



Williamsburg Civic Association Newsletter

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012

WWW.WCA-ARLINGTON.ORG

WCA President's Message

Hi, Neighbors:

I would like to first say a heartfelt *Thank You!* I am honored that you have entrusted me to represent you as president of the WCA. I moved here in 1998, and I can honestly say that I really love this community. We have seen the power of residents coming together and just how effective that community voice can be in Arlington. I am excited about taking on the role of the president, and hope to continue to work on issues that affect each of us and our community as a whole. I am committed to proactive involvement with our County government and staffs, and will do my very best to ensure that issues important to the WCA constituency are priorities for our County Board.

As we enter this New Year, the WCA is already very busy with several topics of interest for our community. At our last meeting, the status of the Sycamore Street Project was presented and several residents volunteered to participate in various aspects of the project, including the landscape design and tree and plant selections.

The results of the WCA Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Survey were also presented to our members at the last meeting. The Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee continues to pursue remedies for the issues documented in the survey. We have provided the report to the Arlington County Police Department Special Operations Division and will continue to coordinate with the Police Department and with the County staffs.

The topic of backyard henhouses in Arlington was brought to the attention of the WCA members. There were significant inquiries from our residents for more information regarding the proposed change in the County's ordinance. We have invited Mr. Ed Fendley from The Arlington Egg Project to speak at our WCA meeting on March 8, 2012.

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, March 8

7:30-9:00 PM

**Nottingham Elementary School
In the Library
5900 Little Falls Road
Arlington, VA 22207**

Topics:

**Backyard Hens in Arlington
Ed Fendley, Founding Member,
The Arlington Egg Project
&
Darryl Hobbs, WCA Resident**

**A Neighborhood Conversation With
Arlington County Board Vice Chairman
J. Walter Tejada**

We will also be joined by the Honorable J. Walter Tejada, Vice Chairman, Arlington County Board. In 2012, the Board launched [P-L-A-C-E](http://www.wca-arlington.org), or *Participation, Leadership and Civic Engagement*. This is an initiative to provide opportunities for Arlington residents to talk directly with a Board member on Monday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at various locations around Arlington County. As a complement to this initiative, we will invite members of the Board to our WCA meetings.

Finally, I would like to encourage each of you to subscribe to the WCA listserv. It is the primary way that we are keeping each other aware of breaking news and important information about our community. Visit our website, www.wca-arlington.org, to learn how to subscribe to the Yahoo group and stay informed.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you at the WCA meeting on March 8!

--Ruth Shearer

Williamsburg Neighbors Answer Call for Donations



By Jim Toronto, WCA Treasurer

Thank you! Thank you! We have a strong core of members who always pay their dues annually if not more frequently. Many of you responded to the plea for additional funds. We had extra donations from \$5.00 to \$100.00. I won't name her but I want to thank our member on John Marshall Dr. for the \$100.00 donation. I must again say thank you for your help. The dues and donations that came in were very generous; plus the additional we are getting through the efforts of Sonia McCormick, our past president and now advertising agent and newsletter editor, have given us a great start for 2012. Our account now has a balance of \$1,239.70. This is before the advertising money that will come in for this current issue. Our newsletter costs are between \$600 and \$650 per newsletter. We currently have volunteers who hand deliver them or donate the funds for the stamps to mail their portion. That is basically a fixed cost for the WCA.

A concern I have is that we have approximately 1,000 homes and only 157 dues paying members. I do have a list that I bring to each of our general membership meetings if you want to check on your dues. As always I am at the desk as you first enter the meeting room. We could not make it without the dues we have been getting. For a while we did have a benefactor who made up the difference if we could not pay for the newsletter. We have been at the point that we haven't needed to count on that. I would only hope that those who read the newsletter and have an interest in our community and who are not paying dues might send them with the coupon attached on Page 12. Dues are \$10.00 per household.

We need new signs for advertising our meetings. These signs have been beneficial for letting the community know about our meetings. The old deteriorating signs have seen better days and need to be replaced soon! There are some interesting topics in the future that also might require funds for engaging professional help for some problems. It is good to have the money in the bank for such things.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting.

Thank you to WCA Block Captains!

For the past three years, a number of WCA residents have volunteered to deliver this newsletter to their neighbors - saving the association hundreds of dollars in postage!

We are extremely grateful to the following individuals for their continued support: Sara Anderson, Jim Ball, Jim Breiling, Paul Cullen, Allan Dosik, Cathy Eckbreth, Kevin Farrell, Bruce Gilbert, Coral Gundlach, John Howell, Ellen Jones, Louis Kluger, Jeremy Levy, Susan Levy, Charles Lundy, Ann & Jim Lunson, Julian Mansilla, Marcia Novak, Joan Pepin, Jon Stoloff, Carrie Thomas, Jim Toronto, Elaine Tucker, Pat Vinkenes, Tony Whitledge & Karen Zumstein.

Carol Cohen (N. 29th Street - 22213), Mary Louise Cohen (N. 29th St. - 22207), and Bob Shirey (N. Kensington St.) recently let us know that they no longer can continue serving as block captains. We thank them for their service. If anyone lives on one of their streets and would be interested in taking over their route, please contact newsletter editor Sonia McCormick at sonia.b.mccormick@gmail.com. In the meantime, several of the WCA officers have volunteered to step in.

Thanks.

Arlington County Board Approves Funding for Sycamore St. Median

On Feb. 14, 2012, the Arlington County Board approved funding for Phase I of the Sycamore Street beautification and traffic calming project. The site of this project is Sycamore St. between 26th St. and Williamsburg Blvd. This project will reduce traffic from two lanes each way to one lane each way and preserves the bike lanes and parking lanes. A median with landscaping and storm water run-off features will be installed. Some sidewalk "bump-outs" will be created to accommodate ART bus stops and to create safer pedestrian crossings of Sycamore St. This project is similar to the median project installed several years ago on the section of Williamsburg Blvd from Sycamore St to Westmoreland St. A big "Thank You" is due to Sycamore St. neighbor Jonathan Levine for obtaining the number of signatures of property owners along the project site necessary to get this project's approval.

Under County rules, this project will be built in two phases. Phase I will be a section of the project from 28th St. to Williamsburg Blvd. The County Board's Feb. 14 approval means that the engineers may begin to put together the plans necessary to begin construction. The engineering design work is expected to take several months, therefore,

groundbreaking may be toward the end of this year or the beginning of 2013.

Following the last WCA meeting, several citizens offered their suggestions and ideas for the type of landscaping to be performed on the median. Arlington County has a landscaping engineer on staff whose expertise is plantings in and around county medians and roads and the rules and standards for such work. Such standards recognize how well the vegetation will grow in that environment, non-obstruction of driver vision, and the effort required to maintain it. With regard to maintenance, the county will mow medians, but it resists landscaping that requires much more maintenance than that. If a neighborhood wishes to install landscaping in a County project that requires more frequent or higher skilled tending and maintenance, then the neighborhood must first demonstrate to the County a strong commitment in volunteers and resources to perform all the necessary maintenance for the foreseeable future. Please let WCA NCAC rep Paul Cullen know if you'd like to work with him on collaborating with the County staff regarding landscaping as this project develops.



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Backyard Hens in Arlington?

The Arlington Egg Project is Working to Revise County Ordinances to Allow Them

*By Ed Fendley, Co-Founder,
The Arlington Egg Project*

“Local food” could soon take on a new meaning.

The Arlington Egg Project, started by a group of local residents, is promoting conversations about the benefits of micro-flocks of female chickens.

Their ultimate objective is revising Arlington County ordinances so neighborhood residents can keep small numbers of backyard hens while prohibiting roosters and ensuring secure, proper, and humane housing for hens.

Proponents point out that backyard hens can reduce dependence of environmentally harmful industrial farming, provide nutritious food, and help kids learn where food comes from.

Backyard hens were once common in Arlington, but zoning decisions in the 1970s barred all but the largest landowners from keeping hens. Now, with urban communities like Charlottesville, Baltimore, Seattle, Madison, and Portland embracing backyard hens, some say it's time for Arlington to join their ranks and promote urban agriculture.

According to the Arlington Egg Project, nearly 1,000 Arlington residents have signed a petition to the County Board calling for the legalization of small-scale, sustainable backyard hen-keeping.

For more information visit
ArlingtonEggProject.org.

Ed Fendley is an advocate for enhancing urban agriculture in Arlington. A longtime Arlington resident, Ed has served as a civic association president, an appointed head of several County advisory groups, and an elected member of the Arlington School Board from 2005 through 2009.

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Backyard Hens Would Attract Rats, WCA Neighbor Warns

By Darryl Hobbs, WCA Resident

The Arlington Egg Project (“AEP”) is a small group actively seeking to ease the current zoning restrictions that prohibit residents from keeping backyard chickens within 100 feet of their neighbor’s property line. Thus far, the matter has received virtually no meaningful public debate or input from the vast majority of Arlington’s 207,000 residents. Before the County passes an ordinance that permits our neighbors to keep chickens, everyone should engage in a frank and honest debate about the potential pitfalls of this proposal.

Since the AEP first started in the spring of 2011, it has collected approximately 1,000 signatures in support of bringing the backyard chicken movement into Arlington. The AEP has mobilized rapidly to amass the support of certain County Board members and the Arlington County Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (“E2C2”). Indeed, within months of launching, the AEP has: successfully lobbied the E2C2 for its support, got the County Board to put it on the agenda, and booked Jay Fisette, County Board Member, to speak at an AEP fundraiser. You can’t get a speed cushion on the Board agenda in eight months! This is what happens when there is no meaningful debate and a proposal is favored by certain County Board members who purport to know what is best for county residents.

In its letter of support, the E2C2 said it was “impressed with the potentially positive environmental impact of this proposal.” To bootstrap its decision, the E2C2 pointed to “other jurisdictions” that already have adopted similar accommodations for chicken owners, but made no mention of those jurisdictions that still prohibit or reasonably restrict chickens. For example, members of the Winchester City Council recently nixed a proposal to ease the city’s existing ordinance, which prohibits residents from keeping chickens on lots of less than *two acres*. It should be noted that the average lot size for an Arlington single family dwelling is less than 7,500 square feet.

Also conspicuously absent from the E2C2’s letter is

any serious mention of the correlation between chicken coops and rodent infestations. Common sense and a simple internet search reveal that rat infestations are a frequent occurrence with backyard chickens. Even chicken advocacy groups acknowledge this fact. For example, the website raisingbackyardchickens.org candidly admits:

Rats are one of the biggest problems of raising backyard chickens . . . First, you should know that rats flock to food sources such as your chicken feed; they would remain to these [sic] food sources and try to breed in an area where there is food. Unfortunately, rats breed pretty quickly and the dark cluttered areas would even [sic] provide them with the good nesting spots that they would need for breeding. In addition, destroying rats’ nests requires the use of a disinfectant to prevent the transmission of disease.



WCA resident Darryl Hobbs says an illegal hen house 40 feet from his house led to rat infestation on his property. He is concerned about how fast the AEP is gaining momentum.

The absence of any mention of the potential for rodents is inexcusable from a Commission appointed by the County Board to provide advice on “environmental issues impacting the health of Arlington Citizens.” In light of the Commission’s mandate, Arlingtonians should expect at least the appearance of a thorough and thoughtful examination of all the potential ramifications, both positive and negative. Yet the E2C2 conducted no additional inquiry or opposing viewpoints before recommending changes to the reasonable limits placed on backyard chicken farms.

Continued on Page 6

Undoubtedly, the current zoning requirements reflect the fact that “A rat’s territory or ‘home range’ is generally within a 50-foot to 150-foot radius of the nest . . . In places where all their needs (food, water, shelter) are met, rodents have smaller territories.” The Arlington County Code requires residents and homeowners to control (at their own expense) rodents and rodent harborage on their property – even if their food source resides next door. If the 100-foot restriction is lifted, it would be an uphill (and potentially contentious) battle for one neighbor to fight a rat infestation on her property while living next door to a chicken coop.

In order to garner support, the AEP also uses misleading information to collect signatures. For example, the primary vehicle for collecting signatures is by clicking a link on the AEP web site. The AEP website states, “... chickens can actually reduce the rodent population by catching and eating baby mice, rats, and other small rodents.” In truth, chickens have been known on occasion to eat a baby mouse or dying rat, but they do not eat mice or rats as part of their diet or reduce the rodent population.

As I can personally attest, chickens actually

contribute to the rat problem in Arlington. For the past year, our property line was approximately 40 feet from an illegal hen house in Arlington. As a result, rats were drawn to nest in and around our shed, not 15 feet from our children’s play set. We have no pets, bird feeders, clutter, or other things that would normally attract rats to infest our yard. Both an Arlington County health inspector and a reputable exterminator said that we would always have a rat problem as long as there was a chicken coop so close to our property line.

Although the goal of promoting sustainable living is an important one, backyard chickens may not improve the quality of life for many residents. So far, most of the limited discussion on this topic has revolved around the benefits of having backyard chickens and fresh eggs. However, there remain many unanswered questions about the practical implications of this proposal: enforcement, rodent control, noise, disease, flies, and slaughter.

With so many important challenges facing Arlington County, residents might want to ask why certain County Board members are pushing this initiative and whether this is really worth the time, effort, and expense. I would urge anyone who is concerned to contact the County Board and add their voice to the debate – before it’s too late.

The right price moves.

The real estate market in our neighborhood has seen a lot of fast movement in the past few months - in the right price range. As you can see from the chart below, the homes priced in the \$500,000-\$800,000 range typically sell very quickly. Many of those homes have been sold to builders, but there is an active market for improved homes in this range as well. If you are thinking of selling but not sure if it's the right time, give me a call and I'll go over the market in detail with you with a custom recommendation to sell your home.



Williamsburg Neighborhood Sales Report*

Active Listings	Number of Homes	Days On Market
\$500,000 - \$800,000	7	20
\$800,000 - \$1,795,000	7	223
Contract Pending	Number of Homes	Days On Market
\$500,000 - \$800,000	5	19.8
\$800,000 - \$1,599,000	1	175
Sold (Nov '11 - Feb '12)	Number of Homes	Days On Market
\$500,000 - \$800,000	9	37
\$800,000 - \$1,459,000	3	99

*Information gathered from MRIS and is deemed reliable but not guaranteed. Not to imply that all sales were made by associate.


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WCA Real Estate Continues to be Strong

By Jim Toronto, WCA Treasurer & Realtor, McEneaney Associates, Inc.

If you're wondering how real estate prices are holding up in the Williamsburg Civic Association, I've got good news to share: Home prices have held their value, plus sales remain strong.

Take these facts into consideration. Since September, 22 properties have sold, 5 properties currently have contracts, and 16 are on the market. For the houses sold, the average sales price was \$805,485; the median sold price was \$675,000; the high sales price was \$2,023,700; and the low sales price was \$457,540.

You need only look around our community to see how diverse the homes have become. We've still got the 1950s style ramblers on 10,000 square foot lots – some of which have not been updated --- that are prime candidates for builders. Those are selling quickly, with builders paying top dollar (\$575,000+). In some cases, buyers are purchasing those homes with plans to update the house or tear them down

and hire their own builder. The homes being built are typically valued well over \$1 million.

Houses in good condition on well located properties are receiving multiple contracts. Homes valued between \$600,000 and \$800,000 are most in demand. If you've got a property valued in that price point that's in good condition, you're likely to sell quickly.

Buyers moving into our neighborhood range from young families just starting out, to older folks downsizing from large homes who want a smaller house but aren't ready for a condo or adult community.

Preaching to the Choir

I'm preaching to the choir when I say I think we live in one of the best areas of Arlington. We're fortunate to have the Metro, excellent schools, public or auto access to any direction in a short period of time, convenient shopping within walking distance, and a diversity of homes and families.

If you are considering moving, do consult a realtor for the most reliable information about recent sales and market conditions. Many of the generic real estate web sites do not keep their inventory lists up to date. I know I used one to give me a value on my home and it was about \$200,000 low! I have had other people call me and tell me list prices were way too high because of what they saw online. The properties in question sold within 3% of the asking price.

Every seller's situation is unique. It's possible that if you purchased your home during the peak real estate boom, you may have to wait a bit longer for the equity value of your home to increase, but perhaps you're planning to move to an area that hasn't seen as much recovery as the Arlington area has. If so, you may be in a situation to sell now and buy in that other area for a lower price.

The bottom line is that if you live in our community and are interested in selling, you'll be in good shape so long as you prepare your house appropriately and price it right.

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Deli Italiano Winning Accolades from Those in the Know



Deli Italiano owner Yasser Baslios, far right, takes great pride in the service he and his team deliver, not to mention the quality of their food!

Deli Italiano has won the coveted “Best Pizza in Arlington” award from none other than the Yorktown High School Class of 2015. And who better to vote on delicious pizza than high school students?

Those students know their stuff. Deli Italiano has won over the hearts and appetites of many Arlingtonians, especially those in the Williamsburg community.

“I’m a fan of the pizza and the subs, but best of all, it’s just nice to come to a place where the people are friendly and you’re feeling like you’re welcome to stay as long as you’d like,” said Gary Sierk, who has lived in the neighborhood since the mid 1950s.

Owner Yasser Baslios says getting to know all of his customers the way he does Gary and his wife is one of his goals. “At our Great Falls location, we know 90 percent of our customers by voice. The minute they call in, we know who they are and can predict what they’re going to order. That’s what we’re working toward here as well. We think of our customers as family and work very hard to provide great service, a quality product, and to be a part of the community.”

Business has been very busy since Deli Italiano opened in the Williamsburg Shopping Center in November of 2010.

Yasser has a formula for doing things right. He started with Deli Italiano’s Great Falls location as a dishwasher in 1999, shortly after arriving in America from Egypt. In a span of three years, he learned English, learned how to cook, became the manager, and eventually bought Deli Italiano from the owner.

A devout Christian Coptic who lives in Landsdowne with his wife and three kids, Yasser has spent the past decade improving upon an already great delicatessen. Everything is made fresh on site, from the marinara sauce to the salad dressing, and all ingredients are the highest quality, including the mozzarella, which is ordered directly from Italy. Gourmet pizza toppings run the gamut from artichoke hearts, to sundried tomatoes, to asiago cheese and prosciutto. Wine and beer are part of the delivery menu. Catering is available.

Deli Italiano is open from 11-10 during the week, and 11-11 on weekends. Orders can be placed online at www.deliitaliano.com.

If you’re a fan of the pizza, help Deli Italiano win its next award: Best Pizza Slice in Northern Virginia. Please visit www.northernvirginiamag.com/pizza/ on March 7th to cast your vote!

School Board Considering Proposals to Add Seats, Modify Schedules

By Eleanor Smith, WCA VP and Rep to Arlington County School Board

Arlington Public Schools (APS) are undertaking several large-scale efforts that are relevant for our community. As parents at Nottingham and Tuckahoe Elementary are aware, school enrollment has grown significantly over the past five years. Tuckahoe and Nottingham are the two most overcrowded schools in the county, but the problem is now county-wide. System-wide enrollment will exceed elementary school capacity this fall. APS has implemented its "More Seats for More Students" effort to plan for constructing new buildings and/or additions to existing schools to meet capacity needs across the county.

On Feb. 15, APS staff held a community forum to provide an update on their efforts. In this forum, they presented an initial rank ordering of options for building capacity. The next step in the effort is to determine costs for the various options, and to develop "option sets" (e.g., combinations of additions and new schools) for the School Board to evaluate. The School Board will consider these option sets in a work session in mid-March. This will be followed by another community forum to provide an update on the results of the work session. For more information on the More Seats for More Students initiative, visit the APS website at <http://www.apsva.us/capacity>.

A second major APS initiative is a proposal to implement block scheduling across Arlington County middle schools. If approved by the School Board, block scheduling will be implemented in the 2013-2014 school year. This change in the middle school schedule is proposed in order to provide additional instructional time in core subjects, increase elective exploratory choices for Grade 6 students, provide grades 6-8 world languages opportunities, allow comprehensive and consistent integration of career and college-ready enhancements to curriculum and schools, and address specific needs of individual students and groups of students.

For 6th grade, the proposal includes 76-minute blocks for the teaching of core subjects (English, Social Studies, Science, and Math). For 7th and 8th grade, the proposal includes 93-minute blocks for core subjects. Some changes that would occur as a result of the proposed block schedules include the integration of the 6th grade Reading course into the four core subjects, the reduction of 6th grade Physical Education/Health classes from every day to every other day, and the reduction of 6th grade Band or Orchestra classes from every day to every other day. More details on the block scheduling proposal, including Frequently Asked Questions, community feedback received to date, and information on how to provide feedback can be found at <http://www.apsva.us/middleschool>.

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All proceeds go to Doberman Assistance, Rescue, & Education, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the burgeoning needs of Dobermans in VA, DC, MD & WV. Our primary directives are to educate the public about Dobermans, assist owners in placing unwanted Dobermans, provide foster homes and veterinary care for rescued and relinquished Dobermans and place Dobermans into loving homes through our adoption program.

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Notes of Interest

Arlington County Board Advertises 97.8 Cent Tax Rate for 2012: On Feb. 15, the Arlington Co. Board voted unanimously to advertise a property tax rate of 97.8 cents per \$100 of assessed value for Calendar Year 2012, including the stormwater sanitary district tax. This is 2 cents above the CY2011 real estate tax rate. The Board will hold public hearings on the budget on March 20 and 22 at 7 pm in the County Board Room at 2100 Clarendon Blvd. The Board will adopt the budget in April. The 2013 fiscal year begins July 1, 2012.

Real Estate Assessments Up 6.6%: Real estate assessments were mailed to Arlington County residents on Jan. 20. Arlington's 2012 real estate assessments are up 6.6% overall, continuing last year's recovery. Single-family residential values showed modest growth. Existing properties -- including detached homes, condominiums and townhouses -- increased 1.8%, from an average value of \$510,200 to \$519,400.

Spring Lawn Care Assistance: Join Virginia Tech Specialist Dr. Mike Goatley for a discussion of best management practices for establishing, renovating and maintaining lawns in Northern Virginia. Topics to be covered include turf selection, soil test and preparation, fertilizing, mowing, weed control, water and drought management, and insect and disease management. The event will be held on Tuesday, March 6, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at the Fairlington Community Center. To register, call 703-228-6414 or email mgarlalex@gmail.com. For more information, visit mgnv.org. Offered by the Arlington Office of Virginia Cooperative Extension with support from Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia.

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WCA Officers

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Vice President: **Eleanor Smith Tyler**
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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 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