

AHCA March Minutes

Police discussions of neighborhood crime

Officers F. Cicholski and J. Horvath, Sergeant J. Rizik, and Detective G. Gleason of the Arlington County Police Department discussed recent criminal activities and actions people can take to protect themselves and their property.

Officer Cicholski said there were two recent burglaries in the Fort Scott area. Thieves entered by kicking in back doors, which were hidden by large shrubs. He said these cases are near resolution and he will provide additional details in the future. A person has been arrested in connection with recent thefts from vehicles. Officer Cicholski cautioned people against leaving valuables visible in cars. Even a GPS attachment ring on the windshield can be an indicator for a thief.

Detective Gleason discussed financial crimes. People cruise the neighborhood and attempt to take advantage of people, especially elder people, by offering services and then cheating them out of their money. A county license is required to peddle door-to-door. It is always better to hire a licensed person to do work, e.g. tree trimming. If you see anything that seems out of place, call the police at 703.558.2222.

Detective Gleason cautioned all to be on guard against check cashing and other scams on the Internet. Lower your profile by using only one credit card for purchases on the Internet. If you are a victim of ID theft, report it to the police. Monitor your credit status by taking advantage of free credit reports. More information is available at www.ftc.gov.

Library Information

Bill Gillen, member of the Friends of the Arlington Public Library (and local resident), provided facts about the county libraries:

- There are eight libraries, plus the prison outreach service.
- The total cost savings expected from the libraries is \$961,000, including \$754,000 in personnel costs.
- Based on the FY2008 actuals, Aurora Hills has the best (lowest) cost per visitor figures of any county library.
- There are over 21,000 people within a mile of the Aurora Hills Library, and the population is growing.
- Four libraries, including Aurora Hills, are on a Metro line.
- Shirlington and Columbia Pike Libraries are the next closest to Aurora Hills. Neither is on a Metro line.
- The county has not articulated a strategic plan for its libraries.

Mr. Gillen urged everyone to sign the petition against budget cuts for the library and to participate in the March 24 and 25 public comment opportunities.

Diana Kresh: Director of Arlington County Libraries

Ms. Kresh grew up in Arlington County and worked for the Library of Congress for 30 years before joining the county library program three years ago. She and her staff monitor library usage throughout the year. She said there is no way to reduce the budget without reducing hours. The budget cut decision was difficult, but all must sacrifice.

Members had numerous questions and comments, including:

- Why not share the burden of reduced hours across all county libraries?
- The District of Columbia cut hours for all its libraries, why not do that here?
- Why didn't the county cut other programs, e.g. the expensive re-cycling brochures?
- Was the cost of a new roof part of the decision to cut hours?
- Are we entering a vicious cycle where fewer hours lead to ever lower usage?
- What other alternatives were presented to the county board?
- Is the library staff prohibited from talking to the public about the proposed cuts?
- Did you consider costs per visitor in your decision?
- Aurora Hills Library is the only library east of I-395. Was that considered?

Ms. Kresh said she would look into cutting hours at all libraries, but would not predict the outcome. She also said she would make sure the staff understood there is no gag order against discussing proposed cuts.

Other

John Kriese alerted all to the upcoming county tree give-away program. Details will be in the April newsletter.

Jim Oliver said Pat Wegeng is asking for volunteers to help clear invasive plants near the tennis courts in Virginia Highlands Park. More information will be forthcoming.

Michael Dowell said the county wants AHCA and ARCA to identify what they want done regarding traffic calming on Ridge Rd and 23rd St (about \$170,000 is available) and Joyce St (about \$70,000 is available). The two associations will report to the county in a month.

Mr. Dowell said the Tortoise and Hare Bar and Grill is applying for a county permit for live music. The county requested AHCA input, and a vote will be taken at the April meeting.

About 225 people attended.

