



Over the Fence

News for Neighbors from the Arlington Heights Civic Association Winter 2008 Edition

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is my last column, and I would like to thank all of you who supported the Arlington Heights Civic Association during the past year.

The work you did on the School Board's Multi-Site Study Committee and on the Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Career Center, and Wakefield High School Building Level Planning Committees will have a long-term impact on the quality of our neighborhood. Your work on the new park at South 2nd Street and South Irving gave us a beautiful facility. You changed the adversarial relationship between the neighborhood and the Fair Board into one of productive debate and accommodation, and the 2007 County Fair was a success. You produced a well thought out Neighborhood Conservation Plan that clearly expresses our strategic priorities for infrastructure maintenance and enhancement.

Our representatives to the Arlington County Civic Federation shaped its debates for us, and those who worked with the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization helped it achieve what was important to us.

An effective civic association fosters a sense of friendship and community that extends beyond specific issues. It was inspiring to watch the re-energization of the social side of the Arlington Heights Civic Association. The Garden Tour and Halloween Parade were wonderful opportunities to make new friends and catch up with old ones.

An effective Civic Association requires financial resources. I thank our dues paying members, the advertisers in our newsletters, and the businesses and individuals who donate to our activities.

Lastly, I thank the officers who counseled me, supported me, kept me out of trouble, and turned ideas into actions.

I encourage all of you to join the Association and to volunteer your thoughts, time, and touch labor to help it help you make the neighborhood be what you want it to be. Work with the Civic Association is important and rewarding.

Jim Gill

AHCA ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTION

Tuesday, January 15, 2008, 7 p.m. -- AHCA Annual Meeting *elections* (Patrick Henry Elementary School Library)

AGENDA: Treasurer's Report (Jason Torchinsky); Elections; *Meet Your Neighbors Series*: Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc., 901 S. Highland St. (Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D., President); Vote on Missing Links Sidewalk Project (Tony Halloin); Arlington County Fair Board (Catherine Camp); Pedestrian Bridge (Juliet Hiznay)

All 2008 dues paying residents and business owners are eligible to vote in elections.

*****OFFICER NOMINATIONS SOUGHT*****

Officer nominations for 2008 are being sought. Nominations can be made at any time between now and when elections are held at the Annual Meeting on January 15, 2008 (7 p.m. at Patrick Henry Elementary School Library). Send your nominations to Jay Jacob Wind at jay.wind@att.net or by calling 703-920-5193.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Potomac Valley Track Club Meets – Indoor track meets (all ages) will be held at Thomas Jefferson Community Center on January 6, January 20, and February 3, 2008. For more information, go to <http://www.pvtc.org/>

Saturday, February 23, 2008, 12-2 p.m. (weather permitting) – Beautification Project at Thomas Jefferson Grounds – Volunteers are needed for a project to remove invasive plants (English ivy and others) from the grounds at Thomas Jefferson. Please contact Juliet Hiznay at 703-685-2596 or Rebecca Mashaw at 703-892-0162 to volunteer.

March, 2008 (date and time tba) – Community Night at the Drafthouse – Patrick Henry community and AHCA members are invited to watch a movie for free (G or PG rated) with friends and neighbors at the Cinema-N-Drafthouse. This event is jointly sponsored by the Drafthouse, Patrick Henry PTA, and the Arlington Heights Civic Assn. Details are forthcoming, but we anticipate an evening event on a weekday. Food and drink will be available for purchase.

Saturday, March 29, 2008 (time tba) – Arts Festival – Patrick Henry Elementary School will be holding its annual Arts Festival on this day, times will be announced. All members of the community are welcome for this kid friendly hands- on arts and crafts event held inside the school.

April 11, 2008 (time tba) – Silent Auction – Patrick Henry Elementary School is now accepting donations for this important school fundraiser. New items and services can be donated. All community members are invited. Please support your neighborhood school.

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION – JOIN FOR 2008

SEND TO: AHCA, c/o Jason Torchinsky, Treasurer, 3109 S. 7th St., Arlington, VA 22204

Full Name(s): _____

Address: _____, Arlington, VA 22204

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Enclosed is \$20.00* for a 2008 Family Membership Enclosed is \$25.00 for a 2008 Business Membership
 Enclosed is an added donation of \$ _____

I would like to help the civic association by (check all that apply):

Serving as an officer Helping with community social events Volunteering for park beautification
 Distributing the quarterly newsletter Contributing articles of interest

*At the October AHCA the membership voted to increase dues from \$12 a year to \$20 a year. This increase is needed to cover the printing costs of the newsletter and neighborhood activities.

Arlington Heights Civic Association -- 2007 Officers

President: Jim Gill, 703-920-2079, gill2j@yahoo.com

First Vice-President: Juliet Hiznay, 703-685-2596, strangefruitblues@yahoo.com

Second Vice-President: Kimberly Sumner, 703-521-8813, ksum22204@yahoo.com

Secretary: Carole Lieber, carolelieber@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Jason Torchinsky, 703-351-9069, jbtorc@aol.com

Neighborhood Conservation Representatives:

Juliet Hiznay, 703-685-2596, strangefruitblues@yahoo.com

Tony Halloin, 202-486-0617, ahalloin@yahoo.com

Richard Bullington McGuire, rbullington@obscure.org

Newsletter Editor: Megan Booth, 703-553-9712, jjmegan@verizon.net

Webmaster: Richard Bullington-McGuire, rbullington@obscure.org

List Serve: Jay Jacob Wind, (703) 218-2726, jay.wind@att.net

OTHER COMMUNITY NEWS

- Congratulations to our Treasurer Jason Torchinsky and his wife Beth, on the recent birth of their daughter. Sarah Grace Torchinsky was born December 13, 2007, weighing 6 lbs. 12 oz. Welcome to the world little one!
- The Park Area Manager for the neighborhood has offered to adjust the existing field lights at TJ to minimize light pollution. *A volunteer is needed to coordinate a meeting of residents from the surrounding streets.* Please contact Juliet Hiznay at 703-685-2596 if you are interested.
- The School Board decided last month to proceed with capital improvement at Wakefield High School before Thomas Jefferson Middle School or the Career Center. The Superintendent's proposal to move the high school continuation program from Arlington Mill to the Career Center may place pressure on APS to make improvements to the Career Center before Jefferson. Ongoing needs at TJ and the Career Center, due to aging infrastructure and other unmet maintenance needs, are under review by school staff.
- The pedestrian bridge connecting TJ to N. Jackson St. is slated for rehabilitation sometime in 2008. When the work is done, the bridge will not be available. There is concern about student safety, as well as the likelihood of completing the project prior to the Fair in the event that the project is undertaken after the school year ends.
- A WalkArlington project is planned to install sidewalks on the north side of the pedestrian bridge (N. Jackson St.)
- The Penrose Square project (current Giant/Adams Sq. site on Columbia Pike) is expected to break ground in 2008. *A neighborhood volunteer is needed to serve on the Penrose Square Working Group.* Please contact Juliet Hiznay at 703-685-2596 if you are interested.
- Jim Gill appointed Richard Bullington-McGuire to serve as one of the neighborhood's alternate delegates to the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee.
- The Arlington County Manager appointed Juliet Hiznay to serve on the Columbia Pike Form Based Code Advisory Group, a citizen group that reviews proposals for technical and substantive adjustments to the Form Based Code.

FHA Loan Improvements

Congress recently approved legislation that would make it easier for homeowners facing potentially higher mortgage payments to get help from the government. The bill cuts in half the down-payment requirement for loans obtained from the Federal Housing Administration, which is currently 3% of total loan value. The bill also raises the maximum loan size in high cost areas to \$417,000 from \$362,790 in an effort to aid homeowners. The legislation would allow the FHA to back refinanced loans for borrowers behind on payments because their mortgages are resetting to sharply higher rates from low initial "teaser" levels.

Also approved was legislation eliminating taxes on mortgage debt, to aid struggling home owners to avoid foreclosure. H.R. 3648, the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, removes this tax burden on mortgage indebtedness, encourages market-based restructuring between lenders and home owners and discourages foreclosures. The legislation also includes a provision extending the deductibility of mortgage insurance for three more years.

Big Changes for VA Loans

VA recently announced that they will provide financing for eligible military personnel with loan amounts up to \$1,000,000.

This is a bold and impressive step for VA and of course requires a deeper understanding of these changes. VA loans are still limited to \$417,000 for 100% financing. However, with a calculated down payment VA will now fund loans for up to \$1,000,000 and they will allow you to add the VA funding fee on top of the maximum loan amount calculation (this is brand new for the VA).

If a veteran buys a \$500,000 home, the first \$417,000 would require no down payment. For the remaining \$83,000, the veteran would need to make a down payment of \$20,750. All together the veteran would be making a 4.15% down payment on a \$500,000 home.

The VA funding fees paid at closing range from 1.5% to 3.3% of the loan amount. Contact me for further details, and I can refer you to some competent mortgage professionals who can answer specifics on this program.



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2007 IN REVIEW

What a busy year for the civic association. In 2007 we accomplished a lot – mostly through building up our volunteer base and engaging county government on a number of levels relating to the issues that concern the neighborhood. There is always more that can be done, but it has been a great year for our neighborhood. In addition to preparing, printing, and hand delivering our quarterly newsletters, and holding six meetings, here are some highlights of what the civic association has done in the past year:

- * Updated Neighborhood Conservation Plan (County Board review pending), bringing the following immediate changes:
 - Planned rehabilitation of the pedestrian bridge
 - Replaced lights on track path at TJ
 - New trash canisters at TJ
 - New striping on streets
 - County staff assessment of intersection at Irving and 2nd St. under way
- * Arlington Heights Garden Tour
- * County Fair Lemonade Stand
- * County Fair Merrifield Fundraiser
- * Halloween Parade and Party (Social Committee and other volunteers)
- * Beautification Projects at TJ (Park Committee and other volunteers)
 - Volunteers worked with county staff on tree and shrub plantings, and path installation, at new park
 - Volunteers planted, watered, and weeded perennial beds at new park area
 - Volunteers removed invasive plants along the Arlington Blvd. fence
 - Neighborhood Sign garden maintenance
- * Garfield St. Neighborhood Conservation Project funded – sidewalk, curb & gutter, pedestrian lights
- * Missing Link sidewalk, curb and gutter project approved and completed at S. Fenwick and 5th Streets
- * Established Liaison Membership on the Arlington County Fair Board
- * Prepared Park Enhancement Grant Application for improvement to new park area (decision is still pending)
- * Participated in Arlington Public School Building Level Planning Committees
- * Executive Committee members engaged leaders on the County Board and the School Board and the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization on multiple topics of interest
- * Successfully opposed proposed increase in density to Columbia Pike Form Based Code, which would have permitted apartments at the Career Center site and across the street on 9th St. South

Congratulations to all our volunteers and officers. A special thank you to the members for participating, and for all your positive comments this year. The more paid members we have, the more we can achieve with improved social events and beautification projects, without relying on event organizers to make cash donations. I have high hopes for 2008.

Happy New Year!

Juliet Hiznay
Neighborhood Conservation Representative