

**Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Minutes of General Membership Meeting
Tues., January 14, 2014, at Westover Library (Conference Room)**

1. Civic Association (CA) President Kim Klingler called the meeting to order and invited participants to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Ms. Klingler shared and received approval for the agenda. In absence of the CA Secretary, approval of the Minutes of the October 29 meeting, which had focused on Metro's Silver Line, was waived. CA Treasurer Jenni Michener gave her report, including a CA account balance of \$2031.15, an increase of \$170.83 from the prior meeting, reflecting primarily a surplus of newsletter advertising revenue over printing costs.

Long Bridge Park and Aquatics Center

2. Ms. Klingler then invited the featured speaker, Erik Beach [ebeach@arlingtonva.us] to give his presentation. He provided an overview of the park and the plans for construction of the aquatics center. The park already features an esplanade, four athletic fields (which are often fully booked), picnic area, gardens, and rain gardens for runoff of rainwater. It can be reached via Long Bridge Drive, with easy access to Crystal City. Phase 2, a 10.5 acre park and Aquatics & Fitness Center, is part of a master plan and is out for bid, although the design could change. It will extend the existing esplanade, with an event lawn, and parking for 229 cars on site. The estimated total project cost is \$79.2 million, including design, construction, furnishings, and security. The building as designed should receive a LEED Silver rating, high for an aquatics building. It will capture heat with 72 solar panels to heat the pool and reduce operating costs by \$250,000 per year. As for swimming, the 50 (x 25) meter pool would be suitable for college meets; it will also offer a teaching pool, a therapeutic warm water pool, and a play pool with a "lazy river." Other features will include cardio equipment and free weights, a children's play area, and (outdoors) an additional field. More information is available at the County website, <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/ParksRecreation/forums/northtract/ParksRecreationForumsNorthtractNorthTractOverview.aspx>.

3. Following Mr. Beach's presentation, Jane Rudolph, Director of Arlington Parks & Recreation Dept., was introduced. She noted that those interested could also google "[Long Bridge Park](#)" for more information. She turned to the issue of bids and operating costs going up since first estimated in 2012. It was not, as some had claimed, a 350% increase; however, the total did double. The park is projected to require total net tax support of \$3.825 million annually as of FY 2020, versus \$3.25 million originally projected.

Questions and Answers: Costs vs. Services

4. Ms. Rudolph then invited questions. Concerning Gravelly Point, she noted it is run by the National Park Service¹, rather than Arlington County. A Civic Association member who had grown up in Crystal City, then a brickyard, compared Long Bridge to the existing Barcroft health & fitness center, which is "jam-packed with youngsters" and others improving their health, said

¹ See <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=23571> or contact Thomas Sheffer, 703-289-2500.

this was a worthwhile enterprise, and commended the County; the only question was about the cost. Another member asked what was the justification for a County fitness center when there are private fitness centers available. Ms. Rudolph said the fitness center is actually a high revenue- generating portion of the project, reducing taxpayer costs. The County had undertaken a professional needs assessment, and found that local government facilities do fill a need – as noted, if you go to Barcroft, it is very crowded. Long Bridge will also be a combination facility, providing breadth of facilities for a whole family, which offers synergies. It will offer classes that you don't have to be a fitness center member to sign up for. While the County has school pools, these are not always available; Long Bridge will offer opportunities such as senior aerobics, lap swimming (in high demand), and classes for kids learning to swim. It will meet needs and interests that keep growing.

5. Another member commented that the Park's whole idea was wonderful, and had given public comment at the County Board to that effect; however, the Board was surprised by the cost overrun. While voters had passed a bond issue to fund the aquatic center, capital costs for things like the lazy river should be kept down. Ms. Rudolph responded that based on surveys done, there were waiting lists for many of the services the Center would offer, and features such as the lazy river would attract lots of families with kids and generate revenues above cost. The overall approach has been multi-functional to allow flexibility. Moreover, the County would receive a private contribution toward the Park of over \$15 million coming in next year. County staff are looking at problems with the bids, did carefully analyze costs, and are going to work to hit the predicted marks, to balance needs and revenue factors. The design firm had a cost estimator and the County had hired an independent estimator. Asked about revenue, Ms. Rudolph said there were multiple sources. These include memberships, annual passes, tickets for six visits, rentals, swim meets, classes, birthday parties, and out-of-county fees, planned for three meets per year but could have more, as several swim clubs are already asking for it.

Long Bridge Usability, Affordability

6. A member raised the issue of parking, noting that the *Washington Post* reported it was cut back significantly. Mr. Beach said the original plan was for the entire park to have 229 spots for the building, and have 175 spots on the road. On-street parking will help a lot. The County plan for events is to run shuttles from Crystal City, and to have bus service linking to Crystal City, which has 9,000 parking spaces. The Center's parking is adequate for everyday use, while for meets, shuttles are normal.

7. Another member noted her concern that Long Bridge is not convenient to rest of the County, and that even for use of the fields residents have to pay to park; this raised doubts as to affordability, especially considering that as taxpayers, is it still fair to be required to be contributing? Ms. Rudolph said that existing classes are cost-recovery; Long Bridge rates will be same, and these are certainly cheaper than private facilities. The County also has fee reduction policies for low-income residents, and facilities will offer family rates. Also, she

noted, increasing the number of swim meets (above the projected three/year) will reduce costs. The County has to charge for parking to avoid commuters overrunning the facility. A lot of us are accustomed to close access to certain County facilities. However, once people learn personally to navigate their way, anything in Arlington is not far, it was noted.

Hickory Hill - 6122 Lee Highway; Lee Highway Visioning; Rivendell School

8. Turning to remaining agenda items, Ms. Klingler asked for any comments regarding the development of Hickory Hill, at 6122 Lee Highway, an acre lot planned for by-right subdivision. There were no objections stated to the plans. On the Lee Highway visioning process, Ms. Klingler informed participants that it was still going on, with 13 civic associations involved. Meetings had drawn a lot of speakers from the County, economic development staff, officials from Marymount and George Mason Universities, the Virginia Hospital Center, etc., to discuss what they envision, not only on Lee Highway, but nearby impacts. All were invited to join the meetings. Turning to Rivendell School, discussion of the renewal of its use permit had been deferred till next month.

9. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 9 p.m.

Submitted by:
Ladd Connell, Secretary