



ARLINGTON RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION
Membership Meeting Minutes
March 18 2010

1. Opening Remarks/Overview of recent activities: Chick Walter convened the meeting at 7:00 pm and discussed the following:

a) Impact of County's proposed 2011 budget:

--library to be closed an extra day per week (likely Tuesday). Same reduction recommended for all branch libraries.

--senior program scheduled for closure come July 1 (the start of Cty's fiscal year). Chick noted that AHCA's meeting 3/18 with Cty Bd member Zimmerman was positive.

Zimmerman encourages all to write Board on senior program closure.

--Chick noted that Pentagon City site development plan provided land for Aurora Hills facility. He also noted proximity of senior housing.

--Chick encouraged folks to send in mailer in ARCA newsletter that opposes both closures.

b) Eads St post office relocation apparently on track thanks to AHCA's past president Bruce Cameron. Post office to relocate to Millenium Building at Metropolitan Park, 1311 Fern St, across from Costco

c) Upcoming pedestrian safety/traffic improvements summarized:

--I-395 ramp and Ridge (beacon and add'l signage to SLOW DOWN)

--23rd St—school zone signage

d) Neighborhood Conservation Plan (NCP)

--Chick notes really an improvement program, not conservation

--The draft survey has been posted to the website for you comments.

--AHCA's NCP, now operational for several years, can be checked at

www.aurorahighlands.org Steve Wyner was author.

e) Crystal City redevelopment

--Letters have been written to the Arlington County Board from the following organizations: Center for Urban Education, Inc., a non-profit environmental corporation (formerly the Pentagon City Coordinating Committee) by Dick Herbst, President, and a local book club by Anne Yancoupe, President. Copies are posted on the ARCA website.

--Both letters oppose the zoning and policy changes in the proposed redevelopment, noting that:

--Significant part of the density increase is outside the County's "1/4 mile bullseye radius of the Metro station."

--The proposed construction of a 330' tower at 23rd Street will be the first building constructed. This will occur in the near future. Another 330' building on 23rd Street will be approximately 525' from the nearest single family home. The book club letter notes these buildings will [destroy breathing room and change air and wind patterns] in the

area.

--First step in the redevelopment is the removal of Cheerios Park on 23rd Street between Route 1 and Crystal Drive and replace it with an extended 23rd Street. The park will be replaced by a significantly smaller pocket park nearby.

--The density will significantly increase west of Route 1.

--The book club letter also described the importance of the principles of the zoning code as it applies to CC.

--Both letters note that development under existing zoning appears to be more appropriate.

--Copies of these letters and an updated information sheet on CC were available on table in the back for meeting attendees.

2. Overview of Community Neighborhood Alliance: AHCA's VP Cara Tenuta

--noted closure of senior program puts library at risk. AHCA wants to develop a neighborhood alliance to work with-or-without County to develop a community center for all ages.

--noted that Aurora Hills had been a community center for all when first built.

--requested completion of a 2-page survey soliciting interest. Hard cc's available. More Info available at www.arcaonline.org including a link to the survey

Or Contact Miriam Gennari: Miriam@metromakeover.com

3. Gunston Middle School

a) Madge Gill, Gunston principal, gave resounding overview of school.

--Gunston focus is college—all are considered college-bound. School has 353 computers.

--Gunston participates in the County's Spanish immersion program where, since kindergarden, children have classes half in English and half in Spanish.

--Gunston is also the home of the County's middle school Montessori program.

--Madge noted rising student population. Offered to give tours of school and feel free to email or call with any questions (mgill2@arlington.k12.va.us; 703.228.6900).

b) Madge was followed by an impressive DVD presentation of Gunston that was produced by students at Gunston's TV studio.

--Two students and TV studio teacher gave highlights/answered questions of school's "New Media Academy."

--Noted school's blog (2K hits) and video on Haitian relief effort.

--Students raised \$8K for Haitian relief. (Madge noted this was particularly impressive given the large (39%) low income student population.)

--Student video on fundraising was reported in Washington Post which in turn drew attention of Haitian Embassy, which publically recognized student effort.

--Cheryl Mendosa of AHCA noted satisfaction gained/little work involved from participating in Gunston's student mentoring program. Call school for info (703-228-6900).

--Kathie Laird noted Arlington Retired Teacher Assn silent auction at Church of the Covenant, 2626 N. Military Road on April 14, 12:30; contact Jenny Sinsabaugh, at 703/684-6805 for details.

4. Wakefield High School

a) Kathie Laird:

--noted that Wakefield 's principal is retiring after 43 years as an educator—replacement search just beginning.

--Run For Wakefield fundraiser: annual 5K run/walk for college scholarships, will be 24 April, 9:00 a.m., at Bluemont Junction & W&OD Trail.

--introduced Cathy O'Malley of the Building Level Planning Committee.

b) Cathy O'Malley, w/PPT pix, explained 3-yr, collaborative (neighbors, students, teaches, all stakeholders) construction design of new Wakefield HS.

Highlights included:

--house 1600 students

--3 levels (stories)

--will meet LEED "green" design stds (possibly gold, ie the highest std) given geo-thermal heat)

--will meet all ADA stds

--new bldg to be where ball fields now are

--main entrance on Dinwiddie, near George Mason [The County wants the new WHS to serve as a Gateway to Arlington.]

--central courtyard designed to be a student hangout (as opposed to kids going off-campus for lunch)

--2 swimming pools, one 8-lane, one teaching/diving

c) Sue Super, an ARCA/AHCA resident who closely follows school developments, discussed 2006 bond referendum financing of Wakefield construction—and why it would be cost effective to start construction sooner than planned—ARCA is preparing a letter of endorsement to forward to the county.

Highlights:

--\$156 m w/2014 start per 2008 estimate BUT given current low interest rates and construction costs, \$109 m if start sooner per bond referendum on Fall 2010 ballot.

--if wait to 2012, then \$15 m more in construction plus higher interest rates

--another reason for is County's 10% cap on debt service

--ARCA and AHCA supported previous referenda

5. Mike Staples, Arlington Professional Firefighters and Paramedics Assn (APFPA), Local 2800, requested citizen support for referendum on November ballot to change Arlington County government from a County Manager plan to a County Board form of government.

a) Current County Mgr plan of gov't (adopted in 1930) says Staples:

--prohibits fire chiefs and police chiefs or any department head from direct discussion w/Board members and vice versa. All such discussions must go through the County Manager, who has the hiring authority for County staff.

--As result chronic problems such as shortage of medic units go uncorrected.

--This is reason fire trucks often used for medical emergencies. (Staples noted that all Arlington fire fighters are trained EMTs.)

--Police union also supports ballot initiative.

--Arlington only jurisdiction in VA that “vests all executive authority in an unelected bureaucrat under the County Manager form of government.”

b) What change would mean to Arlington County:

--Still have County Board but members would be elected by district or ward (similar to Fairfax County) rather than “at large.”

--Still have County Mgr but shifts executive authority to County Board.

c) Need 14K signatures by July 15 for petition to get on ballot.

d) Other:

--Response time is measured from time of dispatch to arrival at address, rather than arrival at patient—which is a measurable difference when patient resides in a high rise.

--Station 5 is busiest station in Arlington.

--There’s a Fire Dept warehouse at 700 S Ball St and another in Shirlington.

5. Meeting was adjourned at 8:45. Next meeting scheduled for May 20 2010