



Williamsburg Civic Association Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2011

WWW.WCA-ARLINGTON.ORG

WCA President's Message

Dear Neighbors:

I hope you and your family had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Your civic association has been busy. As you'll read in this newsletter, we have made some significant progress with the Sycamore Street median project, have been participating in meetings on Arlington County's sign ordinance, and have been tabulating the results of the traffic and pedestrian safety survey that was included in our last newsletter. With this information, we will be able to make educated decisions on what projects to focus on next.



Sonia McCormick

I hope you'll plan to attend our **Tuesday, Dec. 6** general membership to hear the latest on the Sycamore project and the survey results, plus hear how residential real estate is doing in our community. Are houses selling? If so, what's the average time on the market and how are values holding up? McEneaney & Associates's Jim Toronto will bring us up to speed.

But the meeting won't be all business. We actually have a little fun in store. Given that the holiday season is approaching, we're planning to have a **cookie exchange at the outset of the meeting**. Yes, you read that correctly. In addition to showing up with your \$10 in annual dues (more on that in a bit), I hope you'll also plan to bring four dozen cookies to the meeting. If all goes as planned, you'll leave with that same number, except they'll be of a wide variety. As an extra treat, we'd like to compile all of the recipes into a booklet for meeting attendees, so please plan to email your recipe by Dec. 1st to Paul Cullen at Graceld99@comcast.net. Please put **COOKIE EXCHANGE** in the subject line.

In the last paragraph, I mentioned annual dues, which are \$10 per household. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the community traditionally pays their dues. We've done our best to cut down on expenses –

General Membership Meeting and Holiday Celebration

Tuesday, Dec. 6: 7:00-9:00 PM

**7:00-7:30 -- Pay Dues &
Exchange Holiday Cookies!!**
(See president's message for more info)

7:30-9:00 – Meeting & Program

**Nottingham Elementary School
In the Multi-Purpose Room
5900 Little Falls Road
Arlington, VA 22207**

Topics:
**Sycamore Street Median
Traffic/Pedestrian Safety Report
Update on Local Real Estate Market**

most notably by having block captains hand deliver this newsletter – but we are barely covering our costs. So while it's not fun to ask for money, I need to do so. Please help the civic association continue its valuable work in the neighborhood by paying your dues. And if you can afford to donate a little extra, we would greatly appreciate it.

Last but not least, I'd like to announce that I will be resigning as WCA president following the Dec. 6 meeting. Having represented you over the past two years has been a great experience, but I'm ready to move on to other volunteer work. To that end, our VP, Ruth Shearer, will take over as president, which means that her VP slot is open. Should you be interested in that position, please contact Ruth at your earliest convenience at 703-298-8716 or via email at shearerr3@msn.com.

Thank you for having given me the privilege of serving you. Best wishes and happy holidays!

--Sonia

WCA Priority Neighborhood Project Closer to Reality

By Paul Cullen, WCA NCAC Representative

For more than a decade, the Williamsburg Civic Association's priority neighborhood improvement project has been the installation of a landscaped median on Sycamore Street between 26th Street and the Williamsburg Boulevard traffic circle. That project has now been qualified for funding under the bond that funds Arlington's Neighborhood Conservation program. Once the project clears the last few hurdles, construction may begin in about a year.

The WCA's goals for the project are to beautify the neighborhood and to calm traffic. The project design is similar in concept to the median project installed on Williamsburg Boulevard between the Williamsburg traffic circle and Westmoreland Street eight years ago. A median with grass and trees will be installed and one of lane of traffic in each direction will be eliminated. Arlington County engineers surveyed Sycamore Street and determined that two lanes were not necessary to carry the present traffic volume.

The design process has been an exercise of meeting the WCA's goals plus adhering to the engineering and design elements required under Arlington County rules. In addition to eliminating one traffic lane in each direction and installing an average 14.5 foot-wide median with landscaping, key design aspects of the proposed plan include:

- breaks in the median at street intersections, the shopping center, and the stretch of the street with no intersection between 26th Street and 27th Street
- maintenance of bike lanes in each direction
- minor reconfigurations of street striping and turn lanes for traffic transitions at both ends of the project
- maintenance of the parking lanes for all but a couple of spots near ART bus stops, and the recovery of some parking spots currently "striped out."

- a required storm water collection feature under a part of the new median
- required sidewalk "bump-outs" for ART bus stops

Last but not least, we have requested that the County's landscape engineer explore the possibility of planting Sycamore trees in these Sycamore Street medians!

A big "Thank You" is due to Sycamore Street resident Jonathan Levine for the recent progress on this project. Jonathan volunteered to be project captain and labored throughout the summer, going door to door, to gather the required number of signatures to move forward with the project (the County requirement being to obtain signatures of property owners representing at least 60% of the linear footage along the portion of Sycamore Street directly affected by the project). A brief presentation on the Sycamore Street project will be given, and questions answered, at the WCA meeting on Dec. 6th.

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Residents Share Traffic/Pedestrian Safety Concerns

By Eleanor Smith

Member, Traffic /Pedestrian Safety Committee

In the April WCA newsletter, we included a survey to gather residents' perspectives and concerns regarding traffic and pedestrian safety in our neighborhoods. Fifty (50) residents completed the survey and provided thoughtful comments on areas of most concern. We also distributed the survey to the Arlington East Falls Church Civic Association (AEFFCA) to gain insight on their concerns regarding traffic and safety given that they also travel on and cross these same roads as pedestrians and drivers. Sixteen (16) AEFCCA members returned completed surveys. We thank everyone for their time and attention to this issue.

WCA Survey Responses

The first question on the survey asked if residents had trouble crossing particular streets, and provided an option to identify additional streets not mentioned. The results are presented in Table 1. Common themes identified by at least 2 respondents are noted, and are listed in order of frequency of response (i.e., themes with greater frequency noted first). Not surprisingly, a number of residents identified issues with crossing Sycamore St. and Williamsburg Blvd., and noted the difficulties with signage and walk signals at the Williamsburg Circle. Cars speeding on Williamsburg and Sycamore and the lack of visibility because of the hills were key concerns. For Sycamore St., a number of residents noted the difficulty of crossing Sycamore where Little Falls Rd./28th St. intersect, because there is no median or crosswalk. On Little Falls St., the intersection with Ohio St. near Nottingham Elementary was identified as a problem as cars speed down Little Falls and fail to yield to pedestrians. The concern for children walking to Nottingham Elementary was an issue. In the Other category, residents noted the intersections of Lee Highway, Washington Blvd., and Sycamore St. as areas where it is difficult to cross. In addition, it is difficult to use the crosswalk at 26th St. and Trinidad St. because of cars failing to stop at the Trinidad St. stop sign and cars speeding on 26th St.

Table 1

| Do you have trouble crossing the following streets: | Number Responding "Yes" | Common Themes in Comments |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| Sycamore | 16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Falls Rd., 28th St., and Sycamore intersection • At or near the traffic circle • Between the traffic circle and 26th St. • At 26th St. |
| Williamsburg | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At or near the traffic circle • John Marshall Dr. • Ohio St. • Rochester St. • Speed and hills |
| Little Falls | 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio St./Nottingham Elementary • John Marshall Dr. |
| Other | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee Highway, Washington Blvd., Sycamore St. intersections • 26th St. and Trinidad St. |

Continued on Page 4

Approximately two-thirds (2/3) of respondents reported that excessive speeding is a problem in the neighborhood. In particular, residents were concerned about speeding around Bishop O’Connell High School before school starts and after school ends. Residents were also concerned with speeding on Sycamore St., and speeding cars cutting through in the 35th Rd. N and Somerset St. area. Williamsburg Blvd. and the area around Nottingham Elementary were also noted as areas where speeding is a problem. Approximately one-third (1/3) of respondents reported that commuter traffic was a problem in the neighborhood. In particular, residents noted the issue of cut-through traffic on Powhatan St., 35th Rd. N, 35th St. N, and Somerset St. to avoid the traffic circle. A second issue of concern for a number of respondents was commuter traffic around Bishop O’Connell High School and Tuckahoe Elementary. Student and parent traffic coming to and from O’Connell was noted as a problem. Sycamore St. and Williamsburg Blvd. were again mentioned as concerns.

A little over half of respondents reported that stop and yield signs are obeyed in the neighborhood. However, 18 respondents noted that these signs are not obeyed. In particular, residents are concerned about the intersection at Little Falls Rd. and Underwood St. next to O’Connell. There is a 2-way stop sign there, but residents are not confident that drivers will stop and residents believe a 4-way stop should be installed. Residents are also concerned about the traffic circle next to O’Connell at Little Falls Rd. and Trinidad, where cars often do not obey the stop signs on Trinidad St. Finally, respondents noted the failure of cars to obey the stop sign at Little Falls Rd. and Williamsburg Blvd. (at the traffic circle).

A minority of respondents reported having trouble walking/biking to schools and other destinations in our neighborhood, as summarized in Table 2. To some extent, the low number of residents reporting problems may be the result of where the resident lives within our association (i.e., parents of Nottingham students would not typically need to walk to Tuckahoe Elementary, and wouldn’t report problems walking there, and vice versa). Those who did report problems walking to these destinations did raise some of the same themes identified in earlier survey questions (e.g., issues of crossing Sycamore St., Williamsburg traffic circle, speeding traffic on Lee Highway and Washington Blvd.) and some new themes (e.g., lack of a bike lane on Sycamore St., parked cars on Sycamore St., heavy traffic on Williamsburg Blvd. north of the traffic circle).

Table 2

| Do you or members of your household have trouble walking/biking to the following destinations? | Number Responding “Yes” |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Nottingham Elementary | 9 |
| East Falls Church Metro | 7 |
| Williamsburg Shopping Center | 7 |
| Williamsburg Middle School | 6 |
| Yorktown High School | 5 |
| Tuckahoe Elementary | 3 |

Respondents were also asked for their preferences regarding various traffic calming methods to change traffic patterns in the neighborhood. Table 3 ranks in order the various methods based on the number of favorable responses, and notes particular areas where residents would like to see these measures implemented. Interestingly (and probably not surprisingly), traffic circles and speed humps received many written comments of “No!”

Table 3

| Do you favor changing the traffic patterns in the neighborhood through: | Number Responding "Yes" | Common Themes in Comments |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Installing yield to pedestrian signs in crosswalks | 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets around O'Connell/Tuckahoe • Sycamore St. at Little Falls Rd./28th St. |
| Rumble strips | 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No common themes, but various streets mentioned |
| Four way stops | 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around O'Connell High School, in particular at Little Falls Rd. and Underwood St. • 35th Rd N • Yorktown Blvd. |
| Narrowing streets (i.e., enlarging median strips) | 16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. |
| Lowering speed limits to 25 mph | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. |
| Speed cameras | 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. • Around O'Connell High School |
| Decreasing speed limit in school zones | 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around all schools • Tuckahoe/O'Connell |
| Traffic circles | 13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO! was most common comment • 35th Rd. N |
| Speed humps | 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO! was most common comment |
| Marking parking lanes | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. |
| Reconfiguring intersections to reduce turn speed | 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No common themes, but various streets mentioned. |
| Installing additional speed limit signs | 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No common themes |
| Curb extensions to reduce crossing distances | 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. |
| Stop light cameras | 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sycamore St. and Washington Blvd. |
| Turn restrictions | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Williamsburg Blvd. onto Somerset St., Powhatan St. onto 36th St. N |
| Traffic lights | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No common themes |

AEFCCA Responses

Residents of the AEFCCA reported some similar traffic safety issues, such as crossing at Lee Highway and Washington Blvd, an increase in commuter traffic on Williamsburg Blvd., and issues around the EFC metro station. They also noted some unique issues such as crossing Lee Highway at John Marshall near Overlee Pool, and the failure of speeding cars to stop at that crosswalk. Commuter traffic getting onto I-66 was also noted as a problem, as was crossing Washington Blvd. as cars get onto I-66. Residents also raised the issue of Bishop O'Connell students and parents exiting the I-66 ramp at Westmoreland St. in the morning and failing to stop at that stop sign before turning left to drive to O'Connell.

Next Steps

We thank the residents who took the time to provide their thoughts and concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety. The WCA Executive Committee will now use the survey results to identify areas where we can work to address traffic and safety concerns. This will include researching county programs and sources of funding for various types of traffic and safety improvements.

Proposed Sign Ordinance Needs Work, Say Civic Association Reps

By Ruth Shearer, VP

Signs in Arlington are a big deal. That much I've learned.

As someone who represented the Williamsburg Civic Association at a number of recent sign workshops, it became clear just how passionate residents, business owners and others in the County are about ensuring that if revisions are made to Arlington County's 60-year-old zoning code, they're done right.

As many know, the County announced late last year that it would update the sign regulations in Section 34 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance. Outreach was conducted through a public forum, as well as through focus groups with specific industry interests.

The goals of the revision included:

- full compliance with Virginia code and other legal requirements;
- the inclusion of best practices in sign administration;
- easy administration and enforcement of the ordinance; and
- a reduction in the number of County Board hearings regarding zoning issues.

Civic association representatives have asked to be able to continue to have permission to advertise membership meetings via sandwich boards. They also expressed concerns about three major areas of the proposal: the enforcement of the ordinances, lack of illumination information, and the proposed 100% administrative approval.

Continued on Page 7



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Enforcement:

The enforcement concerns include the lack of specific information regarding the improvement of current enforcement protocols, which are perceived by the residents as somewhat lacking. The County staff has not yet responded to the requests from the civic associations and residents to address these concerns.

Sign Illumination

The community concerns regarding the sign illumination stems from the County’s lack of lighting standards. The proposed ordinance for sign illumination is extremely deficient in technical specifications related to illumination levels, light spillage, and light contrast measurements. Although Arlington County residents have repeatedly advised the County staff to acquire lighting expertise to fully address these lighting deficiencies, to date no action has been taken by the County staff.

Administrative Approval

The most controversial topic involves the proposal

to institute 100% administrative approval for the ordinance. This means that all approvals will occur at the zoning desk. The civic associations and residents have repeatedly expressed overwhelming opposition to this proposal. Although the proposal will reduce the number of items that go to the County Board for hearing, it removes all public awareness and community dialogue, thereby removing *all* community involvement in issues that affect the residents and their neighborhoods. This contradicts the basic tenets of the “Arlington Way.”

Civic Federation Affirms Support for Proposal

On Nov. 1, delegates to the Arlington County Civic Federation heard the proposed sign ordinance revision and voted to support the draft amendment for three selected subsections of the draft zoning ordinance (sidewalk signs, umbrella signs, and parking signs) but adopted a resolution for restrictions on sidewalks signs and strong proactive enforcement by the County.

These topics will be the subject of two upcoming public hearings: Nov. 28 by the Planning Commission, and Dec. 10 by the County Board. Please consider participating in these hearings – your voice matters!

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Follow These Simple Steps to Prepare for Winter

Winter Preparedness Week is Dec. 4-10

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management has declared Dec. 4-10 as Winter Preparedness Week. The following tips are provided to you and your family to prepare for the snowy or icy conditions that we've been known to encounter during the winter months:

Make a plan. Decide on a meeting place outside of your neighborhood if your family is separated and cannot return home because of closed roads. Choose an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications. With your family, write down your emergency plan – get a free worksheet at www.ReadyVirginia.gov. Click on Make a Plan for more details.

Get a kit. Start with these basic supplies for winter weather: 3 days' food; 3 days' water (a gallon per person per day); a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio with extra batteries; and your written family emergency plan. After you have these essential supplies, add a first aid kit, medications if needed, blankets and warm clothing, supplies for special members of your household, and pet items.

Stay informed. Before, during and after a winter storm, you should listen to local media for instructions from emergency officials. There may be times when you are advised to stay in place until it is safe to travel. Stay informed about winter storm watches and warnings and road conditions. You can get road condition information 24/7 by calling 511 or checking www.511Virginia.org

Go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov and print out an emergency supply checklist and a family emergency plan.

Bishop O'Connell HS Breaks Ground on New Sports Complex: Construction has begun for O'Connell's new multipurpose, synthetic state-of-the-art turf field and six-lane track surrounding it. According to the school's website, the positioning of the rectangular athletic field is being realigned to allow for a regulation width soccer field. Six sports, including football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, cross country and track and field will use the athletic fields at the varsity, junior varsity and freshman level. Other sports teams as well as PE classes will use the track and turf for conditioning. The project will replace the existing rectangular field and track that was completed in 1964.

Interested in Serving on ACCF Environmental Committee? WCA has been invited to have a representative on the Arlington County Civic Federation's Environmental Committee. If you have an interest in environmental issues and would like to join the committee or learn more about it, please contact the chair of the committee, Joe Pelton, at joepelton@verizon.net. Please copy incoming WCA president, Ruth Shearer, on the email: shearerr@msn.com

Arlington Firefighters Collect Toys for Tots: Once again the Arlington County Fire Department will support the U.S. Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program. Please bring new, unwrapped toys to any area fire station from now until Dec. 24 and help to put a smile on the face of a child who might otherwise go without this holiday season.

Have a non-police emergency? Call Officer O'Daniel: The WCA has a community police officer assigned to us. If you have a non-emergency, please refrain from calling the main police line and instead call Officer James O'Daniel at 703.228.3600, x 9847 or email him at jodaniel@arlingtonva.us

Be on the lookout for plant thief: As incredulous as it may seem, several residents in the neighborhood on or near Sycamore St. have reported having had plants stolen from both their front and back yards. The plants were ripped right out of the ground. The alleged thief is a white male in his 30s or 40s who walks a small dog (possibly a Jack Russell Terrier) early in the morning. If you have any information on this, please contact the Arlington County Police at either 911 or the non-emergency line: 703.228.2222.

Williamsburg Snow Brigade – Call for Volunteers and Neighbors in Need

Arlington County's Snow Removal Ordinance requires each homeowner to remove the snow or ice from the public sidewalks adjacent to their property. The goal of the ordinance is to promote pedestrian safety. The snow must be removed within 24 hours after the snow stops falling when accumulations are less than 6 inches, and within 36 hours when 6 or more inches of snow accumulate. (If another snow event occurs, the clock will reset to the end of the most recent snowfall.)

Noncompliance could result in a civil penalty of \$50 to \$100. The County designated the civic associations as the place residents can go for assistance with sidewalk clearing.

Last winter, to help those who cannot clear their street-side sidewalks, WCA organized a Snow Brigade to match neighbors in need of help with volunteers. Winter is now coming upon us again and we would like to update our list of neighbors in need of snow removal help and volunteers who would like to help. Please contact Ellen Jones: (ellenjones6@starpower.net; 703-536-7626) if:

- **You are a neighbor in need of help.** As in the past, we will do our best to match you with a volunteer. Obviously, we make no guarantees. If we don't get any volunteers near your home, we cannot make a match. Also, if your volunteer is out of town or has an early meeting the day of the storm, he/she may not get to you or might not get to you right away. Similarly, if we get a really killer storm, volunteers may be fully occupied clearing their own property.

We will do our best, but we are just volunteers and can make no promises. There is an exemption for individual homeowners that are physically unable to remove the snow. However, especially if you live on a frequently-travelled pedestrian route (i.e., to schools or metro), please contact us for help, so we can keep the route clear for walkers.

- **You would like to help.** This is a great way to help out both homeowners and pedestrians, but please *do not* volunteer if you have heart or back problems! Also, we understand that your volunteer efforts depend on your schedule and the nature of the snow storm. We will try to match you with a neighbor in need within a two or three block radius of your house and (if possible) provide a back up if your schedule (or the magnitude of the snow storm) does not allow you to get to your resident. In the future – if we get enough volunteers – we will assign some as rovers to try to clear routes to schools and metro and to dig out fire hydrants.

Please help us make this work!

For more on the Snow Removal Ordinance, see <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/uepd/snow/page78323.aspx> For the text of the Ordinance, see:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CountyBoard/Documents/file77280.pdf> For information on the

County-assigned civic association role, see <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/EnvironmentalServices/uepd/snow/file79212.pdf>

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'Oh, Thank Heaven': 7-11 to Re-open in December

December will be a great month to celebrate, as Seven Eleven will re-open its 2,645 square-foot store in the Williamsburg Shopping Center.

Renovations have been underway for some time.

According to landlord Nick Kalis, the new store will feature new exterior signage, store fixtures, and more shopper-friendly aisles.

In what was described in a news release as an "unusual move," Leonard Pick of Renaud Consulting – representing the landlord – worked with Seven Eleven to bring the store back to this dynamic location, which has a long history in the community. The store first opened as a Highs Dairy Store in the mid 1950s.



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WCA ListServ Keeps Neighbors Connected

If you're not yet a member of the Williamsburg Civic Association listserv, you're missing out. The listserv provides a fast and cost-effective way to keep up with breaking news in our neighborhood, plus share recommendations on everything from contractors to doctors to babysitters. To join, visit http://groups.yahoo.com/group/arlington_wca/

When you arrive at the site, you will be asked to include your reason for joining. This is to prevent spammers from trying to gain access. At a minimum, please include your **FIRST** and **LAST NAME**, and **WHERE YOU LIVE**. When you post, it's helpful to identify yourself and the street you live on. Members are asked to be civil and courteous in all postings.

Should you have questions, please contact Mark Moran at [webmast \(at\) wca-arlington.org](mailto:webmast@wca-arlington.org).

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Leasing Inquiries

Leonard Pick

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Vice President: **Ruth Shearer**
Secretary: **Jim Lunson**
Treasurer: **Jim Toronto**
Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee Rep:
Paul Cullen
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Please pay your membership dues (and consider a little extra)!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR WILLIAMSBURG CIVIC ASSOCIATION

The purpose of the Williamsburg Civic Association is to promote the welfare of our community and its residents. We do this by holding meetings, issuing this newsletter, and interacting with the Arlington County Civic Federation, Arlington County Board, and a variety of local and regional organizations. You can support our efforts by paying your annual dues of only \$10 per household. Please tear off this sheet and mail it along with your check (made payable to Williamsburg Civic Association) to our treasurer, Jim Toronto, at 3577 Powhatan St., N., Arlington, VA 22213. You also can pay at the general membership meeting. **Please consider adding a donation to your dues, as we have only \$150 in our account at the moment and must rely on dues and limited ad sales to pay for the printing of this newsletter and various other expenses, such as our website hosting fee and our dues to the Arlington County Civic Federation. Thank you for demonstrating your appreciation for our work by adding a small donation!**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Working on conservation plan projects Organizing social events Helping with the newsletter