

The Village Way

Fall 2015

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City Election Issues Face Voters

On November 3, Falls Church will elect three members of the City Council and three members of the School Board.

As has been our tradition, VPIS is supporting the City election process in two ways. First, by hosting candidate forums for citizens to see the candidates and hear their views on questions currently before the City. Thank you to our co-sponsors, the League of Women Voters and the PTSAs.

Second, we asked the candidates some basic questions about their background and posed a set of questions covering an array of issues of interest to voters. We publish their responses, available at VPIS.org, so the citizens can be more informed.

VPIS has a long tradition of civic activism. We do not endorse any candidates. ♦

Fall Member Meeting Set for November 1

The Fall VPIS Member Meeting will be held Sunday, November 1, 2015, from 3–6 p.m. at Kemper-Macon Ware Lodge, 411 Little Falls Street, next to the W&OD Trail. (This is strategically planned for the bye week for Washington football, so you'll not be missing the game.)

The agenda items include the grand plan from Arlington for East Falls Church Metro Area; the Progress of Community Wildlife Habitat; a VPIS update of activities and positions. We'll have a senior city planner speak on the Falls Church W&OD Trail's Master Plan, Falls Church's Largest Park: "One Park—Many Uses." We are catching this early while still very conceptual. We will have a brief election of Officers and Directors before moving on to our Social Mixer. Come and enjoy. ♦

Community Wildlife Habitat

In Falls Church we've seen beautiful red foxes and Virginia whitetail deer in the early evening. Thus we are seeing the benefits of nature that maintaining some areas for wildlife can bring.

The idea of wildlife in the community has been part of the National Wildlife Foundation's Garden for Wildlife Program for over 40 years. Through this program, the NWF sought individual homeowners, businesses, schools, and others to create and have certified wildlife-friendly landscapes on

their properties. To extend that to community-wide efforts, the NWF launched the Community Wildlife Habitat program in 1997 to empower citizen leaders to take action for wildlife in their own communities. The program provided a framework to restore wildlife habitats and educate and engage community members while working to attain NWF's esteemed certification as a wildlife-friendly community. Communities of all sizes were encouraged to apply, adopt the goals and methods, and work

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President's Message by Keith Thurston

The Falls Church Village Society at 130 Years

How is VPIS connected to President Lincoln, Central Park, Listerine, and Stockbridge, Massachusetts?

In 1853, the Laurel Hill Society began when civic activist Mary Hopkins Goodrich, who was distressed over the appearance of the cemetery in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, posted a notice inviting all citizens to assemble on Laurel Hill to "take measures for the improvement of the burying ground, the streets, walks, public grounds and Laurel Hill." In that first year, she raised more than a thousand dollars and managed the planting of more than 400 trees. Over the years, the society transformed Stockbridge from a rough, shabby village into the handsome orderly town now admired. Many village societies were formed across America based on the Laurel Hill Society, significantly improving the quality of life in small towns and cities.

During the Civil War, over half of the soldiers' deaths were due not to battle but to diseases resulting from the conditions in the camps. So President Lincoln created the Sanitary Commission, led by Frederick Law Olmsted, to improve the quality of life and reduce diseases for the Union troops.

After his Sanitary Commission work, Olmsted advocated the need for fresh air, sunlight, and parks in cities. He went on to design Central Park in New York, the Boston Emerald Necklace Park System, and many other parks, campuses, and neighborhoods across the country.

During the Victorian Era, germ theory became more commonly understood. In the 1870s Englishman John Lister was instrumental in developing practical applications of the germ theory of disease with respect to sanitation. (Listerine was named in honor of John Lister by its inventor, American John Lawrence.)

With this new awareness of the importance of improving public lands, the City Beautiful Movement began bringing the ideas that evolved into what today we call urban planning. Nebraska Governor J. Sterling Morton founded Arbor Day when he noticed severe soil erosion due to the lack of trees. But it was Birdsey Northrop, a Connecticut educator, who really made it his life's work to spread the celebration of Arbor Day and the benefits of tree-lined streets—and the need for village societies to improve the local quality of life.

Village societies were very popular and the Falls Church Village Improvement Society began in 1885. In 1892, Mr. Northrop visited the town to speak at the Village Society meeting at the Congregational Church (next to current State Theater). The first Arbor Day in Virginia was held that year on the current site of Frady Park. Thanks to volunteers that serve, the spirit of the original founding of VPIS continues today with our caring for the community and its tree-lined streets, 130 years later. ♦

Community Wildlife Habitat, *continued from page 1*

toward certification.

In Falls Church citizens began to work on the effort, and then the City officially engaged with the Healthy Habitat Project sponsored by the Environmental Services Council, which was endorsed by the City Council in 2005. The project's overall goal is to conserve, protect, and restore an ecologically balanced habitat in our urban environment. The project team envisioned a habitat that is healthy for both humans and wildlife, and that promotes clean water, clean air, and environmentally friendly land management. Citizen volunteers, community organizations, and many City departments all did their parts to push for the program.

Over the past 10 years the efforts have included events such as education about backyard wildlife habitats and rain gardens. Outreach efforts have included tree plantings, organized invasive plant pulls, and most importantly, encouraging homeowners to certify their yards with the NWF.

This summer Falls Church met all of the qualifications and became the 84th jurisdiction in the United States to be certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a Community Wildlife Habitat. The official recognition was celebrated with a butterfly release by NWF at Cherry Hill Park in September.

Homeowners are encouraged to certify their backyards if they have not yet participated. To qualify for certification, a property needs to provide the four basic elements that support beneficial local wildlife: food, water, cover, and places to raise young; in addition, you should employ at least some sustainable gardening practices, such as mulching, composting, or elimi-

nation of chemical yard products. A link for the application is on the VPIS.org website.

Allowing for Animal Migration

On the larger scale we still need to consider animal migrations and movements when planning, especially highway and rail projects. For instance, I-66 near Falls Church is built with tall sound barriers on each side, and two 10-foot-tall anchor fences protecting the Metro rail area down the center. Except for the rare stream crossing under the highway, the highway becomes a high barrier for any land animal trying to migrate for the season, find a new food source, or find a mate.

The animals are trying their best to navigate the obstacles of human development. We can all be doing our part—at least in our little corner of the earth. ♦

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Thank You

Two major sources of income for VPIS activities are the sale of beverages at the Farmers Market, and the proceeds from the annual Attic Treasures Sale. Each takes a lot of work by volunteers.

Dozens of people volunteered to help plan the Attic Treasures sale, work as store managers, and do the hard setup on Friday and the sale on Saturday. Thanks to all, especially Nisha Sensharma, Susan Alverson, and their team.

Likewise every Saturday volunteers set up and staff the VPIS Farmers Market Booth, some arriving at dawn to get started. They have the whole setup and breakdown process streamlined for efficiency. Thanks to them all for a great season—and especially to Riva Adriance, who recruits and organizes the volunteer efforts every week. ♦



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Nearighborhood Tree Program by Seth Heminway

Dear Falls Church Tree Planting Volunteers,

We have a robust planting list this fall so I hope you have time to help. We'll start each event with a brief demonstration and refreshments and then fan out in teams to plant trees. Wear dirt-friendly clothes, boots or heavy shoes, and gloves. If you have a long-handled shovel, bring it along; if not we have plenty of extra tools. Bring friends—children must be chaperoned.

Tree Planting Events (in case of heavy or steady rain our rain date will be the following Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m.)

- Saturday October 24, 8:30 a.m. Meet in back of Thomas Jefferson Elementary School (223 W Cameron Rd., Falls Church City)
- Saturday November 7, 8:30 a.m. Meet at 1015 Parker St.

Tree Mulching and Native Plants

- Friday November 13, 10:30 a.m. in Cherry Hill Park, behind City Hall, 311 Park Ave. (We'll meet at the pavilion behind Cherry Hill Farmhouse.) This is a special event where we'll be hosting MVLE, an organization that provides support to disabled adults.
- Saturday, November 21, 8:30 a.m. Cherry Hill Park (tentative date needs confirmation)

Please RSVP to heminway.seth@gmail.com so we'll know how much to take on. I look forward to working with you.

The Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS), originally founded in 1885, is an active non-profit citizen volunteer organization in the City of Falls Church, Virginia. The Society works to preserve our natural and built environment, historic structures and landmarks, and it promotes cultural activities. The members are primarily residents and former residents or neighbors of the City of Falls Church and are of all political persuasions. They are bonded by their interest in and commitment to preserving and improving the City. Send donations, comments, questions, or letters to the editor to: Village Preservation and Improvement Society, P.O. Box 6824, Falls Church, VA 22040 or e-mail to vpisfc@gmail.com. VPIS is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. A financial statement is available upon written request.