

DRAFT

Meeting called to order by GCA President Julie Lee at 7:30 pm.

Julie Lee welcomed the speaker, Arlington County's newest Board Member Takis Karantonis, elected on July 7, 2020 and running for re-election this year.

Mr. Karantonis said that meeting with neighborhood groups is what he enjoys most about being on the County Board. A vital aspect of his job is to hear the different opinions and perspectives of community members. He and the Board consider the input in their work to achieve a good quality of life for everybody in Arlington.

The COVID-19 response is the Board's first priority. Since he joined the Board in July, it has been working to get as much testing as possible, especially for those most exposed such as immigrant communities where the numbers remain very high. The opening of schools and businesses is a function of a sturdy, reliable test regime and an advancing vaccination effort. At this time, vaccinations are being scheduled for groups 1a and 1b: health care workers, police and other first responders, critical commercial workers, and those over age 75, especially with underlying conditions. The County planned early and partnered with Virginia Hospital Center to provide 2,000 or more vaccines a day, and at best received a supply to give 3,000 per week. Things are improving on predictability of supply and better information for planning. There is a work session tomorrow at 3 pm with the County Manager with the latest from the Board and leading professionals. Mr. Karantonis apologized for the cancellations and delays of vaccine administration caused by the sudden transfer of supply of the vaccine from hospital systems to the health districts. They should be getting to all of the rescheduled vaccines in the next one to two weeks.

The Missing Middle (MM) Housing Study is a response to the housing crisis. Arlington has become unaffordable for most middle- and low-income people. Many of the old and the young, including the children of Arlington residents, cannot afford to live here. Employers can't find new workers within Arlington. Mr. Karantonis and others believe it is an obligation of the county government to investigate and research policies to increase housing while maintaining quality of life. It will involve a mosaic of policies. One of the challenges is providing school capacity. The Missing Middle is first and foremost a study. Political decisions to ban rowhouses and townhomes in some areas were related to the desire for racial and economic segregation. The county has a good supply of very dense housing along the high traffic corridors, but these represent 14 to 15% of the land, while 75% is single family housing. 25% of our residents live on 75% of the land, and 65% or more live on 17% of Arlington's land. What are the social consequences?

2022 budget season is approaching, and there will be invitations for the public to engage. It has been a tough year, especially for our smallest businesses and the service sector, hospitality and transportation. Other parts of the business sector grew - real estate for example. Housing assessments have gone up and demand continues to be very vigorous. South Arlington and Glencarlyn had among the highest appreciation rates. Rents along Columbia Pike have increased, adding to the shortage of affordable housing stock. Last year's budget was hit hard by dramatic increases in food insecurity, unemployment, all the stabilizing factors. Significant financial support was provided for people who

could no longer afford their rent. The Board's commitment to a social safety net is a given, reflecting the values of the community. Compared to other places in the US, things are cautiously looking up.

Questions and Answers

Q. What determines the supply of vaccines to Arlington on a weekly basis?

A. The allotment is determined by the CDC. The federal government has commissioned VA allotments by population. There were 2,750 last week. We should be getting a bit more. The federal government is assuring states about supplies. A factor limiting availability has been the high number of frontline and national security workers. The county was put in a difficult position having to choose who first and who second and is trying to stratify needs according to CDC guidelines. Vaccine is not being stored or hoarded.

Q. What are the plans to develop the Rouse property?

A. This is a painful subject. There was a proposal to make it a historic district for an impressive list of reasons. We knew that the property was on a list of potential historic sites in 2009, but we were late in engaging with the owner. Now he wants to sell and has applied for a demolition permit. This is a process that can't be interrupted once begun. The owner will get the permit, and the property will be razed. The owner doesn't want to let a historian in to take pictures until he has the demo permit. There are 27, maybe 29, properties that should be carefully scrutinized for potential historic preservation. It can be extremely expensive, but preserving historic homes and buildings increases the value of the surrounding properties.

Q. What large projects will be put on hold because of budget constraints?

A. A community center won't be in operation in the next year. The Board does not want to delay storm water mitigation.

Q. What can we expect on the tax rate based on the residential real estate assessments?

A. The mindset of the Board is not to impose greater tax burdens, but there are certain demands due to COVID, such as school needs. The Manager will present the budget mid-month. Mr. Karantonis cannot guarantee they will not go up.

Q. What vaccines are being given?

A. Pfizer and Moderna. The MRNA type are the front runners, because they deal better with mutations. But you will see the federal government buying AstraZeneca. It is easier to manage because it doesn't require such a low refrigeration rate, and the dose interval is longer and more flexible.

Q. What can the county do to preserve the tree canopy in the face of the removal of large trees during the replacement of smaller old homes with large new ones? Zoning for housing is destroying our tree canopy and having other effects, such as way bigger houses.

A. We would like to tighten the requirements. We are advocating with the General Assembly in Richmond to get the power to regulate more stringently, but of course there will be great resistance by developers. A study has not yet been done on preserving the tree canopy. We need to know how best to do it. The county's goal should be to conserve and even increase the number of mature trees. There is a landowner who is pre-emptively removing large trees from his six properties due to the fear of having severely limited future financial prospects. We have to make it a little bit more difficult to remove them.

Q. Would the county take a position supporting the Dillon rule, which covers a lot more than that?

A. I used to be on the side of its removal. Now, I think I would like to give localities the right to regulate on their own initiative.

Q. On the Missing Middle Study, Julie Lee stated that she wants the County to be very careful. It is a market-based approach, and she is concerned about gentrification. On an R5 zoned lot near Washington Boulevard on N. Vernon St., a developer has permission to build a duplex. The lot is 8,000 square feet. Each unit will be 4,000 sq feet. They will be huge, and they will charge a million dollars each. I do not see how the plan as it is written now will address this issue. If it doesn't, the MM plan will lead to an increase in density, urbanization and high prices. How will the plan keep developers from maximizing home size and cost?

A. What you describe is the worst scenario. We must be smarter about how the MM plan works. It must be smart and context sensitive. In 1955, when data collection began, the average home was about 900 sq. ft. Now it is 3,000 sq. ft. It is a difficult prospect. With an increasing supply of different housing types, we expect to at least temper options and costs. We cannot leave it to the market right now. It is dangerous for our stability and sustainability. We will have to discuss what our support for affordable housing will be. Will it be tax dollar support? tax incentive support?

Q. Julie Lee has been very disappointed with the answers she has gotten from the county on the location of the MM housing. They have said it will be along transportation corridors, which rules out a lot of north Arlington. She fears the MM initiative will target South Arlington, which already has crowded schools. She pointed out that Carlin Springs Elementary School has a higher percentage of free/reduced lunch students than all nine of the NW Arlington elementary schools combined.

A. Mr. Karantonis responded that the existing distribution of less expensive housing has historic roots. Workforce housing was placed in specific areas in the county in the 1950's. What we have attempted in our recent efforts is to try to make it easier to attract diverse demographics to live in these neighborhoods. South Arlington currently has a healthy amount of existing MM housing. In an effort to make it possible for current residents in South Arlington to improve and increase the value of their homes, the Board allowed those with "nonconforming" lots to add on to them.

Mr. Karantonis thanked the GCA for the dialogue. Julie Lee thanked him and said we hope to have him back again. She extended an invitation to come to our next pancake breakfast, hopefully some time in 2021.

In a final comment, Mr. Karantonis said, "From the bottom of my heart, I want to get South Carlin Springs Road right." He will focus on Vision Zero, and welcomes our input. He said that it is ridiculous that children have to be bussed from here to Campbell Elementary.

Old Business

A correction was made to the December minutes to the spelling of Lyme disease. There was a motion to approve the minutes of the December GCA meeting, which was seconded. The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's report by Tim Aiken. There are 165 dues-paying members, and a balance of \$20,666.00. Approximately 47% of dues payers paid dues through PayPal this past year.

Civic Federation report by Tim Aiken. There have been two Civic Federation meetings. At the meeting on December 15, the main topic was a report the County is undertaking with Montgomery County on aircraft noise. If adverse impacts are identified, it has the potential to affect airport practices. The meeting on January 5 concerned support for schools on fiscal stress and the Missing Middle Study. The Civic Federation proposed a resolution encouraging an equity lens on access to open space in smaller, more densely populated areas where more minorities live (in lieu of focusing on bigger park areas).

Expanded Board to include 2 new members. There was an update on the ongoing long-term study on governance.

Neighborhood Conservation Committee report by Kathy Reeder. This is the last report on 2nd St. S. Follow-up concerns on street damage are not really a Neighborhood Conservation Committee concern, but Kathy is helping with that. On the 4th St. project there is no change, with the expectation it will start this summer. Contact Laura Simpson, County Planner, or Kathy for more info.

Steering Committee on Racial Equity and Inclusion, report by Pippy Sickbert. The Committee has partnered with Arlington County on Dialogs on Racial Equity. Tim Aiken, Jeffrey Liteman, and Pippy Sickbert attended training to lead these dialogs. We hosted two 2-hour sessions in January with a total of 22 participants. According to the participants, the top systems where they have experienced racism in Arlington are housing, education, and law enforcement. A report from the Arlington County DRE to the County Board included these data from a survey they conducted: over 80% believe it is valuable to discuss racial equity, 47% have experienced negative bias, and 57% believe structural racism does exist in Arlington. There is a full video of the presentation that Ms. Sickbert is happy to share with anyone.

As we look ahead, we are developing a 2021 action plan. We want to increase engagement. We are excited to have Samia Byrd coming next month to the GCA meeting. We are working on scheduling a fireside chat with local author Wilma Jones who wrote *My Halls Hill Family*. We are meeting regularly with Arlington County Dialogs on Race and Equity. There were 30 out of 60 organizations that participated in the training and were supposed to have dialogs.

Julie Lee wrote two letters to the County Board on behalf of GCA. In response to the letter of support for the special funding for the nature centers, we got a letter from Matt de Ferranti, saying that they would take our letter into consideration but there are budget considerations. In response to the letter about deer population control, Ben Aiken, Ombudsman, wrote that there would be a survey of the deer population and a study of its impact. Brandon Hemel remarked that we had received the same response over a year ago.

In response to her question on budgeting for branch libraries, Ms. Lee was told there would be nothing happening soon.

Steve Young will be on a panel/committee and giving input from Glencarlyn on the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan.

Neighborhood Directory. Data collection for the new Directory will begin online. Online updating information will be distributed in the Village View, and there will be follow-up in other ways. Ms. Lee thanked Sarah Williams and Pippy Sickbert for working on this.

New Business

Julie Lee thanked the members of the Snow Brigade. There have been more and more requests, and new and younger volunteers. She has received many calls of thanks. It is really appreciated, and an essential service.

Sparrow Pond, a small pond near Four Mile Run, will be the subject of a planning meeting on Thursday at 6 pm. There will be a link in the GCA Updates on Wednesday and an article in the next *Village View*.

Glencarlyn Days. Julie Lee submitted a reservation request for the Glencarlyn Park shelter for June 5 and also for September 11, in case we can't have it in June.

GCA meeting speakers and programs. At the meeting on March 1, our speaker will be Chief Race and Equity Officer and Deputy County Manager Samia Byrd. On April 5, we will have a neighborhood discussion on the Missing Middle Study with a slide presentation from the county. It is important that everybody be clear on what it means and how it will impact us and other nearby communities. We have contacted some nearby neighborhood associations, and some may join us at the meeting.

GCA Nominating Committee. Kathy Reeder and Steve LeSueur have agreed to co-chair and will be seeking volunteer candidates for officers and delegates.

Reach out to Steve Young if you have thoughts on the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.