

BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

General Membership Meeting Wednesday, April 29, 2009, 7:30 p.m. St. Ann Catholic Church

Call to Order

President Judah dal Cais called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 p.m. In attendance were Judah dal Cais, Mary Thorne, Sam Ferro, Carl Drummond, Judy Collins, 10 Bluemont Civic Association (BCA) members and 8 nonmembers.

Helen F. Reinecke-Wilt, AICP, LEED AP Program Manager for Arlington County's Residential Green Building and Energy Conservation Program

Helen Reinecke-Wilt described her background in urban planning and both residential and commercial green building. She described the Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program and the Arlington County Green Home Choice Program. The details of this program are available at:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/EnvironmentalServices/epo/EnvironmentalServicesEpoGreenHomeChoice.aspx>

Reinecke-Wilt recommended Consumer Reports or the Consumer Product Safety Commission as sites that compare green products. Virginia will be rolling out a new home energy audit program this summer, which will be announced on the Arlington County Website. Consult the "Energy" heading under the section headed "Environment." The new program does not include green certification for energy efficiency for renovations that have already been completed. The stimulus package to encourage making houses more energy efficient does not have an income limit as was true in the past. Reinecke-Wilt recommended the free "Green It" workshops offered by the county. The next one related to home energy savings, titled "Air Flow and Energy Leaks in your Home," will be presented on May 9. The discussion produced several suggestions for disposing of inefficient appliances including craigslist.org, FreeCycle.com and DeConstruction Services. ReBuild Warehouse in Springfield sells used building materials. There are additional details about these businesses is available on their Websites.

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

Judah explained that the reason that a split-rail fence had been erected instead of the post-and-rail fence (which BCA had voted for on February 25) was due to a communication gap between Judah and the county. Patrick Wegeng explained the various goals he is trying to achieve with the plantings adjacent to the split-

rail fence. He wants to plant as many trees as possible, discourage vehicular traffic in Bluemont Park and allow open space. He is responsible for planting 1,200 trees a year throughout the county. He sees a possibility of adding 40 to 50 trees to Bluemont Park. Wegeng's plan calls for shade trees that will add canopy, and discourage weed growth, while blocking direct vehicular access to the trail.

The trees chosen will have a high canopy so that they don't provide hiding places for criminals. They also will be planted on hills and at least eight feet from the bike trail. The plantings will not be placed in a straight line adjacent to the fences but rather in attractive groupings with a more natural look. His plan calls for installing a long, narrow berm and adding boulders that would be partially buried to provide seating adjacent to open play areas. He observes that most neighbors move through the park. He wants to create a place where residents linger and enjoy the space. Concern was raised that in the past trees have been planted, neglected and therefore have died. Wegeng's staff will dig test holes before tree species are chosen and a budget for maintenance is included in the plan.

Wegeng would like to install the trees before June 1. The berms are easier to build in the summer. A motion was made to accept the concept plan as presented and to authorize the BCA Executive Board and any interested residents to approve the installation. The motion passed unanimously. Within the next two weeks Wegeng will place different-colored flags to indicate locations of trees and boulders and paint the ground where the berms will be constructed. The Executive Board and any other interested members will evaluate these layouts and promptly forward comments to Wegeng on behalf of BCA. With a planting deadline of May 29, there is not adequate time to defer these decisions until the next general meeting on May 27.

Robbie Guenther of D&V Auto Service Center (Penske rental truck parking)

Robbie Guenther, who owns the Texaco station, used to park his rental trucks in the Safeway parking lot. After questions about Safeway's permit for the trucks arose, and Guenther could not longer use the lot, the idle trucks were parked on nearby neighborhood streets. In response to neighbors unhappy with having the trucks parked on the street, BCA wrote to Safeway requesting that it again allow Guenther to use its lot. There was some delay in forwarding this letter because Guenther switched his rental source company from Budget to Penske. Penske has an office near BJ's in Alexandria, and they have drivers who deliver and pick up trucks (pre- and post-rental), thus decreasing the amount of time the trucks spend in Bluemont. As requested, Guenther provided Safeway with a diagram showing the number of trucks and their proposed location in the lot. According to this plan, a maximum of 10 to 15 trucks would be parked at the Edison end of the lot with the front of the trucks facing the Safeway store. This information was sent to Safeway in mid to late February, and Safeway promised to reply within three months.

Given the desire to remove the trucks from the lot before, there was great concern expressed that the old problems not return with the trucks, if Safeway gives its okay. Guenther explained that his business and his home are located in the Bluemont neighborhood, and therefore he is eager to respond to neighbors concerns and avoid potential problems related to the trucks. He requested repeatedly that neighbors approach him directly at his business or home with issues related to his rental trucks.

He plans the following to mitigate the situation:

1. Renters will be required to return trucks to the Texaco station. This should eliminate the instances of renters parking trucks on the Safeway lot and throwing unwanted household goods and trash from their move in the parking lot or dumpster. It should also solve the problem of unlocked trucks in the Safeway lot providing locations for prostitution.
2. Guenther or his employees will check the Safeway lot a minimum of two times per day, pick up trash and deal with any other problems caused by the trucks.
3. Keep the trucks backed up toward the Edison end of the lot without encroaching on the sidewalk. This will reduce the likelihood of damage to the fence and illicit activities encouraged by the secluded area created by parking the trucks next to the fence.
4. Guenther will take full responsibility for problems related to his trucks.

Next steps:

Guenther will phone Safeway at the end of May to ask for an update regarding the decision as to whether or not Safeway will allow his trucks to be parked in the lot. If Safeway gives its permission for the trucks to use the lot, then BCA (Judah) and Robbie will draw up an agreement regarding this issue.

Approval of Minutes for 3/25/09

Secretary Mary Thorne distributed draft minutes for the 3/25/09 General Membership meeting. A motion to approve the 3/25/09 minutes was made and seconded. The membership voted to approve the 3/25/09 minutes as drafted. Thorne will forward the 3/25/09 minutes for posting to the BCA Website.

Neighborhood Day Barbecue

The BCA neighborhood barbecue will be held on May 16 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 (set-up begins at 11 a.m.). There will be an opportunity for kids to tour the firehouse. Volunteers are welcome. Come one, come all.

Other Business

May newsletter articles are due to Suzanne Sundburg by May 5. Neighbors interested in starting a community garden should contact Bob Waffle at rwaffle@comcast.net. Bob Atkins referred members to the county Website and AM 1700 for updates about swine flu. The medical reserve corps has regular exercises preparing for pandemics. Atkins advised neighbors to have food and water on hand in case they are advised to stay at home for a prolonged period. A motion was made to add the curb and gutter project on N. Edison Street to the next unfilled priority spot on the Neighborhood Conservation project list. The motion was passed unanimously. The nominating committee continues to seek volunteers for BCA officer positions. Completed Wilson Boulevard commercial area surveys can be mailed to BCA or given to Judah at the next meeting. Judy Collins reports 240 current members and asks that members remind their neighbors to renew their memberships.

Adjournment

Judah dal Cais adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:15 p.m.