

## MEETING MINUTES

Bluemont Civic Association (BCA)

General Membership Meeting

May 28, 2003 at Arlington Traditional School, Art Classroom

Return Comments/Corrections to John Huennekens [jhuenn@gwu.edu](mailto:jhuenn@gwu.edu)

ATTENDEES (per Sign-In Sheet 14 names)

Ellen Armbruster, Robert Atkins, Judy Collins, Tim Crean, Carl Drummond, Ed Fendley, Elenor Hodges, John Huennekens, Dave Hundelt, Louis Martin, Barbara Szydla, Robert Waffle, Alan & Helen Wright

Judy Collins presided over the meeting

### AGENDA TOPICS:

#### 1) Announcements

- A) Neighborhood Conservation Plan, amendments under consideration.
- B) Nominations Committee, all but Secretary filled.
- C) Second Saturday Park Volunteer Project - June 14 and July 12, 9 a.m.

#### 2) ART Bus Route Through Bluemont

Jim Hamre, Arlington County, Public Works, Transit Planner

#### 3) Community Alert System

Arlington County, Technology Services; with ROAM Secure

#### 4) Wilson Boulevard Speed Activated Light

Terry Bellamy, Arlington County, Public Works, Traffic Engineering

#### 5) Arlington Community Wildlife Habitat Project

Eleanor Hodges, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment

#### 6) Park and Stream Naming

John Huennekens

### 1) ANNOUNCEMENTS

A) Neighborhood Conservation Plan Revisions. Judah Dal Cais is spearheading an effort to review the Neighborhood Conservation Plan and recommend amendments to the project list. Any comments, suggestions and offers to assist should be directed to Judah at [judalcais@yahoo.com](mailto:judalcais@yahoo.com)

B) The Nominations Committee has succeeded in recruiting candidates for all positions except Secretary. Comments, suggestions, and nominations can be directed to Bob Atkins at [luddite2003@yahoo.com](mailto:luddite2003@yahoo.com)

C) Second Saturday Park Volunteer Project. The next two scheduled dates are Saturday June 14, and July 12. Time 9 am to 12 noon. The focus is still on invasive species removal in the area near "the Rocks". Rain washed out the last date on Neighborhood Day, but a handful of trees and shrubs from Arlington County's giveaway were planted in the woods. Arlington County has a program for people or civic groups to suggest areas of public land where trees and shrubs should be planted.

Bluemont residents might be interested in obtaining native plants for their own yard from the "plant rescue" in Reston, organized by the Virginia Native Plant Society. The current site has a variety of ferns, and lots of blueberry and huckleberry, available for the digging. Contact John Huennekens at [jhuenn@gwu.edu](mailto:jhuenn@gwu.edu) for details.

Thank you to Barbara and Laura Farron of Springfield, who heard about the Bluemont 2nd Saturday thru the VNPS and donated 5 woodland sunflower plants for use in our neighborhood park.

## 2) ART BUS ROUTE THROUGH BLUEMONT

Jim Hamre, Transit Program Coordinator with the Arlington County Dept of Public Works, ([jhamre@co.arlington.va.us](mailto:jhamre@co.arlington.va.us)) gave a presentation on a program to expand ART bus service that could provide a route through the Bluemont area. The Columbia Pike Service Improvement Plan, is an initiative supported by the County Board to enhance transit service in that area. The plan relies on frequent Metrobus service up and down the Pike, supplemented with local ART bus routes into the adjacent neighborhoods.

A survey of residents revealed that among the most frequently mentioned transit needs, such as routes to Metrorail or shopping, was a desire for a route to Wakefield HS. The survey results formed the basis for four (4) possible new ART routes. The proposed ART #75 line would run from Wakefield to Ballston, with service in the Columbia Forest, Columbia Heights West, and Glencarlyn neighborhoods. North of US 50, Mr. Hamre proposes to run the bus along Kensington, 7th and Jefferson Streets, and then down Wilson to Ballston.

Service is proposed to commence in September 2003. The next step in the process is a public hearing at the Arlington Mill Community Center scheduled for Monday, July 7 at 7:30 p.m. The audience then offered the following questions to Mr Hamre :

- Bob Atkins, Would the speed humps proposed on Kensington St affect your plans?

Mr Hamre said that he generally tries to avoid streets with speed humps, but sometimes 'you take what you can get'.

- Barbara Szydla, Would the new route curtail existing Metro service down Wilson? A - No, the formal vision is to augment Metro with ART service to ignored pockets of the county.

- Barbara S, I find the ART buses uncomfortable, bouncy, with too-narrow steps, and I don't see how handicapped people can get on board. A - they all have wheelchair lifts. We like to think of the ART bus as a clean, green, neighborhood-friendly machine; but the smaller vehicles do feel the bumps more than a 40 foot long Metrobus.

- Ellen Armbruster, What would be the frequency of service? A - Weekdays, Mon-Fri; every 30 minutes; at rush hour only - 6 to 10 am, and 3:30 to 7:30 pm.

- Judy Collins, What would be the fare? A - the same as Metro, \$1.10, rising to \$1.20 in July. The ART bus is integrated with the Metro system, in that it will accept transfers and passes. Over the next 12 months, all fareboxes will be replaced to accept the Metro Smartcard.

- Rob Waffle, Will the ART busses be coordinated with the Metro schedules? A - we do try to avoid running one bus on top of another, but really the key criteria in scheduling is the desired start and end times for each trip.

- Bob A, How many stops will there be in our neighborhood? A - usually there's a stop about every 2 blocks. You can run a bus with no fixed stops, and let it be flagged down anywhere en route, but stops (and their signs) do help to identify the routes.

- Rob W, Metro does a lousy job of placement for their stops, dropping off people far from the nearest crosswalk so that they end up jaywalking across the street. A - Metro inherited some of their stops from the old AB&W, but they haven't made any effort to upgrade. Arlington County hired a consultant to survey all the bus stops in the county and nominate the 100 most in need of improvement. We thought the scope was somewhere under 500 stops, but the consultant found 1,012 bus stops within the county.

- Bob A, Your new route could put some stops at Wilson & Jefferson, and at Kensington & Carlin Springs.

- Barbara S, What other routes could the proposed bus line take? A - if we don't come up Kensington and Jefferson to Wilson, we'll probably just go up Carlin Springs Rd to Glebe.

- not sure who, If they build speed bumps on Kensington, will you divert the bus route down Fifth, and then up Jefferson? A - probably not, in driving around to scout out the route, 7th was a much better street than 5th, more open and flatter.

- Rob W, Have you considered extending the route beyond Wakefield to Shirlington? One possibility considered was to go over to Walter Reed, then past the 7/11 and up the hill into Fairlington, and then come down into Shirlington through the back way. But we dropped the idea because it took so long, and because Shirlington seems to be pretty well served already.

- Bob Atkins, Should the Civic Association take a position on this? A - it always helps to have a show of support.

**\*\*MOTION\*\*** made by Bob Atkins, seconded by Judy Collins, that :

" The Bluemont Civic Association supports the concept of an ART bus route that would go through the neighborhood between Carlin Springs Road and Wilson Boulevard. "

DISCUSSION :--> None

**\*\*MOTION APPROVED\*\*** (Unanimously - 14 Yes votes)

### 3) COMMUNITY ALERT SYSTEM

George Burado of Arlington County, and David Dresler and Dan Cedro of ROAM Secure; gave a presentation on Arlington County's Community Alert System. The system is a free emergency text messaging service that can send notices out to your e-mail, cell phone, pager, or PDA. Registration is free, and easy - just log onto [www.arlingtonalert.com](http://www.arlingtonalert.com).

Dave Dresler is the CEO of ROAM Secure, the contractor that is setting up these systems in Arlington, Fairfax, and parts of DC. Many of us can recall how the phone system was tied up on 9/11/01. In the aftermath, Arlington County looked for a method to alert a large number of people quickly in the event of some emergency such as fires, severe weather, disaster, power outages, etc. ROAM Secure was brought in first to provide Arlington County emergency personnel with an emergency alert system. Then, Arlington County signed up all of its employees onto the system. Now, the county wants to enroll the entire community. They've already signed up the managers of some 200 major commercial buildings.

Mark Penn, the emergency management director for Arlington County, decides when to send out a message. There is no spam, advertising, or other county government information. Examples of alert messages are things such as a call for 4-wheel drive vehicles in a snowstorm, or an alert that went out for the recent traffic tie-

up on the GW Parkway that was caused by a truck bomb scare. A recent message read "Terror Threat Level raised to Orange. See county e-mail for more information." Arlington has been judicious about using the alert system, as opposed to a system in DC that has sent out 3,000 alerts in 1-1/2 years.

Signup is very simple, after which a test message will be sent out to your device. The system will continue to send out a test message on the First Friday of every month. Subscribers can update their device info anytime by logging in with their password. The Community Alert System has a Help / Support link on the website.

George Burado asked how many people have cell phones, and then how many used text messaging. He explained that 90% of cell phones have text messaging capability, even if most of us don't use it. Arlington is seeing about 50-100 people sign up every day and hopes to have everyone signed up.

Bob Atkins commented that he signed up in April and still hasn't gotten a message. He asked how can he know whether it's ok? George said that there is a spot on the website called [Test Device], and that by clicking onto the page, the system will send out a test message to the user. If it doesn't work, the user can go to the Support section of the website.

Rob Waffle asked if there were still air raid sirens. There aren't any more in Arlington.

#### 4) WILSON BOULEVARD SPEED ACTIVATED LIGHT

Terry Bellamy, of the Arlington County Dept of Public Works Traffic Engineering office, gave a presentation on the speed-activated stoplight that will be installed on Wilson Blvd. Terry's drawing showed that the light will be installed about midway between Lexington St and 4 Mile Run. At the top of the hill to the west, a flashing signal will warn speeding drivers to be prepared to stop. The light was not put at Lexington St because DPW did not want to encourage cut-through traffic. It did not go up at Manchester St because they did not think that cars would be able to stop safely if they were coming down the hill from the west.

The stoplight will also have push buttons for pedestrian activation. There will be a crosswalk painted on the street that will connect to the Rose Garden, with driveways cut into the curb. New, brighter, street lights will be installed along Wilson. The County Board supports this project and money is available for construction.

Rob Waffle commented that if the light were installed at Lexington, it would give residents of the side streets a chance to get out onto Wilson Blvd in the morning. Terry Bellamy replied that they will still be helped by a red light stopping traffic half a block away.

Rob W asked what the setpoint for activation will be. Terry B wasn't sure, but said that the general rule of thumb is 10-12 mph above the speed limit. He noted that the Setpoint can be changed based upon the time of day.

Ed Fendley relayed to Terry B his thanks to the county for installing this light. He asked when it could be installed. Terry B said the work could start as soon as 3 weeks, and that the light should be operational by July or August.

Ed F said that the county should plan for success in their designs, and assume that drivers will learn from the stoplight to adhere to the speed limit. Thus, he thought that the stoplight could be placed at the Manchester St intersection, since cars will soon be coming down the hill more slowly, and since that intersection also has a bike trail

crossing. Ed wondered if the new crosswalk would have flashing lights like the one by Ballston Common Mall.

Lou Martin asked why the light couldn't be installed permanently. Terry B said that the speed-activated light is just a first step, and will be monitored as sort of a test. Depending on the results, and on what happens after the new Powhatan Springs Park opens to the west, the county will decide at a later date on whether to make the light permanent.

Another audience member asked if this light would affect proposals to narrow Wilson Blvd. Terry B said No, road narrowing is the subject of a separate study. Ed F said that if anyone is interested in the arterial traffic calming study, they should give him a call.

Louis Martin noted that Lorcom Lane was originally widened for the Three Sisters Bridge. But since that bridge will never be built, they finally got around to narrowing it to 1 lane each way with a median. He wondered if that could be done on Wilson. Again, Terry B said that Wilson Blvd is the subject of a separate study, and that different opportunities present themselves at different spots.

Someone thanked Terry B for not putting the light at Lexington, since that would encourage cut-through traffic.

#### 5) ARLINGTON COMMUNITY WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT

Eleanor Hodges, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, gave a slide show presentation about Arlington's "Community Wildlife Habitat Initiative". Within 3-5 years, this program hopes to encourage the creation of 1,000, National Wildlife Federation certified, wildlife habitats county-wide. The program is sponsored by the NWF, the Park Dept, the VA Native Plant Society, the Cooperative Extension Service, and by Wild Birds Unlimited.

Resources available include a free yard assessment, which invites a team of experts to survey your yard and give suggestions on what to plant. A sign-up sheet was passed around, or you can call 703 228-6427. The Four Elements of a good habitat are 1) Food, 2) Water, 3) Cover, and 4) a Place to Raise Young. A backyard wildlife habitat is beautiful, educational, and long-lasting.

The subsequent slide show provided examples of how to provide food, water, cover, and a place to raise young. Plants such as sumac, dogwood, aster and columbine provide good sources of food, are pretty, and aren't as messy as a bird feeder. Pollinators like monarch butterflies also need a food source.

A backyard pond or birdbath can provide water. Moving water, such as from the use of circulating pumps, will prevent the growth of mosquito larvae in the water. A bio-friendly product called a mosquito dunk is available for use in stiller waters. Water sources should have some sheltering plants around so that birds are not afraid to land. A water heater will help the birds get through the winter freeze.

Cover can include everything from shrubs and groundcover plants, to a log or rock pile. Toads like overturned clay pots. Snags, or dead trees, provide a home for cavity nesters, and a food source for bug eaters. Some people try to attract bats to their bat box. Eleanor then distributed information packets about how to create your own Backyard Wildlife Habitat.

Rob Waffle expressed concern that backyard habitats could attract rats or raccoons.

Elenor replied that bird seed is attractive to pests, and noted that's one advantage to planting native plant food sources. Lou Martin commented that zinnias attract goldfinches and tiger swallowtail. Someone said that if you want to see honeybees, plant a fig tree.

Elenor reminded everyone that certification of your yard as a wildlife habitat is through the National Wildlife Federation. She said that her organization, ACE, would like to be notified if you do get certified.

Rob Waffle asked if anyone knew who placed the beehive in Bon Air Park at the top of the hill. He said that some of the neighbors were concerned about getting stung. He had heard a caretaker say that someone is placing these in all of the parks.

## 6) PARK and STREAM NAMING

John Huennekens talked about how publicizing the location of the Second Saturday Park Project is hindered by the lack of a formal name for that portion of the county's park system. The stream that flows through the park is also apparently unnamed. After some research, he'd like to suggest names for the park and stream, for BCA endorsement. Hopefully, if the park and stream have a name, people will identify with these areas, and take better care of them.

The county has a formal policy for naming parks and facilities. The criteria for a new name is generally to recognize "the geographical historical, or ecological relationships in which the site is located." Nominations are submitted to the Park and Recreation Commission. They consult with the local civic associations, the Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board, and the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Commission, before deciding whether to recommend the new name to the County Board for approval.

**\*\*MOTION\*\*** made by John Huennekens, seconded by Ed Fendley, that :

" The Bluemont Civic Association supports the naming of the county parkland that is bounded by Carlin Springs Road, Four Mile Run, the VEPCO substation, and the residential areas to the north, as the JOSHUA DeVAUGHAN PARK. "

DISCUSSION :--> John H explained that Joshua DeVaughan is the first person who is known to have lived on the property. He first appears in the historic record during the 1880's, when he was signing marriage certificates as a minister of the Oak Level Baptist Church. Around this time he also purchased property in the vicinity of the Long Branch Nature Center and Tyrol Hill Park.

Later on, Mary Carlin, a spinster schoolteacher who lived to the age of 100 in the log house with the historic marker on Carlin Springs Road, gave him the property west of Kensington St in return for his commitment to take care of her property during her old age.

The daughter-in-law of the man who bought the log house after Mary Carlin's death, recalls that "Uncle Josh" actually lived on Carlin's property east of Kensington St, in a cabin down the hill towards the unnamed stream. Mr DeVaughan's property was subdivided among several owners. The Central Library's Virginia Room has an oral history transcript from a Mr Garrett, who lived in Bon Air in the 1920's, in which he called the small African-American community that grew up west of Kensington St, "DeVaughan's Hill". Today there is no trace of DeVaughan's Hill, which was bought up by VEPCO and the county, and the houses demolished.

**\*\*MOTION APPROVED\*\*** (Unanimously - 10 Yes votes)

John Huennekens went on to explain that naming a stream appears to be a more difficult task than naming a park. The name must ultimately be approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, a unit of the US Geological Survey. A 27-page document entitled "Principles, Policies, and Procedures: Domestic Geographic Names" contains guidelines and an application form. The general criteria is that the name be "Imaginative and relatively distinctive ...descriptive; or suggested by local history, folklore, or incident; or by associated natural life or phenomena." Personal names are allowed, if the person being honored is associated with the feature, or made a significant contribution to the area. The application should provide a short biography (if a personal name is involved), and be accompanied by letters of support from residents and the local authorities.

**\*\*MOTION\*\*** made by John Huennekens, seconded by Ed Fendley, that :

" The Bluemont Civic Association supports the naming of the unnamed tributary stream of Four Mile Run, that flows through county-owned parkland between Carlin Springs Road and North Kensington Street, as the ADAMS SPRING BRANCH. The Bluemont Civic Association also requests that the County Board express its support for the proposed name, in a letter to accompany the neighborhood's application to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. "

DISCUSSION :--> John H explained that he has been unable to find any record or map that indicates a formal name for this local stream. The earliest depiction of the stream was a survey from the 1880's that divided the property of George Rozzell Adams, which depicts the stream as the "Spring Branch". Mr Adams was doing a little estate planning, granting 1/3 of his property (with the house) to his wife, and retaining 2/3 for himself (and eventually his other heirs).

The term Spring Branch is generic, but a common form of usage in the area. Hardin's Spring Branch was identified in 19th century surveys about a quarter-mile east, near where George Mason Dr now crosses past Lubber Run Park. Today, Arlington has two Long Branches, although the one now buried near the eponymous elementary school was also once called Hall's Spring Branch. Recent documents associated with the development of a new county park west of Bluemont near the Dominion Hills Swim Club described the stream flowing across that parcel as the Powhatan Spring Branch.

The division of land by Mr Adams is evident today in the form of the Bluemont neighborhood. The 2/3 portion was subdivided by his heirs in 1890 as the Bon Air Subdivision. The 1/3 portion of his widow Mary, was subdivided by her heirs as the first section of today's Brandon Village Subdivision. The unnamed stream drains parts of both subdivisions. Before the county adopted its uniform street naming system in 1935, N Greenbrier St in Brandon Village was called Adams Spring St.

George R Adams was a prominent citizen of Arlington (then called Alexandria) County during the Reconstruction of the area after the Civil War. The "Underwood" Constitution, adopted in 1870, created a new Virginia institution called the County Board of Supervisors. George Adams was appointed by Governor Walker to the 4-man commission that divided the county into its first supervisor districts.

The Underwood Constitution also provided, for the first time in Virginia, a mandatory system of public education. Our county's schools were initially administered by

Richard Carne, the Superintendent for the City of Alexandria. But in 1881, the State Board of Education ruled that the county schools must have their own leader, and appointed George R Adams as Alexandria County's first Superintendent of Schools. Although he was replaced by Stephen Wibirt one year later, George R Adams can arguably be described as Arlington (nee Alexandria) County's first School Superintendent.

**\*\*MOTION APPROVED\*\*** (Unanimously - 10 Yes votes)

The Association then voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.