

BROOKLAND-BUSH HILL NEWS

Sept 2018

A newsletter for and by the residents of Brookland, Bush Hill, and Gunnell Estates in Alexandria, VA.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Safety and Rights on our Roads

Sandra "Jeannie" (Graham) Henry, President

BBHCA Meeting Sept. 11

Please join us at Bush Hill Elementary for the Brookland-Bush Hill Community Association meeting, beginning at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, Sept. 11th. As of this writing we do not have a confirmed speaker, but Delegate Mark Sickles has been invited and he always has a great deal to tell us about events in Richmond that are of direct interest to our residents. The balance of power between various interests (pipeline companies vs landowners for example) in Virginia politics has been in heavy flux this year, and it's a crucial time to make sure that the issues important to us do not fall off the table.

Pedestrian Crosswalk Connecting BBHA and Rose Hill

We had a strong turnout of BBHCA residents at the special June 27th meeting with VDOT and county transportation officials to discuss the pedestrian refuge being considered for the crosswalk at Franconia and Westchester. There are numerous concerns about the safety of the current painted crosswalk, and a pedestrian refuge (in the current turn lane) is under consideration as a solution. Residents

were able to have a detailed discussion with transportation staff, raise concerns and provide suggestions. We do not know what the final decision on the refuge will be, but I was told that before they make a decision they are going to follow up on the information they got from residents, such as the plan for increased bus traffic to Bush Hill Elementary. I think they were also unaware that some residents with very limited mobility were using the crosswalk and they will look at that as well. They do plan to provide us with updates on the decision-making process, but there have been none this summer.

Who has the Right of Way?

One of the questions that has arisen repeatedly with regard to the Franconia crosswalk is about who has the right-of-way in crosswalks such as this one, where there is no signal, or even an intersection. Pedestrian or driver? There are a lot of misunderstandings about this, and so I've been asked to share what we learned from talking with officials at various meetings. (The law appears to be somewhat convoluted.) First, drivers are not supposed to alter their behavior for a pedestrian on the side of the road---the driver

COMMUNITY MEETING

September 11
(Tuesday)

7:30 pm

**Bush Hill
Elementary School**
(cafeteria,
right side entrance)

AGENDA

Board and Committee Reports

PRESENTATION

Delegate Mark Sickles
(invited)

can actually get a ticket in Virginia for stopping to allow a pedestrian on the curb to cross (because it creates a hazard for other drivers whose view of the pedestrian may be blocked by the stopped car). Second, pedestrians are not supposed to step into the road until it is possible for them to make it to

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Commuting on Virginia Railway Express

Bob Michie,
Constitution and Bylaws Representative

By the time you read this the latest Blue Line outrage should be over. Track work effectively removed commuting options from Northern Virginia to Northwest Washington and to the eastern part of our region. Metro itself encouraged us to use alternative transportation. That "alternative" is usually the family car. I had another alternative: Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

VRE is seldom used in the Rose Hill area. Commuters must get to the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station before they can even board it. There is an alternative that helps use this alternative: Fairfax Connector Bus 310. Many BBHCA members have a low (and unjustified) opinion of busses. The Fairfax Connector system works very well. The air conditioning is almost always in working order and the busses stick to their scheduled times. Combined with VRE you can quick-

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ly get to L'Enfant Plaza or Union Station in a hour. Now you have all the city-side Metro options at your disposal.

Unfortunately, this alternative-alternative needs its own alternative to work: how do you get to Franconia Road to reach Fairfax Connector 310? It is about three-quarters of a mile from my house to the closest Franconia Road bus stop. What I do is ride my bicycle from my house to Franconia and Brookland Road bus stop. Once I arrive I put my bike on the Bus's bike rack for the ride to Franconia-Springfield. The bus ride is about 15 minutes and you can chain up your bike at the bike racks next to the station entrance.

My typical day has me leaving the house around 7:10 AM. I catch the 310 bus at 7:24 and get to Franconia-Springfield at 7:42. The train arrives at 8:12 and gets me to L'Enfant Plaza at 8:40. It is about a 90-minute trip (about 30 extra minutes compared to the Blue Line at Van Dorn Street) but I always get a seat and the air conditioning always works.

Anyway, this is an alternative-alternative-alternative to Metro which is currently running in reduced circumstances. I also don't pay for parking which is currently \$17-\$25 in the Navy Yard area. I spend some of that money for a nice lunch in a nearby restaurant.

Everyone should have an alternative commuting plan to be prepared for the next hassle, whatever it may be. If you want help learning the ins and outs of using VRE, contact me at michierw@gmail.com. I'll be happy to advise you and even coach you through your first ride.

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2018 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Brookland-Bush Hill Civic Association

Membership Year: January 1, 2018–December 31, 2018

Join us—for the good of *your* community.

BBHCA provides many opportunities for you to take an active role in decisions that affect your quality of life and property values as well as make a difference in your community. BBHCA prints a newsletter, maintains a Web site, and e-mails community updates and alert notices. Only members have a vote at BBHCA meetings on decisions that affect the community and the governance of BBHCA. Join today and support your civic association's efforts to keep our neighborhood a great place to call home. For current information on BBHCA activities, please visit Facebook or go to www.bbhca.net.

Enclosed are my member dues: \$20.00 (household) \$10.00 (individual)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY The information provided here will be considered confidential and used only for BBHCA communications and membership verification.

NAME: (LAST) _____ (FIRST) _____

NAME: (LAST) _____ (FIRST) _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: (703) _____

E-MAIL(S): _____

(required for e-mail communications and community alerts; see below)

E-mail Communications

Please notify me by e-mail of community concerns deemed important by BBHCA. I may request that e-mail communications be discontinued at any time. Your e-mail will be used only by BBHCA.

Request for Donation

Your donation will be used to help offset the cost of printing and mailing the BBHCA print newsletter, the website, and other member-approved services. Thank you!

I would like to make a donation to BBHCA for \$10 \$20 Other \$ _____

Please mail this completed form with your check (payable to "BBHCA") to:

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Questions?

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President's Message,

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the other side without impeding traffic. If there is a refuge, then the pedestrian can step into the road if they can make it to the refuge without hindering traffic. Even in a crosswalk, pedestrians can get jaywalking tickets for impeding traffic. However, if a pedestrian misjudges the traffic and steps into the road anyway, then cars must yield to pedestrians. Yielding means not hitting them, but doesn't necessarily mean stopping (according to some court cases). We were told that the laws on this are not always understood, even by police officers. Given all of this, I would urge greater caution on the part of BBHCA residents who are either using the crosswalk, or driving through it. Do not speed in this area, remain alert, and avoid walking into the road when there is oncoming traffic. When walking to the grocery store, remember that there is a signal at Rose Hill and so many residents walk the extra distance to that intersection in order to cross more safely.

Welcoming New Families to BBHCA

If you are reading this newsletter for the first time, we

welcome you to the neighborhood and encourage you to join us at our evening meeting on Sept. 11th. You can meet a few neighbors, learn more about what makes your new neighborhood tick, and hear about local issues, concerns, and opportunities.

Weather Safety

Given the unprecedented weather in many parts of the world this year, we have actually been relatively lucky in Northern Virginia to be dealing with only monsoon-like rains, heavy heat, and extreme humidity this summer. Nevertheless, these can be dangerous conditions for those working outdoors and we urge everyone to take it easy out there. Not only do our bodies have a harder time handling heat and cold when we get older, but they send us fewer clues (like thirst) that we are in trouble. No matter your age, make yourself drink water and take frequent cooling breaks on those days when the heat and humidity are going off the scale. Also, remember that poison ivy loves this kind of weather and it's been growing vigorously around here this summer. There is a quite a bit on the pedestrian walkway to the metro, so learn what it looks like so you can avoid it.

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Land Use Update

*Carol Alim,
BBHCA Land Use Representative*

Summary of Land Use Meetings May-July 2018 (no meeting in August)

Bell Property, 5504 Oakwood:

PCA 82-L-0071; Plan Amendment; Recommended for Approval 17-0-0 at June Meeting.

This application was described in the May newsletter. Bell Property was cited for a building code violation (built tent-like structure without a permit) and a zoning violation for not following the approved plan. They resolved the building code violation by removing the structure. To resolve the zoning violation they submitted an application to change the plan. During the spring I had several conversations with Staff, a meeting with the applicant's attorney and with the board.

The application contained two options, one to retain current building and remove the violations. The second would demolish the existing building and replace it with a 4,500 square foot brick building. Traffic flow on the site and parking would be changed; additional landscaping would be put in and an increase in right-of-way easement would be provided and additional uses to be permitted.

This property is leased to a landscaping company that has outgrown the site and will be locating. At the June meeting we were notified that the current owners have a buyer for the property, someone who owns another site on Oakwood.

Fairfax County Urban Design Guideline:

Staff presented overview of design guidelines that have been put in place to address redevelopment for areas that are becoming more urban in nature. Some discussion of Springfield and Richmond Highway corridor took place. See web site, fcrevit.org, for information on the guidelines

Springfield Gateway Hotel:

Plan recommended for approval 12-0-0 at June meeting.

Applicant wants to build Hampden Inn Suites at the

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corner of Franconia and Backlick on a site that was used for car maintenance. This proposal was presented earlier, but the applicant had some minor changes. The hotel will be six stories with a three story parking garage.

Top Golf Site, Kingstowne:

RZ 2018-LE-009 PCA C-448-34 Information Only.

To refresh, Top Golf will be leaving Kingstowne because the site is not large enough for them to expand this site to be comparable to newer locations. The owner is proposing to develop the site as a mixed use development with commercial, retail and residential uses. The site that Ruby Tuesday sits on is not part of the application; it has a different owner. The owner is proposing 328 residential units with 20,000 square feet of retail, which could be expanded to 70,000 square feet. The site is currently zoned R1 and PDH4; applicant requesting PDH12, which I think is too dense. Per staff, this request would replace some recreational use with residential; increase the traffic and add students to our schools. Edison is currently under capacity; however Mark Twain is above capacity.

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Neighborhood Watch Report

Mary Breeden,
Neighborhood Watch Chair

At our last BBHCA meeting, I had mentioned that there had been two car thefts in the neighborhood. Another member stood up to say that she and her neighbor also had attempted thefts of their vehicles. By some bizarre coincidence, the next morning I found out that someone had entered my vehicle and rummaged through the console. With five known incidents of car theft or attempts to steal, I decided to contact the Fairfax County Police, specifically Officer Jim Reid, to learn more about the thefts. What we both learned was quite enlightening.

During 2018 there were 11 car thefts in the Brookland – Bush Hill area. Of those 11, there were 4 thefts for which there was no indication on how the vehicle was stolen. Residents went out in the morning to find their cars gone with no broken glass or other signs of theft. However, in the other 7 instances, the car doors were unlocked and a spare key was “hidden” in the car. In one instance, they stole change from one resident’s vehicle and in with that change was the key to the residents’ second vehicle. I suppose in a way, this is good news as it means that we know that at least 7 of the 11 vehicle thefts could have been prevented had the residents locked their doors and more importantly did not leave a spare key inside the vehicle.

In a way, this is good news. At least 7 of the 11 incidents could have been avoided by simply locking the car doors and not leaving the keys inside. This can carry over to other areas, such as your homes, sheds, and other property. Make it difficult for the thief to enter and the odds of being a victim of theft are greatly reduced.

Land Use Update

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Kingstowne, as well as others, do not want a grocery store on this site; there is some desire for family type entertainment, which applicant will consider, perhaps

on a rooftop.

Applicant scheduled to come before Landuse on 17 September for vote, with Planning Commission hearing on 27 September. Staff report is due out around 30 August.

Grovedale Drive:

Change of Use; Information Only.

This property currently has a church on the site. The property has been purchased by a dentist who would like to move his practice to this site. He was asked to do soil samples and put together a storm management plan. Traffic impact will not be significant and will spread through the week. Application will be back, possibly in September for more detailed presentation.

Shell Station:

5505 Franconia Road; Meeting with attorney for applicant.

The owner of the property wants to modify/improve the site by adding a couple of pumps and adding a mini-mart. The current car wash building will be demolished and a new building housing the mini-mart and car wash will be built.

This application was originally presented in 2016 and the attorney for the owner met with BBHCA residents. In September 2016, the land use committee recommended approval by a vote of 14 (approve) - 2 (disapprove) - 0 (abstentions). The County Staff also recommended approval. When the application was presented at the Planning Commission, representatives from Shadow Land spoke up in opposition to the plan because it included a 30’ strip of land between the two properties. This strip is currently covered with grass. Shadow Land has an ingress/egress right-of-way for this strip of land and want to retain that right. The Planning Commission did not reject the application; they suspended the vote until the two owners could come to agreement.

The only modification to the application is the removal of this 30’ strip. Everything else is the same, with the possible exception of 17 vs 19 parking spaces for the mini-mart.

As required by VA DOT, the driveway on Franconia closest to Old Rolling Road will be closed. The access point on Old Rolling Road will be moved further from the intersection. The bus stop may be moved.

After meeting with the attorney I reviewed the revised plan with the board. Due to the minor nature of the change, and our concerns for light levels being addressed, we agreed that we would not request that this application come back before the Landuse Committee. It will go back to the Planning Commission in September for a vote.

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May Meeting Minutes

President's Report:

BBHCA Board Elections for 2018 were held and unanimously approved. All existing board members remain in their positions through 2018. President requesting images/pictures of the community to be used on the BBHCA Facebook page.

Secretary's Report:

May BBHCA Meeting minutes approved as published.

Newsletter Report:

President asked attendees to share suggestions for new newsletter advertisers with the board. All current advertisers are committed through 2018. September newsletters will be distributed by hand again by BBHCA First Vice President (Newsletter) and

Secretary.

Membership Report:

BBHCA had 112 dues paying members in 2017. We have 8 new members this year.

Treasurer's Report:

BBHCA 2017 Budget (final) was reviewed. Proposed 2018 Budget was distributed and unanimously approved. Audit committee is being planned. Two volunteers were requested and came forward. Motion to waive audit until November 2018 proposed and approved, reason being that two BBHCA meetings have been missed this past year due to Bush Hill Elementary School closings due to inclement weather.

Neighborhood Watch Report:

There was only one incident to report on - a car theft. Many foxes have been spotted in and around the area. One member had called animal control who stated that, just because foxes (primarily nocturnal animals) are spotted during the day, does not mean they are rabid. It was also suggested that perhaps an article on the topic of animal control might be useful.

Land Use Report:

Our BBHCA Land Use & Transportation Board Member was commended by guest speaker Jeff McKay (Lee District Supervisor) for her commitment to her role and the community—she never misses a meeting!

Guest speakers:

Supervisor Jeff McKay

Recognized that Oakwood is a concern. He has submitted for affordable senior community housing due to lack of options in the area - he has recommended the corner of Van Dorn and Oakwood be considered. He also reported that 65% of county income comes from real estate and commercial real estate values have gone up considerably of late, attributable mostly to the Springfield and Hilltop Town Centers. With this increased income, Fairfax County increased pay for public employees, mainly teachers and police officers. Other focuses include finding programs for opioid addiction, gang prevention, and mental health. Bush Hill Elementary is scheduled to transition to an AP school in 2019. This change will be phased in by grade over multiple years. Concerns include increased traffic in the community. Supervisor McKay

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BBHCA Board and Committees

President: Sandra Graham (aka Jeannie Henry), president@bbhca.net

First Vice President (Newsletter):
Jackie Hawkins, newsletter@bbhca.net

Second Vice President (Membership):
Elise Swinehart,
membership@bbhca.net

Treasurer: Joan Akins,
treasurer@bbhca.net

Secretary: Danny Hawkins,
secretary@bbhca.net

Constitution and Bylaws: Bob Michie,
bylaws_constitution@bbhca.net

Land Use & Transportation (Lee District):
Carol Alim, landuse@bbhca.net

Neighborhood Watch: Mary Breedan,
neighborhoodwatch@bbhca.net

May Meeting Minutes

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reported that there have been an increase in property values in other area of the county where AP schools have been established.

Tim Connelly and Tim Deal (VDOT)

VDOT proposes the installation of a median on Franconia (intersection with Westchester) and moving the current bus stop and shelter to the other side of Westchester so that it is on the same side at the crosswalk. Construction, as of now, is planned for April/May of 2019. Jeff McKay noted that the money for this project has already been appropriated and encouraged us to quickly find resolution with VDOT so as not to risk losing those funds due to delays.

Now is the time to renew your Brookland-Bush Hill Civic Association Membership!

Have you already renewed your BBHCA membership for 2018? Page 3 of this newsletter is the 2018 BBHCA Membership Form. For only \$10.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for households you can help keep our neighborhoods a great place to live. We are always accepting new members and welcome donations which go directly toward help the Civic Association remain an effective voice for the community. For the most current information on BBHCA activities, please visit our website at www.bbhca.net or the "Brookland-Bush Hill Civic Association" Facebook page.

