**ARLINGTON RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

***MINUTES****: GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, MARCH 17, 2016*

*Recorded by Kris Lebras (kris.lebras@gmail.com)*

*Call to order at 7:05 by Arthur Fox, ARCA President*

**Election of Nominating Committee:**

 Lisa Gammon, President of the Nominating Committee presented the slate of candidates for the nominating committee: herself, Bob Hyde and Mike Quigley. The committee can add members without further voting, if other volunteers come forward. Approved unanimously.

**Presentation re: I-395 Hot Toll Lanes Extension from Edsall to Eads Street**

Mike McGurk from TransUrban and Susan Shaw from VDOT presented the proposal, which is under negotiation, to extend the 395 Express lanes northward to Eads Street. Mr. McGurk provided a handout describing the “benefits” of this project for transportation, and economy. (See attachment 1 for details).

 After the presentation, Mr McGuirk and Ms Shaw answered questions from the membership. Key questions are consolidated and paraphrased below.

**What about noise and air pollution from the increased traffic? Is there funding for a sound barrier?** *There is an old noise study which demonstrated that this community may benefit from a sound wall. Because the study is old, some standards have changed, and these studies usually only examine the area 500 feet from the highway. There will be a noise expert at the meetings on April 11 and April 13. The planned location of a possible wall will not be available to the public until the fall. An environmental study will be done in September and voting on the construction of the wall may take place in early 2017.*

*Susan Shaw will make a note of a member's request for a new study of air and noise pollution.*

 **How will this affect the regular lanes to 14th St Bridge, and will the toll roads ever be available to the public for free? Are there fee restrictions on the tolls?** *There will always be a toll for non-HOV 3 vehicles. The one exception would be if the police or public officials opened the lanes due to a public safety concern or an emergency. This is the current policy for all the area Express Lanes. The tolls vary according to the density of traffic, but there is no ceiling on the toll. The cost will be posted on signs at the interchanges to the roads. Did not address potential for bottleneck where new third lane would be discontinued and traffic proceeding over bridge would narrow to two lanes.*

**How will the extension affect our immediate neighborhood? Will we need to pay a toll to enter DC? Who will pay for maintenance and snow removal?** *VDOT and TransUrban are still studying where last toll would be collected, i.e., whether northbound vehicles entering near Fashion Center headed for DC would be charged a toll. TransUrban will monitor 24/7 and maintain the Express lanes; VDOT will handle snow removal.*

**Is TransUrban a foreign owned company and what is the time frame of the contract?** *Transurban's parent company is Australian; however, it will hire local workforce and provide economic benefits to the community. Its contract with VDOT for 70 years, although most similar contracts are for 50 years.*

**Has there been an evaluation of traffic impact and revenue during non-HOV hours?**  *TransUrban estimates that approximately 25% of the income is generated during non-rush hour periods. Despite anecdotal member comments that traffic has been pushed out of HOV lanes into free lanes during non-rush hours creating congestion in those lanes, Ms Shaw claimed that congestion overall has decreased since these toll lanes opened elsewhere and that tolls have encouraged people to carpool or adopt other transportation choices.*

**Natasha Atkins, president of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association addressed the general membership regarding the Virginia Highland Park. (See Attachment)**

Ms. Atkins is looking for support from other 22202 civic associations for its initiative to pressure the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to employ the $592,000 funds available to plan future renovation of western portion of the Park to engage in a community-wide planning process with the objective of achieving multiple-use open green space.

She reported that the site is used for softball and is leased to anyone regardless of where they reside; that only 50% of the people using these spaces are Arlington residents, and the fields are only in use 14% of the time. She would like to see if the local community is interested in converting it into open green space, or some other community use. There is a proposal on the AHCA web site to have the Parks and Recreation Division come speak to residents and get their input.

**Update on the Arlington Public Schools Meeting held at Oakridge Elementary School on March 16th.**

 Arthur stated that we seemingly "hit a wall" regarding efforts to convince APS to begin conceptual site planning in 22202 for a new school in years to come despite letter to APS a week earlier from all four civic associations in the Oakridge attendance zone. APS Facility manager, John Chadwick, indicated he not recommend that the School Board request any funding for that process in its 2016 CIP. There was discussion about the County possibly reclaiming the old Nellie Custis School and using it to house a couple of Oakridge’s grades as a means of eliminating its chronic overcrowding. Presently, it appears that APS intends in 2017-18 to redraw the Oakridge boundary and bus hundreds of 22202 children to Drew beginning the following school year.

**Meeting Adjourned at 9:05**