

Minutes
AFCA Meeting
February 27, 2019

- I. Intro by Allison Kennett
- II. Updates:
 - a. Construction of the new pedestrian bridge in Lubber Run Park is expected to begin in the fall. Concern expressed about why it is taking so long and the bridge not being available during the Amphitheater season.
 - b. Greenbrier - discussion about the status of Carlin Springs Bridge.
 - c. Northside – pothole at Route 50 and Park Drive; water overflows on 1st Street are a problem. Where’s water coming from?
 - d. Kudos to County for planting many new trees in Lubber Run Park and in the circle.
- III. 2019 is the 80th anniversary of Arlington Forest and also the 50th anniversary of the Amphitheater. Suggestion by David Mog: How about a program of music from 1969 and showing of films from 1969? The Amphitheater Foundation will follow up on this suggestion with the County.
- IV. Laura Strine gave a presentation on pedestrian safety issues on Carlin Springs Road.
 - a. County staff was going to look into three things and the third item has not been addressed: A \$200 fine and increased enforcement was proposed.
 - b. Completed: Evaluation of flashing beacon at Harrison St. (at Arlington Forest pool). Survey found 35% of drivers are not yielding to pedestrians who have pressed the button. Drivers are not required to stop – only to yield. County plans to install the same type of yellow flashing beacon at Edison St.
 - c. Serious concern about high school students crossing Carlin Springs Road and catching the bus near Granada St.
 - d. Neighborhood looking for HAWK signals instead of yellow flashing beacons. A HAWK cycles through full yellow, red signal cycle.
 - e. Laura’s group is looking for more support from the County Board about this issue.
 - f. Christian Dorsey question – how has staff responded? Laura: Staff have said the data does not meet warrant thresholds, but is very close. Is there discretion on the part of staff due to circumstances?
- V. County Board Chair Christian Dorsey
 - a. He’ll be happy to get answers to Laura’s questions about discretion to install more traffic control measures.
 - b. Big issues facing Arlington: Amazon and the County budget.
 - c. The General Assembly passed legislation that allows prohibition of smoking at outdoor venues. This will allow smoking to be banned at the Lubber Run Amphitheater.

- d. A 2.75-cent increase in the tax rate is possible and has been advertised. This does not mean that the increase will be this high. The Board went with the maximum to cover themselves. The rationale is that it takes into account recommendations from the County Manager and Arlington Public Schools budget. A 2.75 tax rate increase would mean an increase of \$350 on an average household's tax bill. The budget will be adopted in April.
- e. Amazon: November 13 was their announcement (Christian's birthday). Still planning for 25,000 employees to come to Arlington. After 10 years, Amazon could ramp up to 38,000 employees within four more years. For context: The DC region adds about 50,000 jobs a year. Arlington has the capacity to absorb these employees because of BRAC closures and the great recession. We don't have to build the infrastructure to handle this employment from scratch. It's already here and Amazon's plans align with community growth goals.

We get \$200 million from the State for new transportation improvements that Arlington had hoped to do but didn't have the money to implement. There will also be \$15 million in additional funding for affordable housing. The State is projecting a \$3.2 billion return in tax revenues. Arlington projects a 14 to 1 tax revenue increase vs. investment. Still waiting for additional information from Amazon about the types of services and employees that will be located here.

A resident commented that Amazon has a terrible reputation in Seattle because of their labor practices. Christian said he believes that's why Amazon chose Arlington because we have the capacity to handle the needs that will arise from the expansion. Nothing has changed in terms of Arlington's planning for growth.

- f. Question: Concerned about tax breaks – is Arlington giving money to Amazon and how is that affecting the budget? Christian: Currently, we don't have a prediction about how many other businesses may come to Arlington because Amazon is here. Arlington's incentive to Amazon is a direct incentive that would provide a \$23 million payment that could be higher or lower. The payment would be calculated based on the transient occupancy tax (hotel tax) using the past three years as a baseline. If that tax revenue grows, Amazon gets 15% of the growth and Arlington gets the rest. If tax revenues don't grow, Amazon doesn't get anything. They have to meet annual targets for occupying office space. Christian thinks it's a novel approach because it only uses new money.
- g. Question: Is Amazon going to do any construction? Christian: They are planning to build at the Penn Place site, Metropolitan Park site and they'll be occupying existing space in Crystal City in the interim.

- h. Question: Arlington Forest's future – What are proposed changes in zoning, density and height? Christian: No official action has been taken yet by the Board on this and there are differing opinions about how to proceed. This issue is in the earliest stages of consideration. Minneapolis effort has been praised that resulted in the entire city being upzoned to allow more than one house per site. Christian wants to concentrate development on activity corridors with step down density. Lee Highway is an example of an area where density could be increased with step down density. When he was campaigning for office, he floated the idea in north Arlington to have two dwellings instead of one on a lot. It wouldn't make sense in Arlington Forest.
- i. Question: Proposal to extend Silver Line through Lee Highway, Rosslyn and into Georgetown. Christian: This is something that needs to be discussed at the WMATA Board level.
- j. Deficit issues – projection for when commercial tax rate will catch up? Christian: Original Manager projection for deficit was \$35 million from 1st quarter projection. Arlington had higher real estate assessments than projected in 2nd quarter due to commercial real estate. This is the first year we are projecting that commercial tax income will be higher than residential. Project that Amazon tax benefit will first be felt in 2020.
- k. Question: When is County Board going to make the School Board stick to their budget? Christian: This is one of the hardest things he has to deal with and the County Board has a fiduciary responsibility, but the School Board is an independent organization with their own elected Board. Growth in spending for the County budget is mostly on schools side.
- l. Comment: Arlington Forest, especially on the north side, has had encroachment of density beyond the Ballston corridor that affects the neighborhood. Increased development and especially upzoning will significantly change the character of the neighborhood, as it could be a prime candidate for tear-downs and rebuilding of two units per lot. So far, after 80 years, the neighborhood has only had one tear down.
- m. Question: Will union contractors work on Amazon projects? Christian: The County is encouraging them to use union and local people.
- n. Question: Effects of displacement from Amazon – there's been a 30% surge in buying and a 40% reduction in inventory of housing. Even if Amazon provides higher-level jobs, people who work there are very unhappy, according to a resident. Most people in south Arlington don't know Amazon is coming. We need to do more to reach out. Christian: Last year was an abnormally flat year for real estate – let's wait and see.
- o. Question: Cuts to Cultural Affairs have been proposed by the Manager to the County Board. These cuts would get rid of the scene shop and associated funds and make many other changes that will hurt the arts. Christian: The proposal for four new Economic Development

positions will be funded by fees and other non-tax funded revenue. Economic Development has been underfunded for years and these positions are not just because of Amazon.

- p. Question: Poet Laureate position has been proposed for cuts. This is \$10,000. Christian: Advocacy for these things by residents is important.
- q. Question: How to get companies to bring more \$\$ in for schools? Are we negotiating for this? Christian: We get community benefits for a variety of things and use increased tax value increases to pay for necessary infrastructure and impacts. In VA, you can only get impact \$\$ for things that are directly caused by development, so with something like an office building, there would be no impacts on schools and no State benefits.
- r. Question: Turf issues at Barrett remain after trying to work with Arlington Public Schools (APS) for two years. Need some kind of enforcement/oversight on APS and the County with regard to construction. Need to have some kind of APS/County integration. Please think about how we can work better together. Christian: APS and the County are organized very differently. The APS Board has delegated many responsibilities to the Superintendent and there's a lot of issues about who has the ultimate responsibility.
- s. Question: Arlington is becoming less and less affordable. It's elected officials' job to think about their constituents. Christian: We're dealing with a lot of regional and other forces. Arlington tries to address these issues proactively, but we need more housing. Demand exceeds supply and this is what causes prices to increase. All the regional jurisdictions are trying to tackle this and there's a goal. Christian doesn't want Arlington to become a place where no new development occurs as this causes housing to become even more expensive.