

The Village Way

October 2004

Vol. 37 No. 3

President's Message Development Density, Open Space and Storm Water

Over the years, development issues facing Falls Church are usually focused on commercial development needed to balance the tax base of a predominantly residential City. Lately, increased density in residential development seems to be the direction we are moving. This trend raises serious concerns in a number of areas. Two important issues are open space and storm water management.

Published on p. 2 of this issue of the Village Way is a letter to the City Council that was sent reflecting the VPIS Board position concerning open space and proposed development near West End Park. As development density increases, protecting open space becomes more of a challenge – but a challenge worth taking, if the quality of life we enjoy is going to be maintained. The City had a budget account to accumulate funds to buy open space, but that was eliminated several years ago and those funds were used to balance the budget in other areas. The City Council has appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Open Space to identify ways to maintain and increase open space. VPIS Vice President Barry Buschow was selected to chair the effort. We hope that the outcome is meaningful direction that is actionable. The only real measure of success is if it actually adds open space to the City.

Surface water issues are being faced by many homeowners in the City, as new development close by and record storms are causing flooded basements and perennially wet yards. The City is now considering the Tripps Run maintenance requirements and other water issues related to the Chesapeake Bay Act. The VPIS Fall Membership Meeting November 11 will focus on surface water issues in urban areas. Please join us.



VPIS ANNUAL FALL MEETING

November 11, 2004, 7:30-9:30 pm
(Veteran's Day)

Stormwater Runoff: From Costly Predicament to Valuable Resource

Doug Pickford, *Director of
Environmental and Heritage
Resources for the Northern
Virginia Regional Commission*

- Remembrance of Veterans
- Election of Officers and Board
- Social / Refreshments

Falls Church City Chambers
City Hall 300 Park Avenue

All members and the general public are
invited to our annual Fall Meeting

The Village Preservation and Improvement Society, founded in 1885, is an active nonprofit citizen volunteer organization in the City of Falls Church, Virginia. Send comments, questions or letters to the Editor at: Village Preservation and Improvement Society, P.O. Box 6824, Falls Church, VA 22040

**The Falls Church
Village Preservation and Improvement Society
PO Box 6824
Falls Church, VA 22040**

September 27, 2004

Mayor Dan Gardner
and Members of City Council
City of Falls Church
300 Park Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22046

Subject: Proposed Housing Project at West End Park

Dear Mayor Gardner and Members of Council;

The Board of Directors of the Falls Church Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS) opposes the proposed housing project at West End Park based on a number of issues apparent from the information currently available to the public.

1. With the density of housing increasing in the City, we should be adding more parkland and open space, not subtracting from it. Once gone, parkland is rarely replaced. The loss of designated parkland and open space will degrade the quality of life over the long term for Falls Church.
2. The size of the building is too big for the lot. The mass and height of the proposed building is out of scale with the West End area and will be an imposing structure, overwhelming the normal uses of the park.
3. The facts do not support the case that this building is needed in the City of Falls Church. The demand for housing with these specific low-income qualifications is not apparent. The waiting list at Winter Hill (same income limitations) of City residents is so short it does not appear justify this large development. It appears to be affordable housing far beyond the quantity needed to house qualifying Falls Church citizens. The City should explore the true need for a building of this size to serve the City.
4. The Board noted that some arguments of possible negative land uses, if this is not approved, are not appropriate. Such large imposing buildings and other negative uses mentioned could only be built with zoning changes granted by the city. The citizens should expect the City to approve a building that meets all current zoning on the commercially zoned part of the property, if one is presented.
5. The City's ownership rights to 50% of the property should be recorded through the subdivision of the property and recordation of the deed as parkland. The informal manner in which the City's property rights have been managed in this case, is an unfortunate contributing cause to the current situation.

We would be pleased to meet with you (as a group or individually) at your convenience to discuss the VPIS Board's positions on this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Keith Thurston
President
And Members of the Board of Directors
cc: Planning Commission

ANNUAL FALL MEETING

Thursday, November 11, 2004 , 7:30-9:00 pm
Falls Church City Council Chambers
City Hall - 300 Park Avenue

All members and the general public are invited to the society's annual Fall Meeting. In honor of Veterans Day, the meeting will begin with a brief flag ceremony by the Greater Falls Church Veterans Council.

Recently, three stormwater issues have confronted the citizens and government in Falls Church. With increased expansion of building and paving, more basements seem to be flooding. The FEMA floodplain of Tripps Run (drains two-thirds of City) nearly doubled in size, increasing the number of homes that must purchase flood insurance. Finally, the pipes in the underground portion of Tripps Run have exceeded their life expectancy and will have to be replaced or removed at costs running well into the 6 and 7 figures. How the City decides to solve these problems will affect us all

The subject of the Fall Meeting presentation takes a visionary approach to these issues. Doug Pickford, Director of Environmental and Heritage Resources for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission will give a brief presentation on "*From Costly Predicament to Valuable Resource: New German and American Designs for Stormwater Runoff.*" Doug just returned from a trip to Germany to study various planning techniques that could be used in Northern Virginia. He will show examples of those findings and present alternatives that can be used in Falls Church to help resolve this growing and expensive crisis of stormwater management.

VPIS Year 2004 Officers

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Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

Website: www.vpis.org

Nominations for 2005 Board of Directors

The Society's 5 officer positions, as well as 6 director positions require a membership vote each year at the Fall Meeting, which this year will be held on Thursday November 11 in the City Council Chambers. A nominating committee (composed of 3 current directors not up for reelection) has been appointed, and includes Dave Eckert, Jon Hundley and Cay Wiant. The task of this committee is to compile a list of nominees willing to serve on the Board and to present this list to the membership. Nominations for any Board vacancy can also be made from the floor at the time of the election. A vote is then held by the general membership. The slate being presented by the nominations committee for this year is as follows:

OFFICERS (ONE YEAR TERM)

PRESIDENT – Keith Thurston

Keith has been a Society member since he moved into the City 15 years ago, and is currently President. He served on the VPIS Board in the early 1990s and was the chair of the Design and Development Committee. He went on to serve on the City's Planning Commission including as Chair for 2 years. Keith is also active with Historic Falls Church, Inc. and the Victorian Society. He focuses on issues of long term quality of life for citizens and businesses and hopes to advance VPIS positions in those areas in 2005. Professionally, Keith is the Assistant Deputy Associate Administrator at the General Services Administration Office of Government-wide Policy, working in technology policy.

Recording Secretary – Melanie Griffiths

Melanie has live in Falls Church most of her life and works in the administrative offices of Falls Church City Schools. She is currently Communications Director for VPIS. Melanie was recently appointed as a Commissioner to the City's Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC), and has served as recording secretary to HSAC as well as the Senior Citizens Commission. Melanie is interested in increasing participation in community and cultural events.

Vice-President – Barry Buschow

Barry has lived in Falls Church for most of his life and is an FAA Contract Project Director for Northrop Grumman. He currently serves as vice-president of our Society, and is past chair of the City's Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, current chair of the Open Space Committee, and past president of the Lions Club. Barry also serves as a member of the Economic Advisory Council and a board member of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Barry is interested in making the society a stronger force in Falls Church's political and environmental decision-making process.

Treasurer – Sallie Twentyman

Sallie has lived in Falls Church for 17 years and is owner of the Good Soap Company. She currently serves as treasurer for the Society, and is a past president of the George Mason PTSA. Sallie is especially interested in building community spirit in the City.

Communications Director – Cliff Rohde

Cliff has lived in Falls Church for three years and is attorney and communications regulatory attorney for the National Exchange Carrier Association. He has participated in the Neighborhood Tree Program Planting parties. Cliff is interested in enhancing communications between the Society and the residents of Falls Church.

New Society Historical Task Force

At the October Board meeting, a new task force was formed to study the local and national history of the Village Improvement Movement and how it changed Falls Church and other communities. The committee will also look at how this information may be of importance to us today. The Task Force will report back to the Board with its findings. Currently assisting in this effort are Anne Mercer, Merl Moore, Brad Gernand and Dave Eckert. Any member interested in historical research and helping in this project is encouraged to contact Dave Eckert at (703) 532-0884.

DIRECTORS

Jeff Peterson – 1 year term

Jeff has lived in Falls Church for 4 years and is the Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Water for the U.S. E.P.A. Jeff is especially interested in working on local water quality issues with the Society.

Jason Douglas – 3 year term

Jason has lived in Falls Church for 18 years and is a telecommunications engineer. He is a former member of the School Board, and has served as chair of the Green Schools Committee and chair of the schools' Gifted and Talented Committee. Jason is interested in improving the sustainability of our community, the environment and our local government in Falls Church City.

Karl Ensign– 3 year term

Karl has lived in Falls Church for 10 years and is a researcher and evaluator for children and family issues. He is former chair of the Human Services Advisory Council and was a member of the Affordable Housing Task Force and the Tree Ordinance Committee. He currently serves on the Neighborhood Tree Program Steering Committee. He is interested in helping the Society focus City planning on developing thriving neighborhoods.

Christine Sanders– 3 year term

Christine has lived in Falls Church for 12 years and is a land use attorney. She is a past chair and current member of the City's Planning Commission and a Girl Scout leader. She is interested in keeping the mission of the Society as a guiding force when as the City goes through its redevelopment process.

Michael Slonim– 3 year term

Michael has lived in Falls Church for 12 years and works in export compliance for Raytheon Corporation. He is a past vice-president of the Society and currently serves on the Board. He was past chair of the City's Business Development Commission. He is interested in helping the Society create a town center in Falls Church.

Midge Wang– 3 year term

Midge has lived in Falls Church for 41 years and is a former art teacher in the public schools. She has been on the Board for about 20 years and is founder of the Victorian Society and also is an active member of the Historical Commission. Midge is interested in promoting historic preservation and awareness in Falls Church.



Wanted: Volunteer Tree Planters

If you love trees and the many benefits they provide our community, then you may want to help by becoming a Neighborhood Tree Program volunteer. All trees are planted in the City right-of-way in front of properties where the owner has requested a street tree. Falls Church residents who are interested in participating in the City's

Neighborhood Tree Program have 2 opportunities:

Planting Parties - Volunteers are needed to help at planting parties held in selected neighborhoods. The City Arborist instructs participating volunteers in proper tree-planting techniques, and volunteer teams work together on planting trees in the specified neighborhood. The next Tree-planting Party will be held this **Saturday, October 30, at 1:00 p.m. on Van Buren Street.** Volunteers

are to meet at 310 Van Buren Street.

Tree Squad - The Tree Squad is a group of experienced volunteer tree-planters who plant trees at individual sites throughout the City each spring and fall. The next Tree Squad planting will be Saturday, November 6, at 8:30 a.m.

Call Tree Squad Coordinator Seth Heminway at 703-536-3049 to volunteer. If you would like to request a street tree adjacent to your property, contact the City Arborist at 703-248-5183.

The Neighborhood Tree Program is operated under the guidance of the City Manager and the City's Urban Forestry Division, in cooperation with VPIS. For more information or to volunteer to help, call NTP Steering Committee Chair Annette Mills at 703-532-0884.



Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society
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**NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FALLS CHURCH, VA
PERMIT NO. 66**

Events and Activities

November 11, 2004 - Annual Fall Meeting

see program description inside

Every Saturday through November 20th -

VPIS Booth at the Farmers Market
8 am to Noon -- Stop by and say hi!