

Lyon Park Civic Association

November 14, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Elliot Mandel called the meeting to order at 7:32.

LPCA Traffic Committee

Elliot introduced Bess Zelle and Christa Abbott, the new LPCA traffic committee co-chairs. Question about the ultimate plan for the Arlington Blvd, Pershing and 10th traffic patterns were raised– it is currently very difficult to navigate, regardless whether one walks, drives or bikes. They will be opening communications with the County and the developer. What exists in the County, what parts of our community should be involved in developing a long-term plan and what is the history on this (research the existing transportation plan)?

LPCA Membership Report

Robbie Brehaut provided a report on the LPCA membership. 61% of the 543 members on the rolls are paid up members. 75 paid 2 years ago, but not last year. At least one life-time member is continuing to pay annual dues. Michael O'Connor mentioned that the Board of Governors has a list (for purposes of renovation fundraising) that the LPCA membership could use to do a membership mailing, if needed or desired.

Capital Bikeshare Presentation

Capital Bikeshare, Mike Demaio, made a presentation. CaBi is the Metro DC and Arlington County's bike transit service, and is a point-to-point service that connects DC, Arlington, Montgomery County and Alexandria. Each member gets a key fob, which unlocks a bike at a station. The first 30 minutes are free – for this reason, they encourage use of the system for short trips.

They are currently focusing on connecting the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor and the Route 1 corridor. They are also focusing on Columbia Pike stations. There are about 35 bike stations now, with a total of about 600 bikes available once the current expansion is completed.

Mr. Dimaio wanted to propose 2 more bikeshare stations in the Lyon Park community, and obtain some feedback from the group. One location is at the corner of Arlington Blvd and N. Fillmore Street on the existing VDOT-owned grassy area, because it is convenient to existing trails, and accessible for movement north or south in the County. The County would plan to have a 15 bike dock at this location. There were a few questions, but no objections were raised by the meeting attendees.

The second location is at N. Pershing and N. Wayne Street, where the new development has gone in. 11 bikes are planned to dock at that location. No dislocation of any motor-vehicle parking; since the sidewalk is so wide at that point, and the stations are about 6 feet deep, LPCA members raised questions about infringing on any planned outdoor restaurant seating in the defined area – Mike believes that the area is general easement, which means it is publicly owned. He assured us that he will work with the private property owner to make sure there are no issues with this site.

Roll-out would be planned for Spring, providing that approvals move through quickly. A question was raised about the level of ridership. Regionally, we had 1 million trips in first 12 months, 2 million within several months after that, and 3 million trips a few months later. The current locations make it very easy for people to bike.

LPCA members asked the following questions:

- What happens when the bike docks are full at the location to which you ride? The system has “bike balancers,” people whose job it is to go from station to station and move bikes from one to another throughout the day. When a docking station is full, renters are asked to ride to the next available station to dock the bike. Stations are situated fairly close to one another, and this generally isn’t an issue.
- What about helmets? There are no helmets. Adults are not required to wear helmets, though Capital Bikeshare sells helmets.
- What about children? Children under 15 cannot use the service; 16 and 17 year olds have to ride with an adult.
- Will bikes have priority on the streets of Arlington, like in Amsterdam? Bicycles are treated like motor vehicles while on the street, so following laws when on a bike should be enforced.
- Will Arlington County plow bike trails in the winter? Will share concern with contact at DPR Kevin Stalica (kstalica@arlingtonva.us) who is the trails manager.
- Question about the streetcar tracks planned for Columbia Pike: what does Capital Bikeshare have to say about that? CaBi is focusing on creation of S. 9th and S. 12th as priority lanes for bicylists. Sidewalks will be increased to 10 feet in the areas of Columbia Pike where 9th and 12th don’t extend – it is legal to ride a bike in Arlington on the sidewalk, when there are no bike lanes available.
- What is the protocol when a car and a cyclist come to the intersection going the same way, and the car wants to turn right? Do they need to cede to the cyclist by law? Answer given was to cede to the cyclist in those cases, though of course the cyclist is also required to stop at the light.
- Does Capital Bikeshare pay for itself? In the first year, the program recovered 52% of costs, in the second year, recovered 63% and the goal is to be self-sufficient in a couple more years. With station advertising, they would like the system to become a revenue generator.
- What are the safety and theft statistics? 59 crashes region wide, 13 bikes stolen and not returned, out of 3 million trips.
- What about low-income people without credit cards – how can they use the system? People who don’t have bank accounts or credit cards could go to DC Bank and create one, but currently a person has to have a bank account to use this system. CaBi offers monthly installment plan of \$7 a month for low-income residents – about 100 people have used this option so far.

Development Committee

Erik Gutshall led a conversation about development, and what our community’s priorities should be when talking to developers. Erik provided a broad overview of the development process in Arlington. Discussed the difference between by-right and site plan – the former is developed by the owner in compliance with current the current GLUP and zoning ordinance. The community doesn’t have much of a role in influencing

the development, though the County does encourage the developer to check in with the community, answer questions and generally make nice with the neighbors. The owner in by-right developments still need to build within the existing zoning for the property.

Site plan is where additional density or exceptions to the zoning are desired by the owner to make the development more profitable. During site plan, the community has a seat at the table at the Site Plan Review Committee meetings. SPRC is comprised of members of Housing, Planning, Historic and Landmark Review Board and Transportation commission members, impacted neighborhoods and interested citizens. There are always competing interests among the SPRC members, and trade-offs often happen in committee meetings. The reason the County is willing to provide more density is to receive community benefits – ranging from affordable housing, to streetscape improvements, to undergrounding utilities, creating underground parking and pocket parks. Communities have some amount of sway with the County Board, within reason. Communities also have to be consistent with the concepts of New Urbanism.

What does our community like or want to be considered when developments around Lyon Park are initiated? What is important to our community?

- Sidewalks (large, walkable, sunny so they don't ice up in the winter)
- Trees/Canopy (don't like the new trees being planted, which are cramped and unhealthy because they don't have enough room for roots and growth)
- Traffic Management
- No bait and switch with community – developers promise things, but don't deliver (especially regarding entrances, deliveries and traffic patterns)
- Communication is important
- Light pollution is an issue. Would like more dark sky lighting, and to not have lights on in retail buildings all night.
- Community Benefits:
 - Parks and open space
 - Good retail (not 7-11, CVS or mattress stores)
 - Parking
 - Sidewalks
- Affordable housing production is important in our neighborhood, especially family-sized units.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kathleen McSweeney, LPCA Secretary