

Minutes/DRCA general meeting February 21, 2024

The Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA) held a general membership meeting on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at Taylor Elementary School. DRCA President Bill Richardson presided over the meeting, which began at 7:30 p.m. preceded by a social half hour.

Bill welcomed the group. He had the following preliminary announcements:

1. He circulated Vision 2050 post cards by the County Board, seeking input on what Arlington should be like in the year 2050. These can be completed online, or returned at Cherrydale Library.
2. He noted the handout about an upcoming information session online with different perspectives on the County's pending deer management study.
3. He solicited volunteer help in updating the 2000 NC Plan in light of the many responses to the NC survey completed by members, which we have analyzed.

Kathy Rehill reminded members to pay their dues, which go to fund the newsletter, ice cream socials, and other DRCA events.

Charlie Henkin gave a report on the pending federal legislation to reauthorize the FAA, the Senate version of which would add more long distance flights to National Airport.

Filling Interim Vacancy on DRCA Board

To fill this interim vacancy as a result of Susan Cunningham's resignation coincident to her election as a County Board member, John Fisher nominated Dana Miller. Dana grew up in Bellevue Forest, attended APS schools, graduated from Yorktown, and now lives on Marcey Road. There were no other nominations from the floor. The membership voted to approve the nomination. Dana's interim term expires with the election of a new slate of officers and directors in mid-2024.

Arlington Neighborhoods Program (ANP) Project

Frank Jazzo reported on an ANP (formerly known as the Neighborhood Conservation Program) project to extend the sidewalk down Vacation Lane from Lorcom Lane. He has received over 60% approval from the affected neighbors, as required by the ANP rules. Support was overwhelming: 15 yes votes, 2 no votes, and 3 no responses. The membership overwhelmingly voted to approve proceeding with the design phase of this project. In response to a concern by one of the no votes, hoping to minimize additional impervious surfaces, the DRCA board will work to include in its letter to the County staff noting the DRCA vote that there was a desire to ensure that the design would attempt to ensure less rather than more impervious surface. The issue of exacerbating currently tight parking after adding extra sidewalk was also discussed.

Deputy Police Chief David Giroux

Chief Giroux, a 28-year ACPD veteran who lives in the Lee-Harrison area, gave a brief overview of the work of the criminal investigations division, which is one area under his supervision. He noted the substantial understaffing of the police force amidst the challenges of recruitment and the need for extensive training for those who apply. He discussed the late coming but growing problem with fentanyl in Arlington, including the schools, and the challenges of carjackings and other crimes in parts of Arlington closer to DC. The type of crimes showing the largest increase (2023 vs. 2022) was robberies. In response to questions about how residents could best protect themselves, he emphasized the need to maintain awareness of one's surroundings, pointing out the increasing lack of focus due to cellphone use by pedestrians, and the crucial practice of locking one's cars. He noted KIA and Hyundai have recalled their cars to remove the ability of robbers to steal these cars with a simple OBD port plug in.

Arlington County Board Member Maureen Coffey

Maureen gave a brief introduction, with a focus on her priorities: addressing the rising expense of child care; addressing a housing shortage, particularly for families and individuals in light of workforce loss to remote jurisdictions; livability/quality of life/environment; and traffic safety. She then provided most of her time to an opportunity for questions from DRCA members.

In response to questions about potentially repurposing vacant office space for more residential use, Maureen noted that Arlington has some difficulties with this in light of the way office space has been constructed. A number of members addressed the need to preserve green space by way of lot coverage reform, and the need for better enforcement of existing lot coverage rules. Maureen noted that her concerns about increased housing were not incompatible with the need to preserve green space in the County, and that she hopes to be able to address both concerns in a way that provides reasonable deference to each.

In response to a recent proposal by Delegate Patrick Hope to authorize changes to the structure of the County Board, Maureen suggested that this would be an appropriate subject for Vision 2050. She distinguished Fairfax County, with a large number of district (as opposed to at large) board members, as a larger jurisdiction, whereas in Arlington it may be easier to ensure that each member is aware of and addresses the concerns of all different areas of the County. She also noted that each Arlington board member has only one assistant, unlike Fairfax County Board members, and that more assistants could help board members respond to constituent concerns more effectively.

In response to a concern expressed that in the past County Board members have appeared to understand DRCA concerns but then later failed to address them, Maureen noted that she has taken note of our concerns in an effort to respond to them.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.