

REPORT
of the
Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee
McLean Citizens Association
December 7, 2005

The previous months have been both busy and productive for the Environment, Parks and Recreation (E,P&R) Committee of McLean Citizens Association, which holds its meetings in the Swinson Room of the Mclean Community Center at 8:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of every month. Our committee members continue to be involved with several issues that have the potential to affect the way McLean citizens enjoy their leisure time, including those associated with our environment.

One particular issue could have had a definite negative impact not only on McLean residents, but on every resident of the entire County. The issue evolved originally from an agreement in late 2002 between the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) and McLean Youth Soccer (MYS) that allowed MYS to control virtually all playing time at Field No. 2 at Lewinsville Park. MYS, in turn, developed an agreement with Marymount University, located in Arlington County, that allowed the school's varsity soccer and lacrosse teams to use the field for practice and all home games. No public hearing was held, and the Planning Commissioner ruled that a special exception was not required. The West Lewinsville Heights Citizens Association (WLHCA) filed an appeal with the County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and following a public hearing on September 16, 2003, the BZA ruled that the University's use of the Lewinsville Park field did NOT meet the requirements of the County ordinance that required "public use" of the park, and therefore the BZA decision prohibited Marymount to use the field.

However, the County Board of Supervisors (BoS) filed a law suite challenging the BZA decision and named citizens from WLHCA in the suit. Following a Circuit Court decision in favor of the BoS, the BZA and WLHCA appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court. On September 16, 2005, the high court reversed the Circuit Court ruling. This led to a BoS decision to appeal the Suipreme Court's decision, which in essence allowed Marymount's varsity teams to continue to use the field. The BoS also initiated action to redefine the term "public use" in the applicable County ordinance. The language in the proposed ordinance change would have the effect of allowing both the FCPA and the County School Board to make decision on the use of public park and school facilities without any requirement for public hearings or any means of citizen input.to those decisions.

The E, P & R Committee developed a resolution that objected to the proposed ordinance change, and the resolution was approved by the MCA and forwarded to appropriate officials and the media. On October 27, 2005, the County Planning Commission held a public hearing on the matter, and with MCA leading the way, 24 citizens from throughout the County testified at the hearing. The result was a unanimous decision by the Planning Commission to defer a decision on the proposed change to the ordinance. The committee also provided a draft letter to the BoS recommending deferral of a decision that the MCA president forwarded. Final result: the matter has been postponed indefinitely.

The committee also developed a resolution that supported a Mclean citizen's appeal to the BZA regarding a stormwater runoff problem that was causing severe soil erosion to his property. A neighbor's 12" high stone wall along the side of her property was acting as a dam that prohibited the natural runoff of water during heavy rain storms, and the County Zoning Enforcement Office had issued a citation to the owner of the wall. The owner hired a lawyer, who filed with the BZA for a deferment. The MCA resolution acknowledged the stormwater problem and the citation, and urged the BZA to find against a deferment. The BZA, in fact, did decide against the deferment and directed the homeowner to modify or remove the wall.

Following announcement by the U.S. Park Service that it was seeking citizen input to two alternative plans for Great Falls Park located adjacent to McLean, the committee addressed a draft resolution but ultimately decided that it was inappropriate to forward any resolution on the plans.

The committee also addressed a number of other issues, including an one that is ongoing regarding a stormwater management study that is being conducted.

Respectfully submitted,

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