

**Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, October 24, 2007 at Lee Community Center**

1. Civic Association President Suzanne Kray-Idziak called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. The agenda was approved and the Treasurer's report, showing a balance of \$3,490.58 (a decrease of \$443, reflecting \$577 in expenses, mostly for newsletter printing, against \$134 in income from membership dues receipts), accepted. Ms. Kray-Idziak then invited reports on old business.
2. Cathy Mercil briefed on elementary school district boundaries. All north Arlington schools are at or above capacity, with Tuckahoe the most severe at 120%. While there is some unused capacity in south Arlington, the School Board is not considering busing as a means to achieve enrollment balance. The School Board was to meet November 1 to review boundary change proposals. Neighbors wishing to provide input are welcome to contact Ms. Mercil at cathy.mercil@comcast.net.
3. Civic Association VP Jenni Michener briefed on Commerce Bank's application to construct a one-story red brick bank building to replace the Pure gas station at 5510 Lee Highway. Commerce has incorporated all the neighborhood's requests in its plans. This includes decreasing the drive-thru lanes from three to two; increasing the buffer, with mature trees, from five feet to 30 feet; installing a retaining wall, fence, and streetscape; and funding for traffic calming on Illinois St. The bank will also remove the underground gas storage tanks and remediate the surrounding area. Although there will be no drive-thru ATM, County staff were opposing the project because they cite the drive-thru lanes as not in keeping with the urban character of the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the Pure gas station continues to use the lot for unauthorized activities, such as Christmas tree sales (with attendant use of chainsaws), which negatively impacted neighbors. Given the bank's accommodation of neighborhood concerns, Civic Association executive committee proposed writing a letter to the County Board in favor of the bank project. The motion to do so was seconded and unanimously approved.
4. Concerning the County's renovation of the park behind Lee Community Center, County Environmental Landscape Supervisor Patrick Wegeng explained that there were several tree remediation needs arising from the construction. Where compacted soils had damaged tree roots, a product would be sprayed on the bark to retard leaf growth and thus increase root growth. The butterfly garden will further impact roots; a ginkgo had been moved to preserve it. Replacement trees (7-8" diameter, chest height) were to be installed along the parking lot and a cedar tree next to the sidewalk. Member Doug Watson suggested evergreens, like giant arbor-vita. Mr. Wegeng said they planned a mixture of evergreens, including holly or juniper; it would not be monoculture. Plans were to plant soon, but dry weather had not helped. The County's overall aim was to improve the urban canopy; this was the reason for the free tree giveaway in the spring. Further on the Lee Center, a member noted that seniors would like a crosswalk.
5. Susan Finotti reported that the neighborhood traffic calming committee had selected N. Kensington St. between Lee Highway and N. 22nd St. as one of three projects for funding. While members supported the overall project, several expressed opposition to the use of corner nubs. Rob Swennes moved to have the Civic Association support the project; this passed unanimously, with the proviso that nubs be given the lowest funding priority.
6. Ms Kray-Idziak then introduced the invited speakers. Ms. Mariamalia Araya, a local ecologist, spoke on wild animals in our neighborhood. She noted three effects of settlement on

wildlife: some species disappear completely, such as bobcats and other (larger) predators; some stay, although they may be subject to stress as wild areas diminish; and some, such as squirrels, benefit from suburban habitat. Humans generally benefit from presence of wildlife; birdsongs, for examples, may lower stress. Concerning specific species that sometimes raise concern:

- Deer—sometimes not welcome because they eat shrubs; if a problem, fencing in (part of) your garden is a solution.
- Foxes/raccoons—present because larger predators are gone, but not a threat to pets such as cats and dogs.
- Bats—beneficial because they eat insects; a single bat can eat 1,000 mosquitoes/hour. Rarely carry rabies.

Dave Blixit of the USDA confirmed that while foxes and coyotes can be a threat, they rarely are. They are opportunistic and more likely to go after smaller prey. If by chance you corner one, walk slowly away. Common sense is usually your best guide.

-- Suggestions for adapting your backyard habitat for animals include: 1) leaving in place logs or other natural places for shelter; 2) planting local species; and 3) keeping a bird feeder. On houses, large windows should be marked so that birds don't fly into them.

7. The second speaker was Jennifer Newman of the Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA), which has a contract with the County to handle orphaned, sick, or injured wild animals. It receives about 1,000 calls for wildlife assistance annually. Of these, it picks up and releases some (about 50), transfers many (444) to wild areas, arranges care for a few, and euthanizes others (317). AWLA does not keep wild animals or offer them for adoption but turns them over to veterinarians. AWLA also takes bite reports (mostly animal on animal (e.g., raccoon biting a cat) and picks up dead animals if needed—about 500 last year. Ms. Newman offered advice for pet owners:

- Feed pets indoors.
- Cats and dogs must be vaccinated, but can be allowed outdoors on your property.
- If a wild animal is on the loose in your house, you should get them out, but if that fails, use humane trapping. Trapping companies in Arlington are required to have a permit. AWLA has animal control officers who help remove animals, but work in attics only if they have stairs.

8. The third speaker was David Haring, President of the Yorktown Civic Association (YCA), who spoke on the Yorktown High School (YHS) renovation. YCA has supported the \$100 million project, but is concerned by the site's inadequate parking. Two phases of the multiphase project, a 30 classroom building on the northwest side and the renovation of Greenbrier Park, have already been completed. YHS itself is to be completely re-built, although a few existing parts, such as the auditorium, will be retained. The final building, for 1,600 students, will be 360,000 square feet, although the master plan called for only 300,000 sq. ft. YCA is concerned because the school will have only 347 parking spaces, compared to 660 for Washington-Lee and 700 for the North Tract park (near National Airport). YHS has 237 staff and about 20% (320) of its students drive to school. Arlington Parks and YHS have agreed to limit the number of days when special events will require more spaces. Mr. Haring asked for Leeway Overlee's support for more parking. Members expressed appreciation for the briefing, but no resolution on the matter was introduced or adopted, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by Ladd Connell, Secretary