

Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Thursday, October 18, 2012

at Resurrection Lutheran Church Hall (Washington Blvd. at Powhatan St.)

1. Civic Association (CA) President Kim Klingler opened the meeting at 7:35 p.m., starting with reports from officers. Treasurer Jenni Michener reported a current balance of \$2,797.65, and increase from the June 19 balance of \$2,716.29, a net positive change of \$81.36, reflecting \$225 income from dues, less \$143.64 in expenses. Reading of Minutes of the June General Membership Meeting was waived. Member Mary McLean shared a presentation on alien invasive species and protecting against them.

Guest Speaker: Mary Hynes, Chair, Arlington County Board

2. Ms. Klingler then introduced Mary Hynes, Chair of the Arlington County Board as Guest Speaker. Ms Hynes spoke on a number of topics of community interest. Concerning the options for elementary schools that could be expanded to accommodate increased numbers of students, Ms. Hynes noted that APS is looking at Ashlawn. One advantage is that capacity can be added faster because it will be an addition, and the decision is driven in part by the need to get space for the start of the school year, an ambitious schedule. Transportation is also a consideration. The other elementary school that would be added is at Williamsburg Middle School, planned for 2015. This involves a lot of site work, road capacity, and managing people on these sites.
3. Turning to the **County bond issues** coming up for a vote, Ms. Hynes explained that Arlington County was seeking approval of three bonds. 1st: \$110 million for transportation including for Metro repair, not to expand, but get it working well; the remainder is for roads, bridge repair, and walking/biking trails, which would get a big step up (\$15 million across the County). 2nd: For Parks & Recreation, the largest portion is for the aquatic/fitness center at Long Bridge Park, including a 50 meter pool, a warmer pool, with a Cameron Run type facility indoors, including water slides, and funds for other park facilities. 3rd: Other infrastructure, such as to replace Arlington's underground network for technology, with optical fiber throughout the County, including schools, and Neighborhood Conservation funds. Some of the hi-tech infrastructure replaces Comcast support of \$13million/year that had been mandated by the Federal Communications Commission as a condition of their franchise. All in all, it is the most balanced package in terms of taking care of existing infrastructure and positioning the County well for future needs. A member noted that the Parks bond was a close vote in the Civic Federation. Asked about the bonds' cumulative amount, Ms. Hynes noted this group was middling, actually smaller than some prior bond approvals. The **Schools bond** has been \$30 million - \$100 million every two years. Recent bonds have funded re-building of Wakefield High School. Asked about other schools, Ms. Hynes noted that APS has a proposal for Kenmore Middle School, and one for Arlington Traditional School. This year's \$42 million is all for APS construction. She added that the County's growing school age population is "a wonderful problem;" 17-18% of the County is now school kids, and we have great school system.
4. Ms. Hynes then addressed **civic engagement**. The County Board had talked to 4-600 people to help develop a framework for civic engagement. This will drive changes in processes, potential training opportunities (the County had developed training for civic association

presidents 7-8 years ago, but this fell apart; the County still wants to provide a “neighborhood college.” The County Board’s civic engagement has also included staff people. The County staff has a generational shift going on that requires re-thinking about how best to work with citizens. Part of this means training cohorts of mid-level staff to engage in respectful civic engagement, and this will be in job descriptions. The goal is to develop a shared vocabulary, and maintain the collaboration between County government and citizens. The County Board recognizes the need to be intentional about it; it encompasses facilitating citizen-citizen, as well as citizen-staff, contacts. One area where this is being applied is adapting more online forms for citizen input. Member Chips Johnston noted that beginning in 1998, citizens and staff had worked together on the re-construction and re-purposing of the Reed School property; the only problem was citizens’ late involvement. Ms. Hynes observed that County Manager Barbara Donellan had pushed hard to get the re-construction done, getting the County library and school systems to collaborate, and finally got a single plan.

5. Kicking off more general questions and answers, Rob Swennes brought up the issue of re-paving of **Arlington’s streets**. He noted that some streets had been in awful condition last spring, e.g. Washington Blvd. However, County staffer Dave Hundel had been very responsive. Ms. Hynes responded that with pent-up maintenance, fixing it will require some time and make it tricky to get around. But the County has a lot of contractors. The County’s road maintenance goal is full re-paving every 15 years for regular roads.
6. Member Jerry Auten asked about **East Falls Church re-development**: had developers been found for the oil company. site? Ms. Hynes said she had heard nothing. She noted that for commercial building, credit markets are still difficult, and certain projects are just not being funded. JBG Central Place, being built in Rosslyn, is a speculative office building, with no bank partner. A CA member agreed that commercial financing is really tough to find; builders generally need 50% pre-sold. Ms. Hynes agreed: builders need a prime tenant or deep pockets. Mr. Auten asked about the County’s pension obligations: was the County assuming a 7.76% annual return as opposed to a 5.5% recommended rate? Ms. Hynes said there was no state directive on this; it was governed by a retirement board, and there was no accounting (FASB or GASB) rule.
7. Ms. Michener asked about **County revenues**. Ms. Hynes said this year had been tougher than last year. Commercial real estate revenue is up, so the County has had a 12.5% increase on commercial property. But this is only usable for transport. Ms. Donellan had told the Board that the County had a \$24 million gap, and would need a 4 cent raise (\$6 million per penny) in the residential rate to fill the gap. As for state aid to local governments, it has been reduced by \$60 million statewide. Sales and meals tax receipts were both up slightly, as were business & professional and hotel tax receipts. The County is not close to the top among regional jurisdictions on tax rates, but still wants to avoid any significant increase.
8. A member asked about maintenance and operating hours for Arlington’s Nature Centers. Ms. Hynes said she would check with County staff, but no building that is being used would be closed. The County is fortunate to have significant amounts of **public land** for public

good. Asked about Clarendon, she noted there is now a dog park in Lyon Village. Many young families are staying in apartments in Clarendon, since housing prices have gone up.

9. The discussion concluded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by:
Ladd Connell, Secretary