

Minutes
AFCA Meeting
January 15, 2020

The meeting was called to order by President Esther Bowring at 7:02 pm. 28 people attended.

President's Report

Treasurer Lauren Mikoy will be leaving Arlington Forest, and we will need a new treasurer in the spring. Esther is looking for volunteers. This is a key position that we cannot leave unfilled. We would like to fill it as soon as possible to have some overlap time for training. Esther will put the request for volunteers out on the list-serv and in the next Arlington Forester. Please let her know of ideas. We are very sorry to lose Lauren.

Good news! Two people have graciously volunteered to take over as editor and layout editor of the Forester. John Naland will continue in the editor role through May. At that time, he will not totally step down, and will continue to coordinate kids delivery of the newsletter. Hutch Brown will become the editor, and Leo Horwitz will become the layout editor. Laura Smialowicz has been the layout person for almost 10 years, and she and John have done a great job. We will miss them a lot.

Other good news! Thanks to Tricia Freeman, Katherine Roberts, and Gloria Mog we will have an AF house and garden tour this year. We make money from ticket sales but need AFCA to provide money up front. We have an approved budget of \$1,750 but we may need \$2,200 (the tour three years ago cost between \$1,800 and \$1,900, and the organizers do not yet know printing costs for the brochure). We can afford to spend the additional money, especially knowing we will get most of it back. **Janet Irwin moved that AFCA allocate up to \$2,200 for the tour, Joel Yudken seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Liz Kauffman is in charge of the AF neighborhood conservation plan. To obtain neighborhood input, she wants to purchase a Survey Monkey account (the free version limits the number of questions and will not tabulate results). In addition, we need to have printed versions available upon request, and we need to mail the survey to non-resident homeowners (37 homes). Total funding request is \$600. **Joel Yudken moved that AFCA allocate up to \$600 for the conservation survey and distribution, Jan Hull seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

AFCA has made its annual budgeted donations to the Kenmore, Barrett, and Barcroft PTAs (\$200 each) and Culpepper Gardens (\$100).

With the possibility of winter storms, be sure you're signed up for Arlington alerts.

At the February meeting, we will hear updates on the Carlin Springs crossing and Edison Park.

Northside Section Report (Joel Yudken)

Lubber Run Community Center work is continuing. Esther noted that the County will send a speaker in April to discuss the LRCC and will plan an open house for the community. She also noted the construction activity at George Mason and Park Drives, where the County will be

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putting in a rapid flashing beacon system. (The traffic currently is not high volume enough to justify a full, pedestrian-activated signal, but this may change once the new LRCC is open.)

At the last AFCA meeting, some people had some concerns about holes in the road around 1st and Columbus Streets. It is now partially fixed, but they still need to do a finishing layer.

Greenbrier Section Report (Tom Smialowicz)

Nothing has been brought to Tom's attention. Tricia Freeman warned that residents should be wary of putting in online requests re urban forestry; she requested someone to come take a look at an ailing tree so they could work together to preserve it, and without notice the tree was taken down.

Southside Section Report (None)

Guest Speaker

Reid Goldstein, Arlington School Board liaison to AFCA from Barcroft, Kenmore, and Wakefield

Mr. Goldstein delivered a presentation based on Powerpoint.

Q and A with Reid Goldstein:

How is it possible that student projections are leveling off? The County anticipates increases in population growth, and there is the prospect of increasing density in single family neighborhoods. Projection accuracy has been an ongoing issue for 40 years. Why?

There's not a great answer. APS planning staff collaborates with County planning and housing staff. There are still areas difficult to work out. Housing department can tell us what new developments are planned and in what year; this is solid info for next 3-5 years at least. We've decided not to book that in projections until the Board approves the project. But an approved project is not necessarily going to get built – for example, a developer runs into financing problems, delays, etc. Projections for our last two years were actually too high: We projected 1,000 additional students for September 2018 (but got 500) and 2019 (got 600). Projections were off enough that you don't want to continue with same model. There is also ongoing discussion between the School and County Boards about the County Board approval of certain types of high-density, multi-family housing – only in certain districts that all impact the same set of schools. We need to be tracking: Are families moving into new high-rise residential products in greater numbers than before? Are we approaching a New York City model? If so, how rapidly? And obviously Amazon will be a factor.

Interested in your thoughts on the proposed move of schools, including Key Elementary. Concerned about potential impact on Latino community around Key and prospect of moving to smaller physical plant.

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Elementary school moves: staff proposal that Board members are still trying to get information on. Hear about alternative proposals that purportedly do a better job of achieving articulated goals. Fitting 709 Key students into current ATS building that holds 594 students is a good question (Reid asked at last Board meeting). Combination of adjusting enrollment and expanding physical facilities over time. Some answers that don't satisfy the questions very well. Still looking into it. Timeline: vote on February 6.

Also interested in rationale behind cancellation of summer school and draw down so it focuses only on remedial education opportunities. Particular problem for immersion students who benefit from continuing language education over the summer.

Summer school is extraordinarily expensive. In order to try and manage costs, staff decided to eliminate enrichment and focus on remedial. Cut back on amount of necessary staff and building usage. There is a lot of summer school that doesn't really contribute to APS mission – a lot of babysitting at APS prices. So we will try this and see what happens; if it does not work, we will adjust. The change to immersion continuity over the summer went into effect this past summer, but not entirely.

New Chief Diversity and Equity Officer – how will this relate to the family and community engagement program? Any connection?

Yes, and also a connection to Office of Equity and Excellence (used to be the Office of Minority Achievement). No staff for the CDEIO yet; School Board anticipates addressing in this year's budget. The new person will likely be spending many months understanding what the landscape is, what the issue is, who the stakeholders are, getting a handle on the way to define his work plan. Will likely start to put that into practice in July.

Understanding re projections – why did we have that growth? Can we figure out how to model for the future? Able to anticipate cause and effect?

Don't know that we've got a short answer for why we encountered that kind of rapid growth for so many years. Part is that the Washington area is a jobs engine and we suffered less than anyone else in economic downturn. Part is proximity to federal government jobs. Part is APS has always had a good reputation.

Have the HS boundary changes been proposed yet?

No, this coming fall staff will offer proposals, and the School Board will decide in December or the new year. Must be done by March of the year they will take effect, along with neighborhood ES changes.

School Board elections – what to look for.

Good understanding of where we need to go in the near term. The things that effect near-term planning. Important to be able to make a decision. Be able to make hard decisions. Successful

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candidate needs a vision for what they want to achieve, for where APS can and should go in the future.

Many of us don't believe the projections. High-rise development projections are vastly under – student generation factor is greatly off. The more you could have a proactive input into County development, the better it would be. County Board seems to approve more, and zoning is the only constraint on development. Developers will keep developing unless someone stops them. SB is always chasing CB – if there were prospective input re high-density areas, it would be better. Not sure the solutions given by staff are empirically good or reflect a lot of thought and input. Board should push the staff more.

Enrollment versus tax revenues not growing at equal rates. It's only a matter of time before housing developers say that families will jump on a 3BR apartment on a Metro line. If they see a demand (there is or will be), they will build for it. We would be moving more to NYC model, with families moving to high-rises and using public space as their green space.

County has a list of properties that can be used to build schools – there are parks on there, such as Quincy Park. This is disturbing.

Lots of properties are on this list. Not all would be suitable for school facilities. I don't believe schools should be built on park land. We need all the parks we have.

What's driving the feasibility studies? Which data?

The projections that there will be greater increases in some school communities rather than others. The studies don't cost that much – less than half a million to do 14 studies. CIP is roughly half a billion over 10 years. We have to invest something in getting smart.

Any consideration about expanding to more year-round schools? Would that help capacity situation?

That has come up. If you take the same number of students and they have to be in school 180 days a year, you can spread it out but there's still going to be plenty of weeks where you have to have all 28,000 APS students in seats.

Discussion on Missing Middle Housing Study (Esther Bowring)

Esther wrote an article about this for the Forester. County is looking at different ways to expand housing options in Arlington because of limited supply. Could include duplexes, triplexes in neighborhoods that are now single family homes. What is the “middle”? There are high end expensive single family homes, and affordable housing, and nothing in-between.

Esther recommends that AFCA establish a committee to assess positive and negative impacts, help the neighborhood develop a position; we will need to be advocating in the spring right when the process starts.

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Per Esther, there are some positives but some big negatives. Arlington Forest may be one of the key neighborhoods for up-zoning if they do not do it across the board. Because we are along the R-B corridor, we are a prime target. Our neighborhood is relatively economical for tear-downs.

Idea is to increase availability of housing so prices would come down a little bit (“middle housing,” versus “affordable), but Esther doesn’t think that’s what’s going to happen.

AFCA will need to have a position. Everyone in the neighborhood will not feel the same way, but we would like to try to come to some kind of consensus.

Question: Should this be part of the conservation plan, and questions can be added to the conservation plan survey? Yes; those survey questions were drafted before this came up, but middle housing can be added.

The Civic Federation is looking at this issue across the County. Civic federation presidents are experiencing a lot of tear-downs. We have fewer in AF – one house in 80 years. Looking at passing bylaws about by-right development because developers aren’t following same rules as individual homeowners who want to make changes to their house.

Comment: We don’t know yet what the proposal is, so we cannot say we are against it until we have more information.

Comments: Storm water infrastructure – can’t say you want to improve this and yet have more impervious surface. Where will the water go? Anything that increases the density will increase impervious space – harm green space, harm the trees, will affect the quality of life. It will get hotter, need to use more energy to keep cool through the summer. Think about not only about home values but about the loss of green space and more cars.

Question: Why do they think duplexes are going to be popular?

Esther requested volunteers to sign up for Committee

Report on Lubber Run Repairs

At the November AFCA Meeting, Lyndell Core from the County presented. AFCA wanted to find out more about Lubber Run Park repairs – it is not even in the budget to repair two bridges (for the third one closest to Columbus, County is in the process). Esther wrote a letter to the County to request Board members tour the damage.

Attendee Comments

You can take the Water Utility Rate Survey on Engage Arlington – it lists six values, but none of them is environmental stewardship. Encourage County to adopt rate structure that allows people to water their trees.