

REPORT
of the
Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee
McLean Citizens Association
September 8, 2005

During the preceding months, the Environment, Parks and Recreation (E,P&R) Committee of Mclean Citizens Association has been involved with a number of important issues that impact the quality of life and the environment, surroundings, and recreational opportunities of residents of McLean and the Dranesville District of Fairfax County. Committee members meet at the Mclean Community Center 8:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Topics and subjects addressed are those that emanate from policies, plans, legislation, and various other initiatives of local, state and federal government agencies, as well as from developers, builders and other businesses that could affect residents' well-being.

In March 2005, the Committee carefully reviewed the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) sections of the out-of-turn Fairfax County Proposed Policy Plan Amendment (Item S01-CW-15CP). The 37-page document contained language that would significantly modify FCPA policies related to such factors as the goals of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors as they affect the FCPA; the FCPA park classification system and the parameters that determine how a particular park is classified (and therefore how a park is operated and used); the impact of nearby communities on the development of new parks, or operations/changes at existing parks in size, facilities, layout, or usage; standards and criteria for establishment of park and recreation facilities; and guidelines for adding the numbers of specific types of recreation facilities.

Following the development of the Committee's recommended changes to the Proposed Policy Plan Amendment, the two Committee co-chairs arranged for and subsequently participated in detailed discussions with FCPA officials during a meeting at the FCPA Headquarters. They presented cogent arguments and supporting rationale that ultimately resulted in significant changes to the document. The Committee later assured that follow-up documentation was forwarded to the FCPA. The final Fairfax County Policy Plan Amendment reflected virtually all of the changes recommended by the Committee.

The E,P&R Committee reviewed and submitted significant recommendations to the FCPA funding addendum to the Fiscal Year 2006 budget which were incorporated. The added amount of \$305,000 permitted the implementation of Fairfax County's well-conceived and newly adopted Natural Resource Management Plan. The proposed additional funds supported natural resource inventory activities and the FCPA program to combat invasive non-native plant species. Moreover, the FCPA Natural Resources Management Plan directly supported the Board of Supervisors Environmental Agenda.

During the late-spring timeframe, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) initiated a concrete repair program for street curbs and gutters in an established McLean neighborhood. Residents became alarmed by VDOT's cutting and removal of mature trees that had been planted along the grassy areas between the community's sidewalks and curbs. Local neighborhood leaders contacted the E,P&R Committee for assistance and attended a Committee meeting to present details about the circumstances. Through the initiatives of the Committee, arrangements were made for a meeting involving VDOT, staff

members of both State and County elected officials, community leaders, and E,P&R Committee members. The entire situation was resolved amicably, and VDOT's work in the neighborhood continued without the unnecessary removal of additional trees.

The Committee also became involved in resolving an aircraft noise problem caused by departing and arriving aircraft at Ronald Reagan National Airport. Representatives from Arlington County as well as citizens from McLean met with the Committee to present information and discuss the situation. The Committee quickly developed a resolution that was approved by the MCA Board of Directors and then forwarded to appropriate local, state and federal officials and the Federal Aviation Administration. Subsequent indications are that aircraft noise pollution and disturbances had diminished significantly.

In early September 2005, the Committee developed an important resolution that dealt with a growing concern that the communities in and around McLean, rather than being protected by environmental laws and regulations, have instead been adversely impacted by land development. It was determined that the preclusions and constraints on development embodied in these laws and regulations were being ignored or obfuscated by some in the development community and also by some Fairfax County staff and officials. The resolution strongly supported the intent of the environmental protections provided by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (CBPO), the Floodplain Ordinance and related legislation. Of particular concern was the County's recent history of administratively removing land and watercourses from protected status that had been established by legislation. Further, the Committee believed that there have been determinations by Fairfax County officials that do not reflect the intent of the Zoning Ordinance, the CBPO, the Floodplain Ordinance, the regulations codified in the Public Facilities Manual (PFM), or best practices and that appear contrary to the stated intent of the Board's Environmental Vision. Accordingly, the MCA Board passed a resolution that calls on the Board of Supervisors to take immediate steps to clarify the letter and intent of the County Code, the PFM, and other regulatory provisions. The resolution also calls on the Board of Supervisors to promptly undertake initiatives that were specifically listed in the resolution in order to demonstrate to the citizens of Fairfax County that the Board's legislative enactments are consistent with, and in furtherance of, its Environmental Vision.

Members of the E,P&R Committee also took time to acknowledge by means of an MCA resolution the historic accomplishment of the McLean Girls Little League softball team that recently returned in triumph from the Little League Softball World Series, having claimed the Championship title.

The Committee continues diligently to monitor and track FCPA proposals and initial planning involving land acquisitions, development of a new McLean park, and possible options that affect several other parks. Also watched closely are developer proposals and initiatives that could impact the local environment through such considerations as tree retention, stormwater management, protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, etc.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Crandall and Paul Wieland
Co-Chairs, Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee