

ADOPTED Minutes
Arlington Heights Civic Association (AHCA) Meeting
Tuesday, February 12, 2013
Patrick Henry Elementary School

1. Attendees: Loren Wilee, Leah Dudani, Stephen Hughes, Amy Hughes, Dan Morrissey, Jay Vennett, Morton Posner, Valynda Mayes, Megan Haydasz, Scott Winn, Stacey Whyte, Jim Presswood and Janet Presswood.

2. Call to Order: Stacey Whyte, AHCA President, called the meeting to order at 7:16pm.

3. President's Opening Remarks:

- Building plans were circulated amongst the group for the large mixed-use development currently under construction on the former Rosenthal (car dealership) site at the southwest corner of Glebe Rd & Columbia Pike. We'll have a better idea of its projected completion date in May once they work through some permitting issues with the County.
- The County recently instituted a 4-hour parking limit along the outer border of Patrick Henry Elementary on S. Walter Reed Dr. from 7th to 9th St. South, and on S. 7th St. from S. Walter Reed Dr. to S. Garfield St.
- Simplicity Urgent Care has just added Primary Care (Internal Medicine) to its repertoire and can now offer routine check-ups, preventive care, health education, and initial consultations for new health problems.

4. Guest Speakers: Arlington County's Department of Real Estate Assessments

- Derek Dubbe (Appraiser, 4yrs) and Deidra Kelley (Supervisor, 20yrs) came to speak to the group regarding the County's (tax year) 2013 real estate assessments, of which residents were recently notified. They left their business cards for follow-up concerns and explained that the County has a public appeals process for residents who are dissatisfied with their assessments, but they noted that this (AHCA) meeting was mainly informational and not the forum for individual questions. Two pamphlets (FAQs and general information) were handed out, as well as a Trend Area map with more granular data and information.
- Arlington County's methodology for gathering assessment data includes use of a computer-assisted Mass appraisal system (vs. Private appraisal) and use of Marshall & Swift's cost-of-materials tables. Mr. Dubbe noted that they take out a given home's depreciation to determine its effective age, then they estimate the cost of each home using materials tables and by reviewing neighborhood boundaries within each trend area (Arlington Heights lies within Trend Area 8). Next, they look at trends and sales in the neighborhood and analyze land sales that occur in the same period as the home sales. Finally, they review exterior and interior photos of each property, and they try to visit each house personally to make sure they're using "good" data.
- \$370,337 was the average assessment for a single-family dwelling in Trend Area 8 for 2013 vs. \$354,596 for 2012 (a 4.4% increase). The analysis period for 2013's assessments was July 2011-June 2012, and sometimes this lag can affect your assessed value. Late sales are factored-in but the cut-off date is always July 1st of the previous year. They are currently looking into including another 2 months' worth of data for the 2013 assessments.
- **Question (Stacey Whyte):** Why are there cases in which the land value stayed the same but the home value went up, despite no changes being made to the home over the past year? **Answer:** Land value is hard to assess because there is not as much (land-only) data available, and house-size also *does* contribute to the overall appreciation/depreciation of a given property's value. Therefore, they try to balance-out this appreciation for smaller homes to maintain their affordability.
- **Question:** Regarding appeals, the County requests that homeowners' example sales come from within their

neighborhood boundaries. Why, then, does the County's response sometimes include sales outside the neighborhood? **Answer:** Present whatever information you want, all information is considered. It is very helpful to include the real property code (RPC) with each of your listings. There is an online process to upload all of your information, including a recent appraisal, etc. Stacey Whyte cautioned that *any* upgrades to the home since the last County visit could drive your appraisal UP instead of down (*next* year...won't affect this year if you appeal)! There is a Property Data Search on the County website...

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/realestate/reassessments/scripts/dreadefault.asp> ...which you can use to pull up your property information, then click the link to view sales in your neighborhood.

- County assessments aim for 93-95% of the home's sale value. Major renovations will adjust the home's grade from, for example, Good to Very Good. There is some subjectivity to the grading system...they try to base it on sales within a particular neighborhood to equalize the value, but different neighborhoods' grading may vary slightly. The County's appraisers switch neighborhoods each year to ensure "fresh eyes." Data collectors follow permits to 85% completion and give supplemental real estate assessments (before July 1) for a prorated amount thru year-end. Taxes, on other hand, aren't due until the following year. At one time, there was a huge permit backlog, but the County hired data collectors to reduce that, and the "Improvements" section online should show what has been factored in.
- **Question (Jim Presswood):** It is a VA requirement to have 100% real estate value assessments. Is this the case in other states? **Answer:** Not necessarily...it varies widely by state.
- **Question:** Do trend area boundaries change over time? **Answer:** Not for a while, but they could do so in the future.
- The review/appeal deadline for all 2013 assessments is March 1st. The assessed value would be lowered retroactively as of Jan 1. The land book/tax rate is usually certified in April.

5. Neighborhood Development Update:

- **Capital Bikeshare** - Good news: The 2 proposed Capital Bikeshare stations in our neighborhood have been approved! The first is at the Thomas Jefferson Middle School & Community Center, near the trees between the playground and the rec center entrance; the second will be located behind the Career Center near the future "hawk light" signal at the intersection of S. Walter Reed Dr. & 9th St. as part of the "Complete Streets" project.

6. Update on Current Columbia Pike Business Issues:

- **3111 Columbia Pike/Pines of Italy** - The live entertainment permit for this restaurant & nightclub is pending approval from the County Board. The current proprietors recently surveyed non-adjacent neighbors for a petition to support their permit, but the establishments at this site have historically been a source of controversy in the neighborhood, including issues with trash, noise (particularly late-night), parking violations, and violence. As a result, AHCA initially requested that the Board deny the permit, which the owner has had revoked 3 times in other incarnations. The County subsequently asked us to sit down with them and the owners of 3111 to develop guidelines for a "test case" before the March County Board meeting, where they intend to approve/deny the permit once and for all. Therefore, if anyone comes to your door during this interim period and asks you to sign something related to this establishment, please discuss with Stacey Whyte, if needed, before doing so.
- **Sports House Grill (Westmont Shopping Center)** - This establishment has had 19 violations in the past 18 months, not even including its many associated DUIs. The owner never attempted to mitigate any of these issues or do community outreach. After a year of hearings every 3 months, the County Board has recommended that their live entertainment permit be revoked (hopefully in March). After that, AHCA will work toward having their ABC license revoked because of the two dozen related DUI arrests over the past year, in which many of the patrons were way over the legal limit.

- **Question:** Could the noise ordinance that the County is currently working to implement be the key to making it easier to deny/revoke permits for these types of issues? **Answer:** Possibly, although the issues are often complex. Concerned neighbors are welcome to attend County hearings and/or information sessions to offer input/feedback on the process. For example, there is a Streetcar Town Hall meeting coming up on March 27th.
- **Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)** - Located at the corner of S. Highland St. & Columbia Pike, this is a great neighborhood organization, even offering free tax returns for low-income patrons. Their live entertainment permit is also up for review, and, while its discussion was pushed past the March Board meeting, ECDC's management is working diligently with us to resolve any outstanding issues.

7. Closing Remarks/Questions:

- **Neighborhood Park Kiosks** - Our two informational kiosks are located in the Thomas Jefferson and Arlington Heights parks at the corners of 2nd & Irving and 9th & Irving, respectively. Beginning this month, we will provide Spanish translation in the kiosks as well. We're also looking to print a portion of each AHCA newsletter in Spanish and direct Spanish-speakers online for the fully-translated version.
- **Letter from the TJ Middle School PTA President** - The school has been having problems with traffic and child safety in mornings, and the PTA has requested an on-duty officer to direct traffic on the premises. However, there are currently only about 20 police officers on duty at any given time in all of Arlington County. AHCA has deferred response to the letter until we have more information from the police, and, in the interim, we are working with the PTA to explore other possible solutions, e.g. less bussing, more parents driving, etc.
- **Question regarding earlier Ft. Myer Gate Closings (Janet Presswood)** - How will the new 6pm gate closings impact bike commuters? **Answer:** The earlier closings *will* prevent non-military/gold badge bike commuters from entering the fort after 6pm. The fort says they're doing this to cut back on security, although they will still need 3rd party, non-military security on-duty to check badges. Stacey Whyte will pursue a definitive answer on this.
- **Annual AHCA Membership Dues** - Please pay your dues (\$20/household; \$25/business), if you haven't already. Make the check payable to AHCA, and give it to Scott Winn (Treasurer).

8. Meeting Adjourned: 8:40pm.
