicants to submit SPRC agenda materials "no later than eight days before the site plan meeting", as stated in the SPRC Guide, and

2. The BCA respectfully requests that the County send SPRC members and “Interested Parties” the site plan meeting agenda and materials at least 5 days prior to the SPRC meetings.

The resolution was reviewed by the Executive Board members, and a motion was made, and seconded, to support the resolution. The resolution was approved unanimously by the Executive Board.

Adjournment

President dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m.