

Arlington Ridge Civic Association
17 January, 2019 Membership Meeting
Recorded by Jim Wieber

The meeting opened at 7 pm with a brief introduction by Arthur Fox who provided the assembled members with the speaker lineup for the evening:

Lila Paig, the new director of the Aurora Hills Senior Center

Gabriella Vega, Arlington Count DES staff member

Matt de Ferranti, newly elected Arlington County Board Member

Aurora Hills Senior Center

David Litman introduced Lila Paig, the new director of the Aurora Hills Senior Center who discussed her goal to increase programs, members and participation in the Center's activities. The Center is currently open three days each week - Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. It hopes that with greater participation it could be open five days a week.

Ms. Paig described existing programs and asked for suggestions of additional programs the Center might offer that would attract new members and greater participation. Aurora Hills currently focuses on intellectual and mental stimulation type of activities featuring occasional speakers, games such as duplicate bridge and chess, Hatha Yoga and Yarn Crafters.

The Center is looking forward to its annual fundraising sale - "Trash and Treasures" on April 26 - 27, 2019.

Arlington Ridge Road Slip Lane into Lang Street

Gabrielle Vega, a Department of Environmental Services representative, presented the county's plan to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Arlington Ridge Rd with S. Lang Street adjacent to Gunston Middle School. The intersection and its cross walks are frequented by students that walk to school.

She reported that traffic on Ridge Road typically travels 10 MPH faster than the posted 25 MPH speed limit, and eliminating the slip lane and requiring southbound traffic instead to slow down in order to make a hard right turn into Lang Street is a needed safety measure.

There was active discussion from the audience regarding different pros and cons of the proposal. Given the general member support for the plan, Ms. Vega predicted that it will be implemented, though the fine points of how best to implement it have yet to be

finalized, but that work may not begin until 2020 and would then require 6 - 8 months to complete.

Matt de Ferranti

Matt de Ferranti was elected to the Arlington County Board in November, 2018, having defeated incumbent board member John Vihstadt.

Mr. de Ferranti opened by describing his background as a schoolteacher before changing career paths by attending law school and then working as an attorney for municipalities and school districts in California. He worked for a state legislator in Austin, Texas for several years before returning to the DC area in 2008 to work for Feeding America, the country's network of food banks. He also worked as an advocate for Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together on low- income homeownership.

He addressed Amazon's planned presence in Arlington, saying that the County does not yet have a legal agreement with Amazon; to approve any agreement, he said it would have to be satisfied that:

1. It would need to be a big win *for* Arlington County and its residents
2. There would need to be an infrastructure plan for schools and transportation, etc.
3. There would need to be a plan addressing small businesses
4. There would need to be openness/transparency

He is confident that when an agreement is presented, it will meet these standards.

Mr. de Ferranti went on to say that he has his own set of "dream standards":

1. There should be a project/labor agreement that includes fair wages
2. Construction should reflect sustainability and be energy efficient
3. Affordable housing should be made available

Additionally, de Ferranti said that New York gave way more to Amazon than Arlington which will only share a percent of new hotel taxes received by the County, up to \$23 million, as a consequence of Amazon's presence and after Amazon meets a set of square footage goals.

He said he has some concerns about traffic, but is optimistic that Amazon's revenue stream into the County coffers will help to relieve some of the upward pressure on residents' property taxes caused in part by the loss of some 24,000 jobs in Crystal City as a result of BRAC that has contributed to the current budget deficit of \$70 million.

It was pointed out that Amazon will not be replacing the 24,000 job vacancies in Crystal City since it will be located instead in new buildings to be built in Pentagon City. It remains unclear what will happen to the empty Crystal City office buildings. When asked about the substantial increase in density in Pentagon City, he said he was aware of ARCA's outstanding Resolution and that "he will look into it."

As for transportation infrastructure improvements, he said additional entrances will be added to the Crystal City and Potomac Yards Metro stops by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and a pedestrian bridge will be constructed between Reagan National Airport and the VRE station in Crystal City.

Mr. de Ferranti acknowledged that Amazon's arrival will put upward pressure on residential property taxes due primarily to increased property values and assessments. He was asked to consider reducing the tax rate as a way of offsetting at least some of the property tax increases.

He indicated that new multi-family housing would likely put less pressure on schools than single family homes (which are more likely to include children). Without such buildings, single family homes become less affordable.

Mr. de Ferranti raised the subject of affordable housing on several occasions and noted that zoning modifications might be necessary to enable more affordable housing.

Mr. de Ferranti also was queried on the loss of housing in Pentagon City occasioned by Amazon's purchase of the vacant land on MetPark for its corporate campus that was to have contained 1,400 residential units. His response was that other housing sites would need to be found to make up for the resulting shortfall.

He also indicated awareness of ARCA's resolution requesting that an independent 22202 infrastructure study be pursued.