

**Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Thursday, January 29, 2009 at Lee Center:
East Falls Church Redevelopment/Planning**

1. Civic Association President Jenni Michener called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm and reported on items of neighborhood interest:

-- First, she noted that Metro was conducting a Service Evaluation Study to improve service on **Metrobus** Routes 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2G, which run along Washington Blvd., and is looking for input on its findings. Residents are invited to submit comments on www.MetroBusServiceEvaluation.com or hotline (202) 370-2915.

-- Second, she reported news of an armed assault at 2100 N. Patrick Henry Blvd. and of **thefts from unlocked cars**; residents are reminded to lock their vehicles.

-- Turning to replacement of the **Pure gas station** at 5510 Lee Highway, the bank (now Toronto Dominion, reflecting its purchase of Commerce Bank in October 2007) is scheduled to be built this August. It will be a one-story building with a pitched roof. The contractor has shared a draft landscape plan which includes both deciduous and evergreens, and ornamental and taller trees. Final plans were scheduled to be submitted to the County in the near future.

2. Concerning **Rivendell School**'s use of the Lee Community Center grounds/park, the County Board approved renewal of Rivendell's use permit for 5700 Lee Highway at its January 24 meeting, but made the school's use of Lee Center park subject to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the County. This restricts Rivendell's use of the park to between 11:20 a.m. and 1:20 p.m. (M-F) and provides for use of the butterfly garden only as part of a supervised activity, among other restrictions.¹ The Board also approved as conditions of the use permit that Rivendell is to

(i) inform parents in writing, at the beginning of every school year, and as often as deemed necessary by Rivendell, to obey all traffic laws when picking up and dropping off children, or visiting the school; and

(ii) meet annually with representatives of Arlington's Parks & Recreation Dept. (CPHD Planning Division) and Leeway Overlee before the new school year begins. Rivendell is also to inform CA representatives at that time of upcoming school-year events and to (continue to) inform neighbors of the school in writing of school special events at least once per year.

Although the use permit is due for County Board renewal only in five years (2014), the annual meeting will function as a use permit review by County staff.

3. Ms. Michener invited **reports** from other officers. **Treasurer** Carolyn Connell reported that the Civic Association had taken in \$694.11 (\$600 in newsletter advertising fees, \$65 in membership fees and \$29.11 in interest on the CD) and had disbursed \$50 in Arlington County Civic Federation dues, producing a net asset

¹ See full text at http://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1126&meta_id=56730.

balance of \$4,641.09 She reminded members that 2009 dues are now being accepted. **Secretary** Ladd Connell reported that the November 6 meeting had included information from ACCF delegate Jerry Auten on East Falls Church planning and a presentation by Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE). The full minutes for this and all Leeway Overlee meetings since the end of 2005 may be found at the Civic Association website.

4. Leeway Overlee's NCAC Representative, Rob Swennes, reported on discussions with County staff and asked for views on the two Stop signs at the **intersection of Powhatan and 22nd St.** He had suggested to the County traffic engineer responsible for the stop sign reconfiguration design to review the placement of the sign at Powhatan and Potomac, which is just a few feet away from the one at 22nd St., and to consider placement where Potomac, which gets little traffic but currently has right of way, intersects Powhatan, a busier street. County staff seemed to resist any change. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to have the Leeway Overlee Executive Committee review the issue and, if appropriate, send a letter asking the County to reinstate the original stop sign configuration (one sign where Potomac intersects Powhatan) for the intersection based on neighborhood concerns regarding both the safety and the sense of the new stop sign arrangement. Leeway Overlee's **Newsletter Distribution** Coordinator, Amy Appelbaum, requested volunteers to distribute the newsletter. This entails some walking around the neighborhood four times a year; those interested should contact Amy at 703-241-8446. A member requested information on the current **Westover Library building**: is it to be demolished once the new library is built? The answer is yes: the hill where it sits will become an open park area.

East Falls Church (EFC) Re-development

5. Ms Michener then gave the floor to the invited speakers to address East Falls Church (EFC) re-development. Mike Nardolilli, President of the Arlington-East Falls Church Civic Association, the largest in Arlington, spoke first. Mr. Nardolilli is also President of the Board of the Arlington Outdoor Education Association (a.k.a. the Outdoor Lab), a 34-year resident of Arlington, and Chair of the 17-member East Falls Church Task Force, which has a County mandate "to generate a land use and transportation vision for transit-oriented development in the East Falls Church area of Arlington." Other task force members are representatives of Madison Manor Civic Association, Williamsburg Civic Association, County advisory groups, the City of Falls Church, Metro, and VDOT. The task force holds public meetings on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Fire Station #6 (Lee Hwy at Gresham Place) from 7-9 p.m.

6. Nardolilli explained that the neighborhood had been bisected by the building of I-66 and Metro, replacing the business district with a highway interchange. A key issue now was how to re-integrate pedestrians and retail business into the

neighborhood. The task force had considered Rosslyn, where pedestrians are mostly above the street (in overpasses); Crystal City, where they are below (in tunnels); and Clarendon where they are on the street. Clearly, Clarendon worked best, both for business and as a pedestrian experience. Aspects of EFC redevelopment have been under study since 2000, beginning with the Metro parking lots—which are owned partly by Metro, and partly (closer to I-66) by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). In 2002, Metro conducted an access study. One finding has been that only one in five cars using Metro lots is from Arlington County; 25% are from more than five miles away. Planners estimated that even with double the existing parking, the lot would fill up.

7. Nardolilli reported that the task force had to date agreed on several principles:
 - a) EFC was not part of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor, and should not reach the level of density found there. The distance from EFC to Ballston is as great as that from Ballston to Rosslyn.
 - b) EFC should not be a Vienna-style mega-commuter parking lot.
 - c) EFC should be designed to minimize congestion.
 - d) EFC should improve access for pedestrians and bicycles.

The task force had benefited from a 111-page study conducted by Virginia Tech students, which called for very intense development, but also proposed a large park-like plaza/deck over I-66 to provide open space for the neighborhood. While attractive, this would be very expensive (\$80 million just for the deck).

8. The task force had surveyed 1, 800 households, holding 26 meetings to create, tabulate, and report the data, Nardolilli noted. Respondents strongly supported (87%) as proactive approach by the neighborhood in the planning process with an emphasis on making it more pedestrian-friendly (90%), increasing neighborhood retail services (74%), short-term (2-4 hour, not commuter) parking, and a floor/area ratio of 2.0, which based on average coverage, translates to building heights of 5-6 stories. The ideas of a deck over I-66, expanding Washington Blvd. to provide a pedestrian and bicycle crossing, and an additional (western) entrance to the EFC Metro station all garnered support. One constraint is that VDOT wants to keep open the possibility of adding a lane to I-66. The task force continues to meet to refine views on the options, which covers only government and commercially zoned property.

9. Once decided, the task force recommendations will go to the County's transportation and housing commissions, which make a recommendation to the County Board. After the Board approves the new sector plan for the Arlington portion of the East Falls Church area, affected non-residential property owners in the area, such as VDOT and Metro, could at any time thereafter come forth with specific redevelopment projects for their properties. These rebuild projects would be reviewed by county staff and by the County Planning and Transportation

Commissions before a development proposal is submitted to the County Board for final consideration and approval. Citizens who learn about them can generally speak at the beginning of Commission meetings at which such proposals are being discussed.

10. The second speaker was Richard Tucker of Arlington County's Planning Division (703- 228-0069, rtucker@arlingtonva.us), who is County liaison to the EFC Task Force. Mr. Tucker presented the three major development proposals currently being reviewed: low-, medium-, and high-density, which involve building on the Metro parking lots to average heights of four, seven, or ten stories, respectively. The first includes above ground parking and the latter two below ground parking, but none would increase the total parking spaces. The Metro parking site would be mixed use with ground floor retail. The higher density options would provide funds for more amenities such as the full deck or a ramp from Washington Blvd. under Lee highway onto I-66 (\$14 million). The Falls Church portion of the area is zoned for a maximum of 5-8 stories. Any transfer of development rights (TDRs) allowing greater height would be considered in context.

11. The speakers then responded to questions. What happens to specific commercial sites, such as the Exxon station at the corner of Washington Blvd. and Lee Hwy., would depend on property owners and how much developers are willing to pay. Although Tyson's Corner currently has empty store and office space, transit-oriented development has been consistently in high demand in the DC area over the last 20 years, and this trend should remain, given that planners project four million people moving in over the next 20 years. The new Silver Metro line will split from the Orange just west of EFC, so that EFC would become a transfer station for passengers heading to/from Dulles, bringing more people to that stop. The EFC task force will culminate in the County Board adopting amendments to the General Land Use Plan (GLUP). However, current residentially zoned property will remain residential. Also, the Washington & Old Dominion trail will remain, and some open space could be added around it, but it could be partly re-routed.

12. Several residents expressed concerns about spillover/cut-through traffic, continuing danger for pedestrians trying to cross at Washington Blvd. and Sycamore St., EFC "becoming Ballston," unrealistic elements of some plans (e.g., an underground bus stop), whether lessons had been learned from other areas (e.g., Dunn Loring), and about impact on the Leeway Overlee area being considered. The speakers acknowledged that there were no perfect answers. However, they were seeking both to do what the community wants and to accommodate transit; they would take a look at Dunn Loring, and encouraged residents to attend EFC task force meetings. The meeting concluded at approximately 9:30 p.m.

--Submitted by Ladd Connell, Secretary