

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

General Membership Meeting Wednesday, February 25, 2009, 7:30 p.m. Lubber Run Community Center

Call to Order

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 pm. In attendance were Judah dal Cais, Wendy Dean, Mary Thorne, Sam Ferro, Suzanne Sundburg, 10 Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members and 12 nonmembers.

Police Liaison—Officer O’Daniel

Officer James O’Daniel gave the update on crime in the area. There has been an increase in bank robberies (four robberies along Lee Highway within a 2-week period). Neighbors are advised to use caution at ATMs and avoid entering banks after dark when possible. The two recent bank robberies in Arlington were between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. In one case, a customer on a cell phone ran into a robber with a gun while entering a bank in a distracted state. There have also been some grand larceny autos. He advises locking cars and houses and recommends removing GPS equipment from unattended cars. The police increased their presence in response to an upsurge of muggings and robberies around the Ballston Common Mall and arrested about 20 people. O’Daniel cautions against giving cash to panhandlers, many of whom spend it on drugs or alcohol. (However, he did not object to providing food to homeless individuals.) Heroin needles have been found in Lincoln Park in Falls Church. Several members requested O’Daniel’s assistance with speeding (800 block of N. Wakefield Street and hotrodding along Bluemont Drive) and parking violations (N. Frederick and 5th Streets) on their blocks.

Development of 650 Glebe Road (Goodyear Tire)—Crimson Urban LLC/Crimson Partners (Ryan Whittier, Chris Lukawski, Chris Chambers, Joe Snyder and Elizabeth McKeeby)

Joe Snyder reported that a preliminary site plan amendment (to site plan #72) has been submitted to allow a mixed-use residential building at 650 North Glebe Road. (The county has not yet accepted the amended plan.) The original site plan for this location at the corner of N. Carlin Springs and N. Glebe Roads was done in 1968. The proposed 115-unit residential building would also include 9,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. The building would be 78 feet high (60 feet plus penthouse) with five stories above ground and two levels of parking below. In comparison, the neighboring Carlin is 95 feet tall (80 feet plus penthouse). This amended use falls within the parameters of the existing General Land Use Plan and zoning, and there is no request for bonus density.

Therefore, the plan contains no affordable housing component. Crimson representatives said that this amendment would not alter existing plans for the Harris Teeter and American Service Center parcels. The apartment units in the new building would include studio, one bedroom, and two bedroom configurations at an approximate monthly rent of \$2,100. The proposed parking will be provided according to site plan requirements of 1.125 cars per unit, in addition to 16 retail parking spaces. A traffic study will be part of the process. In response to a member's question, Crimson stated that the county no longer supports the original raised pedestrian walkway that was included in the original site plan. Instead, the county prefers at-grade pedestrian crossing improvements, although Crimson did not identify the specific improvements that might be made in conjunction with its plan. Both VDOT and Arlington County require that the site be accessed from a single point on N. Carlin Springs Road. Hazardous waste from the site should be able to be remediated when dirt is removed to construct the parking garage. Due to Arlington County's long process, Crimson Urban LLC estimates starting construction in 2011 with completion in 2013.

Bluemont Park Fence Replacement—Kevin Stalica

Parks Division staff member Stalica informed the membership that there has been some turnover in the Parks department, and there may be some reassignment of staff. The Parks budget has been cut by \$24 million, and the County Manager's budget proposes to close the Gulf Branch Nature Center, among other cuts. Stalica discussed the history of the split-rail fence in Bluemont Park, which was removed on 8/2/08 when it had reached the end of its useful life (split-rail fences begin to "wobble" at 5 years and must be repaired or replaced approximately every 10 years; the post-and-rail fence lasts approximately one and a half times longer). Stalica presented the membership with three options for replacing the split rail fence in Bluemont Park. The three choices are: 1) a split-rail fence 2) a post-and-rail fence 3) a combination of either type of fence with bushes or trees. (A combination of fencing and rocks would be used where street dead-end at the park in order to discourage vehicles from driving into the park.) The County landscape architect and Environmental Landscape Supervisor Patrick Wegeng will work with the neighborhood to select the bushes, trees or other plantings, if BCA prefers a combination of fence and landscaping. Ideally, the landscaped areas would be designed to minimize the chance of overgrowth, and the County could mow around the plantings and provide maintenance of both the plants and the new fence. Member Kate Mattos asked that any fence or landscaping not interfere with the existing volleyball court.

Member Bob Atkins asked what happened to money originally bonded for the park, which appears to have "disappeared." Stalica said he does not have any knowledge or access to track the disposition of funds that may have originally been dedicated to the park. In any case, Stalica has identified and assembled funding from several existing sources to pay for the fence and plantings; however, he suggested that the time was of the essence, as future funds

availability cannot be assured. Stalica also suggested that it would be helpful if neighbors could help with watering of any landscaping during the first year following installation. The County recommends post-and-rail fence because although up-front costs may be a bit more, it would last longer. There was much discussion of the current situation and pros and cons of the three options. At the conclusion of the discussion a motion was made, a vote was taken and the motion passed to combine one of the fence options with sections of landscape plantings. It was stated that the type of fence would be decided later. Although several members felt strongly that the split-rail fence was more esthetically pleasing, several other members noted that the split-rail fence needed almost constant attention (rails must be repositioned/replaced, etc.). At the end of the meeting a second motion was made, a vote was taken, and the motion passed to combine the post-and-rail fence with sections of living fence.

In answer to a question, Stalica briefly commented on the proposal to relocate the Whitman-Walker Clinic's contemplative garden and walkway to county park property (the Whitman-Walker Clinic on Lee Highway is being torn down to make way for new development). He noted that several sites, including Bon Air Park, are being considered. In answer to a question about the Bon Air Rose Garden, he stated that despite help from volunteers, the county landscaping staff still is spending a significant amount of time caring for the roses.

Neighborhood Conservation (NC)

In NC Representative Carl Drummond's absence, member Suzanne Sundburg gave the forwarded NC report. The North Frederick Street project was not funded in the December funding round and is not projected to be funding in the spring funding round either. There were a total of 23 NC projects completed in 2008. The deadline for submission of Missing Links (sidewalk completion) projects is March 23. Interested parties should see Carl Drummond or Suzanne for an application and program specifications.

Neighborhood Day

There will not be a parade for Neighborhood Day on May 9. However, BCA will once again host a barbeque at Fire Station #2 near the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and N. George Mason Drive. The membership voted to allocate up to \$100 for the barbeque. David Van Wagner and Bob Atkins volunteered to assist with the barbecue, and Judah is looking for additional volunteers to help with the event.

Approval of Minutes for 12/9/08

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 12/09/08 joint General Membership and Executive Board meeting (the January General Membership meeting was canceled due to inclement weather). A motion to approve the 12/09/08 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 12/09/08 minutes as drafted. Thorne will forward the 12/9/08 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

Bluemont Village Center (BVC) Working Group

Wendy Dean reported that the Bluemont Village Center Working Group has been meeting regularly to create a development vision for the neighborhood's commercial center along Wilson Boulevard (between N. George Mason Drive and N. Greenbrier Street). Rather than reacting to a developer's future request, the neighborhood would like to provide the county with a proactive and defined statement in Bluemont's updated NC Plan. At the most recent meeting, Planning Commission and BCA member Steve Cole volunteered to approach the urban planning department at Virginia Tech to see if a class would like to work with the group. There will be crossover between this group and the folks updating the NC Plan. For example, the BVC group is working on survey questions related to the commercial area for the NC survey, which Bluemont would be required to distribute if it implements a formal update of its NC Plan. Among the issues being examined are the importance of a neighborhood school and what kind of commercial area development would be preferable. Member David Van Wagner will collect and combine questions about the commercial area for the survey. His e-mail address is dpvanwagner@mindspring.com.

Other Old Business

After checking with the Arlington County Manager's office, Jim Thorne reported that although the county code includes a table with noise limits, the sound measurements can only be made by the Code Enforcement Office and its staff members only work during regular business hours. Thus, the noise table itself is not enforceable to curtail loud parties on weeknights or weekends. Thorne's neighbors attended the meeting and asked if this issue only pertained to them. Thorne responded that at least six other couples had reported party noise problems in various locations throughout Bluemont. Also, Officer O'Daniel had previously described problems with outdoor drinking contest games in the parks. Afterwards, Thorne complimented the neighbors for attending the meeting. Thorne will put together a list of questions and answers on these issues, including County policies and procedures, for posting on the BCA Website. The membership voted to approve moving ahead with the process to formally update Bluemont's NC Plan.

Other New Business

The membership voted to change the date of the April meeting from the 22nd to the 29th. Ron Carlee has been invited to speak at the April meeting. There was a call for volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee. Bob Atkins and Richard Young volunteered to serve in this capacity. The membership further discussed the relocation of the Whitman-Walker Clinic's contemplative garden. According to information provided by BCA and Parks Commission member Kate Mesches, the county is considering the garden's relocation to Bon Air Park. The membership is open to the idea of the contemplative garden moving to Bon Air Park. Judah will follow up on this with Parks Division on this matter. Jim Thorne volunteered to fill the position of Emergency Preparedness Liaison.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:20 pm.