

Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Monday, April 9, 2012 at Westover Library (Conference Room)

1. Civic Association (CA) President Karla Brown called the meeting to order at 7:33pm, with 37 people in attendance. CA Secretary Ladd Connell summarized minutes of the January 31 meeting, which covered the Overlee Community Association's pool and clubhouse reconstruction and the choice of a second priority neighborhood conservation (NC) project. This NC project was chosen to follow those currently or about to be installed (Nottingham Street between Lee Highway to 22nd St.), Illinois St. also from Lee Highway to North 22nd St. (funded but set to begin a year or so after the work on Nottingham), and Illinois to Kensington on N. 24th St. (petitioned, but not funded). Minutes were approved with amendment to the description of the second priority project. Jenni Michener then gave the Treasurer's report. The Civic Association (CA) since last report had total income of \$150; expenses were incurred for printing the newsletter and support to the Yorktown graduating seniors' boat party and the Westover Easter egg hunt. The net change in assets was a negative \$452.99. The CA had earlier contributed \$200 to the non-profit corporation that is setting up the Westover Farmers' Market.

2. Ms. Brown then invited reports on old business. Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) representative Rob Swennes provided an update, noting that marking work was planned on the Nottingham Street NC project to occur next month. Ms. Brown said that a pre-construction meeting was also planned, and any residents on Nottingham north of 22nd were invited. She noted that current construction, replacing the water main, was not part of the NC project; Mr. Swennes added that he understood from [Nottingham St. resident] Pierre Boyer that utilities were also replacing a gas line. Turning to the issue of school capacity, Ms. Brown advised that the latest issue of the *Leeway Overlee Leader* had an update, notably on the Reed School property. The option that includes Reed has not been taken off the table, but other proposals are being moved forward, involving Williamsburg and Kenmore; the School Board had set a maximum of \$125 million for implementing this solution.

3. Ms. Brown introduced Tim Aken, legislative director for Rep. Jim Moran. Mr. Aken said that he lives in Glen Carlyn, and that Congressman Moran had asked his staff to meet with Civic Associations. Responding to questions, Mr. Aken noted that USDA has a program to support farmers' markets; concerning the addition of a third westbound lane to I-66 between Glebe Road and Sycamore St., he observed that VDOT had avoided full environmental review by calling it a spot improvement.

Westover Farmers' Market

4. Ms. Brown then introduced Josh Kaplowitz, Board member of Field to Table, Inc., the non-profit organizing the Westover Farmers' Market, and Rob Swennes, in his capacity as a Field to Table Board member. Mr. Kaplowitz explained the rationale for a farmers' market at Westover: a farmers' market offers locally produced goods, which brings environmental, health, and safety benefits, including freshness and variety that people can't get at supermarkets. He noted that Westover is a perfect spot for a farmers' market, as a pedestrian-friendly community, with a strong sense of community, providing an opportunity to get together while drawing from all of North Arlington—the nearest Sunday market being at Glebe Rd. and Columbia Pike. It will offer benefits/synergy for

the business district and be eco-friendly, as it is centrally located. He then reviewed the process of organizing the market, which had included productive dialogues with community, merchants, and County Board members. The organizers had incorporated as a non-profit, had recruited vendors, arranged the set-up, and sought volunteers, who were particularly needed help run the market for 1st few weeks. Mr. Kaplowitz underscored the key values of the market: it features producers only (everyone produces their own products), who come from within 125 miles of Arlington, and whose products are sustainable and affordable, while recognizing that vendors do need to make a living. They are looking at options to open up the market to food stamps, and possibly vouchers for WIC [the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants and Children], and are trying to include the Hispanic community.

5. Turning to logistics, Mr. Kaplowitz explained that the market will run from May to November, with 33 vendor locations on McKinley Road, just north of Washington Blvd. in front of Westover Library/Reed School. McKinley will be blocked to traffic beginning an hour before market opening. Patrons can use the parking lot behind or next to the school/library. Mr. Swennes noted that Sunday morning is usually a quiet time on Washington Blvd. and at Westover; there are 40 and 20 spots in the parking lots behind and next to Reed School. The market plans to have signage and volunteers to direct people to parking. Market organizers have invited vendors from other local farmers' markets, and have visited almost all the vendors. They come from Virginia, W. Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. This variety allows for different products and different seasons. Not all will be selling produce; organizers want to have a diversity of offerings. Vendors will offer fruit, vegetables, cut flowers, sustainable meats, dairy products, baked goods and other prepared foods—dips & rubs, sandwiches, and the like.

6. Mr. Kaplowitz and Mr. Swennes then answered questions. They explained that in the future, the market has the potential to use the Reed School sidewalk and parking lot – which will allow more vendors, more activities, and advocacy, e.g. for nutrition and sustainability. Use the Reed School grounds is subject to Arlington School Board's approval, however, and the School Board is awaiting legal clearance. Organizers had hoped this clearance would come in time for the market opening, but had committed, e.g. to vendors, to open in the spring. County staff has been asked to allow the market to use the street surface on an interim basis, under the same authority as for allowing a block party. Vendor tents will all be 10'x10'. The street is a right of way which the County controls. But all involved view it as likely only interim market location, and they expect to move physical location of vendors.¹

7. Discussion ensued concerning the merits of the street location, the operating hours, the possibility of congestion, and the “food miles” incurred relative to mass markets which

¹ Update: Mr. Swennes subsequently reported that at its meeting on April 24, the County Board approved the use permit for the farmers' market, but reduced its operating hours, for at least the first few months, to the 8am – 12pm time period rather than from 9am – 1pm. “That is something we can live with, but it will be a disappointment for the vendors,” he observed. Depending upon how the market works over the first few months, the hours issue could be addressed again.

may sell higher percentages of produce delivered. The main focus was a statement from the owners of Ayers Variety Store. It noted that Ayers was not against idea of a farmers' market per se; however, they had been told last year it would be on the library /Reed grounds. Closing McKinley St. will impact Ayers' business. Ayers also needs the parking lot behind the store for customers. Ayers employs seven full-time people, and wants to keep its long-term customers. They suggested the farmers' market hours be set at 8am-12pm and location be kept out of the street. Mr. Kaplowitz and Mr. Swennes said they expected that bringing 1,000 people to the Westover commercial area would actually help all the merchants. They also hoped to move the market out of the street as soon as they got permission. The interim arrangement requires a long stretch of fence to be set up and taken down each Sunday. They further explained that in any case space constraints won't allow the Westover market to be of same size as the Falls Church farmers' market. The Westover market will have a website: www.westoverfarmersmarket.com. One participant suggested a meeting with Ayers to resolve the issues it had raised. Other participants expressed their appreciation for the work done.

8. Ms. Brown welcomed members of other civic associations. She suggested that further feedback from the community and accountability for the farmers' market could be channeled via the respective civic associations, which could, if there were support, also pressure the School Board to decide on use of the Reed School plaza. In response to further questions and comments, Mr. Kaplowitz and Mr. Swennes said that while they understood concern on the part of some merchants, market logistics will be easier when it gets off the street, and the interim arrangement does protect the commercial parking lot from filling up. If the market is successful, merchants may find benefits in opening earlier than they currently do on Sundays, as many of the customers may be the same as those who shop and dine at Westover. The market may also work with Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) to provide fresh vegetables that vendors have as excess inventory. Concerning possible opportunity for other organizations to run activities (such as petition-signings or public information stands) around the market, it was noted that this would be possible, and the market could set up a sign-up sheet (web-based) to coordinate such activity.

9. In closing, Ms. Brown noted that 1) the Leeway Yard Sale was scheduled for June 2—all were encouraged to attend; 2) the Tuckahoe elementary school home & garden tours on were set for May 19, again encouraging those interested to join; 3) Leeway-Overlee was seeking nominations for officers; and 4) the next general membership meeting would be in June before school gets out. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Submitted by:
Ladd Connell,
Secretary