

Are you a homeowner or a renter? If you live in the Aurora Highlands area you are invited and encouraged to come to our monthly meetings where we meet neighbors, discuss topics of interest and share information. ALL are welcome to attend. Come at 6:45pm and meet your neighbors at the Aurora Hills Recreation Center at 735 S. 18th St. at the corner of 18th and Hayes Streets (where the library / fire station is located).

OUR UPCOMING JUNE 11 MEETING

The press of business continues. This month's agenda includes:

1. John Blevins—Sports Programs Section Supervisor—Arlington PRCR—to discuss community access to softball fields at Virginia Highlands Park
2. CALL TO ACTION—Need widespread community participation in June 17 County Board Meeting
3. Call for annual dues and donations (yes, we're asking for money!)
4. Report ADU survey results
5. Call for volunteers for the Boo Ha Ha coordinating committee (Halloween Party)

Child care and light refreshments will be provided.

CALL TO ACTION

Many of you have asked what you can do—read on.

We need you to show your support for Aurora Highlands (and Arlington Ridge) at the upcoming Arlington County Board Meeting.

Why: In our continuing efforts to obtain equitable services from the county, several of us spoke at the public comment period of the May 17 county board meeting. **County Board members acknowledged that they factor in number of concerned citizens present when an issue is being discussed and/or decided.** This may have as much or more weight than well reasoned arguments .

What: We need you to come, bring your neighbors, friends and children to this meeting to show the Board that we want equitable treatment from the county. It is important that we demonstrate strong community support.

When: Tuesday June 17, 6:30 pm

Where: 2100 Clarendon Blvd, third floor, County Board Room

Below is the text of a letter I sent to the board following up on the May 17 meeting and as a precursor to the June 17 County Board meeting.

Please come and show the Board you care about your community.

Detailed photographs of the neighborhood were included in the letter. They have been removed here for sake of space. Copy of original will be posted to Aurorahighlands.org

Dear County Board Members and County Manager:

At the May 17 County Board meeting, a handful of Aurora Highlands Civic Association neighbors came to speak to you on handful of subjects. Since Public Comment Period does not allow any citizen follow up to the comments made by the County Board Members or the County Manager, I want to follow up in writing on a few key points on each subject.

Virginia Highlands Park – This Park deserves a special Master Planning effort given the unique resource it is to Arlington County as well as to our side of Interstate 395.

Volleyball courts: Mr. Zimmerman made two interesting comments. He seemed to suggest that the Virginia Highlands Park decision might have been part of the original County Board decision regarding Crystal dislocation of two volleyball courts. However, just 2-3 days before coming to this open comment period, I listened to a County Board Meeting on the cable channel during which Mr. Zimmerman spoke at length about how civic facilities are different and special and deserve an extensive and lengthy opportunity for full community wide input. This standard was CLEARLY not applied to the question of placing volleyball courts at Virginia Highlands. Let's be clear, only one court came out of Crystal City location. I used to play there so I am very familiar with the three (3) original courts, of which two

are still there. This focus is on placing two new courts into Virginia Highlands Park. So to call this replacement is not accurate and it is not accurate when two new courts are put into a neighborhood that didn't ask for them when only one court was removed from another neighborhood. In contrast, when park equipment was removed from Nina Park without notice due to arsenic contamination, there was no rush by the County Board or County Manager to find the replacement funds for the lost equipment. Where is the equity in your actions? A comment was made about how many volleyball players showed up at the original hearing. Well, we from Aurora Highlands will do the same now that we know that is the measurement standard for decision making in the County. This is also interesting because when asked at our monthly civic association meeting who the user groups were, county staff could not answer the question.

My son, Rory, mentioned preserving open space. No matter what gets put into Virginia Highlands Park, this is THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUE. Once the open space is gone, it's gone. If you locate these volleyball courts as planned, it cuts the remaining open space in half. Given the attention being paid to the epidemic of childhood obesity, more attention should be paid to the wants and needs of our younger park users, rather than adding more adult facilities. Children, especially children in high-rise apartments, do not have open space to run, play, be creative and have fun. Any modification to this Park merits full deliberation and consideration and community and neighborhood input. If the intention is transform a neighborhood and Community Park into a de facto County sports facility, then the volleyball courts will just about complete that effort.

Maintenance - My son also mentioned glass in the grass. There is regularly broken glass in the area where the 5 year olds have soccer practice. We would appreciate it if the county could address this as soon as possible so our children can play safely.

Softball fields - The locked softball fields at Virginia Highlands Park are sore a point for local neighbors who are completely excluded from these club fields. These are the same fields which will get a capital expenditures for lighting upgrades for the club teams but only benefit softball players. I wonder how many of the people who play on the field live in the Aurora Highlands area?

Spray Park: Many neighbors would like to see a small spray park at Virginia Highlands Park. Based on the two spray grounds that North Arlington has which are only 2 minutes apart by car, the spray features are not huge facilities, probably only about half to two-thirds the size of one volleyball court area. So the issue that somehow this competes with the argument of maintaining open space is not that strong, given it could be

put right be existing playground –even placed in the strange left over concrete area between the two parking lots. Second, the Board Chair referred to how some might find the laughter of small children to be noise and bothersome. This is a completely different setting than the two spray ground tucked right inside residential neighborhoods in North Arlington. This is a park and playground. If it were a quiet place, THAT would be a problem. In addition, have any of you actually experienced language that comes from adults on the basketball courts and soccer fields in this Park? It is totally “adult profanity” and loud. So please, that argument about children making too much noise in this park doesn't hold. Also, almost every parent of small kids says what a great thing it would be to have at this Park. There is a down side, and it's bigger than the spray ground idea. That is, first balancing the interests of Arlington wide residents versus Aurora Highlands/ Arlington Ridge residents, and then balancing and better controlling use of the Park beyond Arlington boundaries. Again, that is a bigger issue than just spray feature of volleyball courts.

Following is the text of message sent to me by Lisa Grandle, Park Development Division Chief on 9/9/07:

"County Board Chairman Paul Ferguson asked me to respond to your additional thoughts regarding a spray park with a fire fighter theme and potential federal funding.

We have frequently used the idea of theming in playground projects, such as the spray playground at Hayes Park that uses a solar system theme or the African American volunteer firefighters/first school house theme at Langston Brown Community Center. The idea of designing a spray playground themed around the fire fighters who were first responders on 9-11 is a worthwhile idea to be considered in the future when funding is identified."

One last point, I find it interesting when AHCA asks for something for Virginia Highlands Park, we are told to go through the NC process, which would imply this is a neighborhood park. However, when the county cuts a deal to benefit Crystal City businesses that impacts our park and we object, we are told, no, no, no, this a “community park” which is bigger than just neighborhood interest. Also, when I heard of this volleyball trade last year, I heard developer would contribute funds for new volleyball courts. But this sure sounds like it is coming out of County Capital funds.

Sidewalks/street and traffic safety and the NC process –Given the fact that the NC Program does not factor in size of neighborhood areas, population size nor unique impacts like Waste Water Treatment Plant or Pentagon City or Crystal City, there is no way NC is sufficient to address needs of Aurora Highlands when it comes to missing sidewalks and traffic safety issues.

NC staff has charted that Aurora Highlands is at high end of spectrum for missing sidewalks and by wish list, had the most missing on the list and if the lower part of Arlington Ridge (a few blocks of the lower grid which is more part of our neighborhood by activity) were factored in, we have most missing sidewalk county wide, hands down.

Also, I just found out yesterday (5/23/08) that in the year 2000, an agreement was reached between the County and developers (at Pentagon Row and Costco sites) recognizing increased traffic impact to Aurora Highlands and Arlington Ridge from the additional commercial development. Yet over the past year, when I have pleaded to various County Board members and senior staff that NC is not equitable and does not factor in these unique heavy impacts to our large neighborhoods, this point was brushed aside.

CCBID, Inc. –Since Arlington is proud of its citizen advisory committees, and the Rosslyn BID, Inc. has non-business citizens as part of the County representation to that BID, why are you afraid to include non-business citizens in this unique public-private relationship. Why is this different from everything else in the county? And what is it that a few citizen residents (who are impacted by CCBID, Inc.) could do or say that would be so detrimental that justifies leaving impacted residents and voters out of this relationship. Especially given these county citizen representatives would have no voting rights within BID Board votes. The two BIDs should be consistent. The explanation that they are evolving is unacceptable. It is not acceptable that the residents of Rosslyn should have a voice in their business improvement district while the residents of Aurora Highlands must allow the BID to steamroll them without consideration of residential issues.

Waste Water Treatment Plant – The County has not been transparent about options for quieter pile driving versus additional costs and time and is acting like a private corporation that has “lawyered up” to protect itself from liability. I would remind you that you that the county government represent us, the residents of Arlington County and is not a private corporate interest beholden to shareholders. While the county must be fiscally responsible, it must take the best interests of the residents into account. And if the County (as in WE THE PEOPLE) has caused emotional or property harm to some of our friends and neighbors, then whatever it costs, it (WE) should be willing to incur the expense to make it right and to give as much disclosure on process and costs and time involved for any viable option for quieter pile driving.

ITEMS NOT MENTIONED AT OPEN COMMENT BUT THAT HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY RAISED WITH YOU:

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

P.O. Box 25201 - Arlington, VA 22202

“The Association is a non-partisan organization of community residents formed to work in the overall community interest in promoting civic pride, enhancing the quality of life in the community, preserving the character of the community and planning for the orderly, safe, and humane development of the community” (AHCA Bylaws, Article II). The AHCA meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (except August) in the Auror/a Hills Recreation Center (735 S. 18th St.) at 7:00 p.m.

2008 Issues

Long Term:

1. **Crystal City Long Term Plan as well as CCBID and CCBID, Impact on AHCA**
2. **ADU Initiative**
3. **Wakefield High School Capital Rebuilding and quality of academic programs.**

Near Term Neighborhood Specific

1. **Social Event**
2. **NC Plan (finish drafting plan)**
 - A. **Community Center & Virginia Highlands Park**
 - B. **Sidewalks**
 - C. **Nina/Nellie Custis/Eads Parks**
3. **Waste Water Treatment Plant—near term noise issues.**

Association Officers & Committee Chairs

- ◇ President – Bruce Cameron 703 892-5071
- ◇ Vice President – Steve Wyner 703 920-1629
- ◇ 2nd Vice President – Van Newstrom 703 683-5911
- ◇ Treasurer / Membership - Johanna Soli 703-655-5895
- ◇ Business Secretary – John Kriese 703 519-0961
- ◇ Corresponding Secretary – Martin King 703 979-7299
- ◇ Aircraft Noise Liaison - Denis O’Sullivan 703-521-6425
- ◇ Meeting Hospitality - Judy King 703-979-7299
- ◇ Newsletter Distribution - Martin & Judy King 979-7299
- ◇ Newsletter Editor—Maria Cameron 703-892-5071
- ◇ Police and Waste Water Treatment Plant Liaison -Brad & Louise Garris - 703-548-1944
- ◇ Urban Planning Ted Saks 703-683-1312
- ◇ Newsletter printing compliments of the Sheltered Occupational Center, 750 South 23rd St. 703-920-9400)

Items for the Newsletter: Send items in e-mail messages (not attachments) to the newsletter editor, Bruce Cameron at brucecameronahca@gmail.com; no later than the 26th of the month.

Virginia Hills Community Center/Old Fire House #105

– Since August of last year, we have raised the idea of refurbishing this combined facility into something special for the county and our neighborhood with you and Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Zimmerman. We are still waiting for you to help us start the public process regarding this facility and its potential renovation and refurbishment (and saving its 9-11 history). Rather than being told directly, we found out plans for old fire house by overhearing a conversation at grand opening of new fire house where we heard “that old firehouse is to be used as (high priced) warehouse building by the Fire Department.” I return to Mr. Zimmerman’s comments about civic facilities. Where was the in-depth community engagement process about future use of this county civic facility that was no longer needed in its former role?

Wakefield –It should be easy for County Board Members and the County Manager to say Wakefield should be on parity from a facility and performance standpoint ASAP. It is unacceptable for it to be the only high school still not confirmed for capital rebuilding program. And it is unacceptable for it to rank more than 300 places below the next Arlington High School, when the other three Arlington High Schools rank in the top 100 in the country in a Washington Post article. It’s just not.

ADUs – The AHCA survey will be done by May 30, 2008; we will tally and deliver to the Board and Manager. Of the surveys I have received, most say they are not familiar with how parameters of the program will work. Also, most have said they want this to go through a County wide Referendum. And while I wouldn’t consider it myself, I wouldn’t be surprised if a group of citizens chooses to sue the County if it passes this initiative without a County wide Referendum.

Crystal City Long Term Plan – The Crystal City plan is not just about Crystal City, it is about the whole area inside 395 bowl. It is one of the most unique urban areas in country. You must focus on the whole bowl, not just Crystal City. All parts benefit the others on our side of 395.

We want to work in partnership with you, but we need the county to start acting like you take our concerns seriously, and not as an afterthought to the business interests of Crystal City.

Due to space consideration (and to get you to visit our website!) minutes from the May meeting are posted on the website—Aurorahighlands.org.

Don’t forget—Keep working on those ideas for the community center! Encourage your kids to share their great ideas as well.

Our sincere thanks to SOC for their support of AHCA by printing our newsletter.

SOC Enterprises

750 South 23rd St. Arlington, VA 22202
703-920-9400 Fax: 703-299-3255

“Business and Rehabilitation”

We combine both to provide meaningful training and work for our community’s disabled
SOC for Printing, Mailing, and Fulfillment Services

Important Phone Numbers:

- Streetlight Outages/Power Outages Contact Dominion Virginia Power at 1-888-667-3000.
- Arlington Non-Emergency Number 703-558-2222 for County Police / Fire / Rescue
- Water Pollution Control Plant (odor complaint number) 703-228-6867 (Phil Loar). When you call this number it will also give you a number for the Shift Supervisor for immediate assistance after regular business hours, holidays, or weekends.
- Inspection Services 703-228-3800 for concerns / complaints about construction
- Refuse / Recycling Pickup call the Department of Environmental Services customer call center at 703-228-6570.
- Unkempt Property / High Grass To report high grass or unkempt properties, call Arlington County Code Enforcement at 703-228-3232. .

School News

For general school information, see the APS website (<http://www.arlington.k12.va.us/aps/site/default.asp>)

Wakefield Update—3 funding scenarios are currently under consideration. For more information, please visit <http://rebuildwakefield.blogspot.com/>

How to Get on the List serve

The neighborhood listserv is hosted by Alice Andors. It continues to be an independent community resource (it is not connected with the civic association). To join, send an email to Alice at andorsali@comcast.net with a note that you’d like to participate. She’ll walk you through the drill.

AHCA E-mail List

Occasionally we would like to reach out to AHCA neighbors on a more urgent and focused basis than the broader 4-D listserv. If you will e-mail your contact info to brucecameronahca@gmail.com, we will update our AHCA e-mail list. If you would encourage your immediate neighbors to send their contact info as well, that would be helpful.