

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

General Membership Meeting Wednesday, March 25, 2009, 7:30 p.m. Arlington Traditional School

Call to Order

Neighborhood Conservation (NC) representative Carl Drummond called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 pm. In attendance were Judah dal Cais, Wendy Dean, Mary Thorne, Sam Ferro, Suzanne Sundburg, Carl Drummond, Judy Collins, and 7 Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members.

Update from Environmental Landscape Supervisor Patrick Wegeng, Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources—Parks and Natural Resources Division

Bicentennial Flower Garden

Due to budgetary concerns, the county will be looking for ways to cut costs associated with plantings. Mulching, weeding, spraying and watering costs can be saved by replacing annuals with perennials. This May, petunias will be planted in the Bicentennial Flower Garden, but going forward, perennials such as ornamental grasses, day lilies or knock-out roses will be used instead. This is considered a signature garden for the county so adequate funds will be allocated to maintain an attractive appearance. The annuals could return in two or three years as the budget allows.

Rose Garden

There are currently two full-time employees working in the Bon Air Memorial Rose Garden, but Wegeng has been charged with reducing the time spent on maintenance. His first step has been to increase landscape and gardening staff efficiency. Next, he will be making changes to the plantings. By moving or eliminating plants on the periphery of the garden he will reduce maintenance requirements. These plants include the bushes next to the tennis courts and roses on the hillside towards four mile run. The perennials in the interior are also being evaluated. He may contract out spraying while maintaining edging and pruning duties. Wegeng is looking for volunteers to help with the cutting of rose blooms. He would like to organize teams of volunteers to build community involvement and distribute the hot tedious work over as many neighbors as possible. Judah offered to put a request for volunteers in the April newsletter, which will be distributed to nearly 2,000 households within Bluemont boundaries. Wegeng appreciated this offer and will provide Judah with the necessary details. The bottom line is that the rose garden will not be eliminated but some tweaking must be done to protect this community treasure.

Planting associated with fence replacement

Kevin Stalica asked Patrick Wegeng to discuss aspects of planting related to replacing fencing. There will be 1,574 feet of total fencing with 75 feet at each intersection. Wegeng would like to expand the number and variety of trees in the park. Part of his responsibility is to increase the number of trees in the county. He was wondering why there are so many open spaces in Bluemont Park without trees. The membership informed him that families enjoy the open space for playing volleyball. In addition to trees, he will use boulders and large shrubs. (Stalica will provide funds from his budget for the fence and, hopefully, for the boulders.) Some of the trees he is considering are red maples and bald cypress. He will select shrubs that grow thick which minimizes the sunlight that reaches the ground and discourages weeds. Some examples of these are witch hazel and bottlebrush buckeye. He plans to plant in groupings rather than straight lines. Once he orders the plants it will require only two weeks for them to arrive and be planted. He would be happy to bring a schematic drawing to the April 29 meeting.

Healing Garden

Judah asked what the plan is for the healing garden at the Whitman-Walker Clinic. Wegeng has been serving on an ad hoc committee concerned with the future of the garden. This garden is comprised of shade-loving plants and stone pavers, which provide a sense of sanctuary for those who visit. Due to the planned redevelopment of the site, the garden has to be moved by March 31. Initially the plants will be stored in a county nursery until a more permanent solution is developed. Parks and Natural Resources has provided, and can continue to provide, advice but cannot move or maintain the garden. The ad hoc committee may set up a nonprofit 501(c)(3) to fund the moving the plants and stone pavers to a new location nearby and to provide for ongoing garden maintenance. Several sites, including Bluemont, Bon Air and Dominion Hills, are being considered as possible sites for relocating the garden.

Trees

Wegeng is seeking opportunities to add additional trees to Bluemont. In addition, there are county funds available for planting trees on private property where storms have knocked down trees. The goal is to increase the mature tree canopy (now at just 16%) to 41% in Arlington County. Part of this program is providing the 4- to 5-foot tree whips on Neighborhood Day. This year bur oak and American hazelnut whips will be provided. Last year, 1,300 whips were distributed. This distribution is accomplished through a system of neighborhood coordinators who take the requests and organize the distribution.

Approval of Minutes for 2/25/09

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 2/25/09 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 2/25/09 minutes was made and

seconded. The membership voted to approve the 2/25/09 minutes as drafted. Thorne will forward the 2/25/09 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

Update from Bluemont Village Center (BVC) Working Group

The BVC working group met with Professor Shelley Mastran from Virginia Tech on March 24. (Mastran was invited to meet with the group by BCA and Planning Commission member Steve Cole.) If approved by Mastran's dean, her urban planning students could take on the design of Bluemont Village Center as a class project in the fall. The BVC working group is working on creating a vision for the Wilson Boulevard commercial center anchored by Safeway. The goal is to have a plan with buy-in from the neighborhood before a developer comes in with a site plan. Once a development plan reaches the site plan review stage, there is limited opportunity for the neighborhood to provide meaningful input. The group has created a draft list of survey questions pertaining to this project which will be posted on the BCA Website within the next few weeks.

Neighborhood Day Barbecue

The BCA neighborhood barbecue will be held on May 16 (note change of date from May 9) from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Judah can help in the morning. Both Carl Drummond and David Van Wagner offered to help. The site of the barbecue has yet to be confirmed.

Old Business

David Van Wagner volunteered to join Bob Atkins and Richard Young on the Nominating Committee. Judah will follow up with Scott about migrating servers. Robbie Guenther hopes to have an answer for BCA by the April meeting regarding moving the Pensky (formerly Budget) rental trucks back to the Safeway lot.

Peck-Staples Update

Wendy Dean reported that JBG has requested several site plan amendments.

Several of these are of particular interest to nearby residents. The relevant amendments are the following:

- 1) Narrow the temporary pedestrian walkway on Glebe Road adjacent to the site in front of the former Staples property. The walkway would still be ADA compliant and would not impact traffic flow.
- 2) Reconfigure slightly the street geometry of the 800 block of N. Wakefield St. to provide a better transition between the travel lanes north and south of the new Ninth Street North, while adding two zone 8 parking spots and maintaining a planting strip north of the new 9th St.
- 3) Reconfigure North Wakefield Street such that the streetscape south of Ninth Street North, on the east side of North Wakefield Street, be revised

to a five foot wide sidewalk with a four foot wide planting strip to match the widths approved north of Ninth Street North.

4) Allow the developer to verify the bottom of one portion of the excavation and let it start garage construction there while the other end of the hole is still being dug (then verify that excavation point before starting garage construction at that end). Also, a technical amendment regarding wall measurement is proposed.

A motion was passed to allow the officers of BCA to draft a letter in support of the amendments. These site plan amendments will be considered by the County Board on April 25.

Neighborhood Conservation (NC)

County Manager Ron Carlee has announced that all traffic-calming projects have been eliminated from the 2010 budget. There are 72 streets affected by this decision. Budget hearings took place on March 24 and 25. Neighbors can still e-mail the County Board their input regarding the budget.

New Business

Newsletter articles are due to Suzanne Sundburg by April 1. No site or speaker has, as yet, been identified for the April meeting. Neighbors wishing to participate in Earth Hour should turn out their lights from 8:30–9:30 pm on March 28. Many countries will be participating in this environmental effort. Judy Collins reported that the current membership has reached 225. Barbara M. Donnellan, the Deputy County Manager, will speak at the May meeting.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00 pm.