

**Arlington Forest Citizens Association Meeting
January 17, 2018**

Minutes

I. Announcements: Allison Kennett

- Had great holiday party. Will need to identify a new location for next year while new Recreation Center is under construction.
- Meeting about Farmer's Market was held and there will be another to gauge interest by volunteers.
- Discussion about topics for upcoming AFCA meetings.

II. Neighborhood Reports

- Southside Report – no report
- Northside Report – reminder that we have a new coffee house, Sense of Place, in the shopping center and encourage people to patronize it. Construction continuing at circle.
- Greenbrier Report – Thank County for full stop sign at Edison. Challenge other parts of the neighborhood to pay dues at same rate as Greenbrier.

III. Carlin Springs Pedestrian Safety Progress Report

- Laura Strine discussed Carlin Springs crossing issues near the Arlington Forest pool. The County has completed numerous improvements, but there are a number of things that still remain:
 - HAWK signal – no way for pedestrian to know whether it's been activated. Can this be improved?
 - HAWK is solar powered and doesn't consistently work.
 - Working with Assistant County Manager Carol Mitten about issues. A meeting will be coming up.
 - There is no safe pedestrian crossing between Glebe Road and Route 50 along Carlin Springs – probably the longest stretch in the County.

IV. Katie Cristol, County Board Chair

- Passed out business card showing online resources available to residents.
- Shared her priorities as Chair.
 - Metro funding:**
 - Arlington avoided fate of becoming a pass-through for Fairfax and other communities.
 - We are in a crisis as far as funding for Metro – the level of deferred maintenance is staggering and we are running out of options. Last year's contribution was increased 300+ percent. This is not sustainable. We need more from other jurisdictions. Arlington is lobbying Richmond, other Metro jurisdictions, and tapping into spirit of regionalism. All Board members are intensely engaged in this process.

- Arlington – history of being for families and for kids. Need to tackle affordability of childcare. Bringing to the community some action plans on January 25 to present ideas for expanding childcare. Looking at aligning County and State standards. How can we partner with higher education institutions to raise qualifications of potential childcare workers. Search for more information online for Child Care Initiative.

Questions to Katie from residents:

- Concern that Board keeps approving more housing and demographers are not taking this into account properly when looking at school enrollment. Why not have developers pay for school construction impacts like other jurisdictions? **Answer:** The Board is taking a fresh look at the methodology used to project school age population from different housing types. High rises are not the source of most of the overcrowding we are seeing in schools. Prefer to ask developers to pay into support for transit network, more park space. It's not reasonable to ask people who don't benefit from schools to pay for them. Looking at what type of single-family housing generates school age kids. In a lot of neighborhoods, we are losing smaller houses.
- ArlNow survey – what should the priorities be? Parks came out as one of the highest priorities. **Answer:** Lower taxes was #1 and then #2 and #3 cost more money. Arlington uses multiple measures to assess priorities. Wants and needs this year will outstrip resources available, so looking at potential cuts.
- If single-family neighborhoods generate most students – are we undercutting ourselves by trying to encourage accessory units/duplexes in single family neighborhoods? How is question of schools and students and demographics being considered? Is data being analyzed to look at projections and compare with actual? **Answer:** Yes – student generation factors are result of a formula based on housing type. Formula is based on where students are coming from every year. How is formula tweaked? – Facilities study is looking at algorithm – but it needs to be adjusted based on land use changes. Haven't committed to doing that. Katie says projections have gotten more accurate.
- Schools and housing – most of the population growth is coming from single family housing, but if you look at the data – 55% of the growth in schools is coming from other types of housing. New emphasis on missing middle, so what impact will this have on schools? This will bring more kids. **Answer:** Growth in general, is increasing needs/demands – our small size is such a constraint in meeting all needs – but this should inform our thinking strategically – what is the limit to growth? At what point, will it diminish our quality of life and impact our taxes? What's challenging is growth in the out years that's being projected and making sure that changes are sustainable. Want a balanced budget this year. Have an office vacancy rate problem. Not

- growing revenues as quickly. We also don't want the growth to happen outside the County and then all of that traffic will pass through Arlington.
- Commercial space – what is occupancy rate and what is the strategy to increase businesses? **Answer:** 21% vacancy rate – brought it down to teens (about 19%). However, lost NSF because the federal government has changed its procedures and now commercial space is selected based on the lowest bidder, making it nearly impossible for Arlington to be successful. We have a multi-pronged strategy – retain tenants as they grow, attract smaller tenants who will grow, and go after big fish like Nestle. No easy fix. Don't want to go too far into economic incentives. Arlington has the lowest unemployment rate in Commonwealth.
 - Tax rate in Arlington is much lower than neighboring jurisdictions – why don't we talk about this in context of raising taxes? **Answer:** It is true – we have the lowest tax rate in northern VA, but people's taxes are going up because the value of the property is increasing.
 - Taxes in Arlington have doubled in last 20 years – have services doubled? **Answer:** The value of the land has more than doubled.
 - Why can Fairfax build schools for so much less? **Answer:** Arlington hired an independent auditor to determine why our costs are so much higher. Beginning of conversation—Fairfax and Loudon still have lots of land; close by stakeholders in Arlington means very element of the site has to be engineered. Soft costs in those jurisdictions are 6-8% whereas in Arlington it's 30% due to the number of meetings required and that drives up cost.
 - Comment: Happy to pay high taxes to have conversations like we had about Lubber Run Recreation Center. This is important.
 - Hard to look at designs and not come to conclusion that we are building iconic buildings – part of public process should be to look at the price tag. **Answer:** Agree that we should talk more about how much things cost.
 - Standard sand practices for public engagement – County has developed a new draft plan.
 - Comments:
 - Find Parks staff and Director very responsive.
 - Grateful for Carlin Springs project improvements.
 - Conservation plan – really hope that will continue.
 - Initiative for small start-ups – environmental firms in Arlington – form a clean tech corridor along Orange Line.

Meeting was adjourned.