

Six-Month Report
of the
Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee
McLean Citizens Association
for the Period Ending December 31, 2005

During the period, the Environment, Parks and Recreation (E,P&R) Committee of McLean Citizens Association was 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.

During the summer of 2005, the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) finalized the out-of-turn Fairfax County Proposed Policy Plan Amendment (Item S01-CW-15CP). The lengthy document significantly modified 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 initial language in 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.

Early during the period, 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.

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 Supreme 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.

E, P & R committee members developed four separate resolutions involving stormwater and its ultimate impact on area watersheds and runoff ultimately to the Chesapeake Bay. The resolutions were finalized in preparation for addressal by the MCA Board of Directors during its January 2006 meeting. The titles of the four resolutions:

- Resolution regarding Proposed Amendments to the Public Facilities Manual for Adequate Outfall of Stormwater
- Resolution Regarding Natural Drainage Divides
- Resolution Regarding Notification of Adjacent Property Owners
- Resolution Regarding Reclassification of Perennial Streams

All four resolutions were deemed important environmentally. The one dealing with the classification of perennial streams, however, addressed a long-standing issue that the committee had focused on for

several years. It urged the County to adopt specifically listed standards that would assure that streams are accurately classified and, if adopted, will greatly enhance the protection of the County's environment.

In summary, the E,P &R committee continued 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