

Roundtables with Civic and Condo Association Presidents March 2018 Summary Notes

OVERVIEW

In early March, County Manager Mark Schwartz and Civic Federation President Duke Banks hosted a series of three roundtables with approximately 55 Civic/Condo Association Presidents to explore opportunities for better coordination and communication. Presidents shared practices in areas of communication, identified areas of opportunity for better coordination, and highlighted the challenges that Civic and Condo Association Presidents face on a regular basis.

There were a number of emerging themes all outlined below in this document. However, a few key themes that surfaced across all three roundtable sessions:

- It is important to strengthen and streamline communication with civic and condo associations
- There are challenges with getting neighbors to participate in Civic and Condo Associations, especially people living in multi-family buildings
- There are limited resources available to help civic and condo associations with communication and other key functions
- There are often challenges navigating and communicating with other agencies/organizations (e.g., VDOT, Dominion, etc.)
- There is expressed interest in having continued support and connections for CA leadership.
- There is an opportunity for the Civic Federation to have a larger role in facilitating communication and coordination between Civic and Condo Associations

Over the coming months, the County will work with the Civic Federation and Presidents to explore short term opportunities for strengthening Civic and Condo Association participation and communication. These include:

- Explore strategies for streamlining information sent from the County to Civic and Condo Associations
- Identify new strategies to help increase communication, outreach and participation, with a special focus on reaching residents in multi-family buildings
- Develop a toolkit for new presidents of civic and condo associations
- Host an annual best practice workshop with civic and condo associations
- Explore long term strategies for strengthening communication and coordination with civic and condo associations

KEY THEMES

COMMUNICATION WITH THE COUNTY

General

- The DPR team has been very helpful in our neighborhood especially on the Madison Manor Park Project
- I really love the new interactive project page.
- CPHD has been good at asking for feedback from us. It's also helpful to have dates for when feedback will be collected by.
- The County is usually supportive of our CA when we have an issue- gun store situation
- I appreciate how quickly the County is at responding to issues and responding to emails
- We really appreciate staff's willingness to come to our evening meetings. They are always available to come to us and that is important to us.
- While there is good interaction with the County on a lot of things. We have had several experiences where staff is rude, ignore concerns, they brush you off. They treat everybody badly and it is so disheartening. Hopefully, the County focuses on their engagement abilities. It is less about the projects, but it is about the problems we are experiencing now.
- My interactions with most staff been both positive and negative. Most of the times when they call, I am in favor with what they are talking about. E.g. the streets are being paved. I am thrilled, but we have all on street parking, so we need to work together. It doesn't help to just have 24-48 hr. notice. It took me 10 minutes to convince the person on the phone that I wasn't trying to be combative, I just wanted them to make sure they understood our constraints.
- There is something of an issue in Arlington across the board, where Arlington is changing into a high-density urban area. This week we were told that our curbs are being worked on, but the neighbors were upset when there was fresh curb in front of their driveway. They weren't consulted about it. When they asked the contractors about it, they said that they were just told to do it.

Managing Information and Input

- It is a lot of work to forward every email. Perhaps it would be easier if we had less notifications of surveys. What if we had a monthly list of surveys so that it wasn't so often.
- I'm on a lot of email lists for various County departments- it's often overwhelming, but I like knowing about things that are coming up. I didn't specifically ask to be added to meetings.
- We send the updates of changing CA contact information to the CBO and CIVFED. But it seems that this information does not always get transferred to all the other departments
- I do appreciate the single email with links that are very useful for reposting information to our CA Facebook page

- Staff needs to contact CA presidents about upcoming engagement opportunities
- We have noticed that if we send specific information on specific topics, we get more of a response. Everything I see that the County sends out is good stuff.
- I appreciate getting notices. I understand that you are now going to electronic systems for permits, I suggest that you send the digital formats to the civic association presidents. We can send them out to our listservs so that we can facilitate communications with our neighborhoods. I am the only one who gets access to the detailed maps of the County that these permit users would need access too.
- Subdivision coordinate ordinance should require that those kinds of forms be done by email
- The communication of all the parts of the County is so overwhelming. There is a lot coming from the schools as well. That on top of the County is overwhelming
- The communication from staff is much stronger and more proactive than it was 6 years ago. But there is such a deluge of communication. My biggest frustration with the County come out to me that are incredibly short fused. “We need you to do this by Friday” or “we need you to host a CA meeting by this day”. It’s incredibly disrespectful of my time as a volunteer. I don’t think that any of us that are leaders of CAs have people who are readily available for things like that. People are busy, slow to respond, etc.
- We really appreciate all the staff who are willing to meet with us often. It is impressive and makes us feel like we are a part of the process. We have not been shy about reaching out to the County and they have been responsive.

Communication and Engagement with the County

- CA would appreciate more information about what’s being done with buildings that are being torn down.
- Our biggest issue is the decision-making process of the County after we have had engagement efforts. We wanted to be a part of the process by which the County was looking at options and alternatives, but the concern is that the decision-making process is going on without us. We would like to be able to inform the County of constraints. If people don’t feel like they are part of the decision-making process, then they won’t show up.
- Consider County wide 311 system
- Explore the relationship and communication between Civic Associations and PTAs
- We have the same issue with on street parking, but we never knew until we saw the placards. People who lived on the street knew, but the managers of the buildings did not. I get notified of SPRC meetings much too late. They want our engagement, but I don’t know what the processes are. I might want to go to the County Board, but the processes feel overly complicated
- One of the things we are pulling the thread on are volunteering. How do we get more participation and get younger people involved? There’s no winning in scheduling meetings to please everyone. When we look at short fuses, what is the County doing with this information? How do we know that the County is taking all of this seriously? APS Walking blocks- people couldn’t use the website interface.

- To the extent that we can get people involved and they feel as if what we're doing gets through to the County, we can get more participation. However, most times we feel as if we are getting push back or no response. It's frustrating that we are getting generic surveys that we feel like we've already answered. It doesn't inspire enthusiasm.
- The County appears to want to be able to say in the end that "we were really out there, we really asked". I really appreciate these roundtables. What we're really talking about here is a government that works- effective checks and balances and effective civic engagement. I have asked the councils office to conduct a review of our rules to see all the places that require or mention CAs. We don't make it up, it's in the rules. CAs are written into the process. We also need to determine credible input. Ex. In 4MRV, we wanted a postcard sent out to everyone, we never wanted to be in the position of hearing that people didn't know what was going on. I think we need a few more mechanisms built in so that we know that no one can tell us that we didn't try. We heard that you talked about being able to find mailing lists.
- POPS public meetings were great in December. There are a lot of citizens that are worried about us being a community of the one percent. How are we going to be a diverse community when we have overengineering? At the POPS process we gave feedback about more casual space, but we don't see it. Are we being heard?
- We appreciate the thought that goes into prioritizing needs and coming up with solutions. We can obviously afford a large and talented staff, but if you have a specific problem, it feels like a forest trying to get to an easily accessible portal to report a problem.
- How do we create a world where everyone decides to write the County Board and Mark? There's a temptation in Arlington right now for everyone to communicate by email.
- I have submitted a FOIA for information before and got like saying "we are not going to respond to this issue" and I sent it to the CB.
- I used to live in Fairfax County where I felt like we had no voice. So, I appreciate that we have one in Arlington. We need tools for participation. I'd love to have people share their ideas on how they are getting enthusiasm from their community members. They are supposed to be the "voice of the community" but there are six white guys and a white woman. This is a much more different and urban place, so I'm much more interested in how we get a more representative participation.
- Let's talk about a survey, because it might show your 3% that people are interested in more than what your board thinks.
- The County is doing well with neighborhood College. Getting people active in civic associations.
- We have been talking about possibly having a Neighborhood Workshop. Several people responded thinking this could be a good idea
- I would like to know more about the survey results. Can we get a general report of how many people participated in feedback or what the benefit from our responses were considered? We can take that back to our membership and show that we can inspire change

PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

General

- Our members are all full-time workers with families who don't have too much time to invest in the work that CAs do.
- People have limited time/bandwidth
- People tend to come out when there are controversial topics.
- One of my biggest fears is that we aren't going to have a civic association. Due to recent politics, people aren't as interested in local issues such as sidewalks. There's a real risk in people feeling like they aren't relative. I think that the County could take some action in bringing attention of state and national issues to CAs
- Lee highway alliance has been very involved. I wonder if it would be helpful to continue these forums and specifically discuss how we can get people more engaged. We have a hard time getting people to take on leadership roles.
- Asset based community development- we need to get more of the folks that go neighborhood college and Leadership Arlington and get them to be block captains. Should be more citizen led, but County staff led
- We try to identify topics that we think are of interest to our neighborhood.

Diversity and Inclusion

- We have 850 houses and 5,000 apartments. Getting the word out is not that easy. Many immigrants, so language is issue. North Arlington has a lot more single-family homes
- Fortunately, our civic association meetings DO look like Arlington- more diverse. We have committed an affordable complex in our CA without them being represented in our membership. How much do we associate ourselves with our neighborhoods? How much of my Arlington existence is associated with Clarendon-Courthouse? I know that CIVFED has other member organizations, how do they enhance this issue?
- I see no diversity around the room. It is a problem in my civic association and in others. When we talk about MFU housing, I assume that there are more diverse community meetings in those associations. I would like the County to try to talk to those groups and ask them if they've tried to get involved with the civic associations. We should get them involved so that their voices can be heard.
- I hope that the discussion of diversity is not controversial. I want to make sure that our board is representatives of our building.
- I've heard dozens of times that people went to their CAs and didn't feel welcomed. I encourage that CAs look at the way they are structured to make sure that people feel welcomed. We can disagree and yet make sure that people feel like they are members of the community.
- The small group of people that show up to CA meetings don't necessarily represent the communities, so talking about capacity building is important because we need to best reach the people we are working for. We also need to figure out the County reaches out to people who aren't heavily active.

Outreach to Condos/Rental/ Multi-Family Buildings

- We have put a poster at MFU buildings and asked to put our flyers there and they have been willing to help
- We can get the mailing addresses from Real Estate bureau. You can't get into apartment and condo buildings- no soliciting- I can understand that, you can walk up to the door of a residential house, but the only way we have been able to contact people who live in MFU buildings
- Having access to condos is something that everyone complains about, because then the feeling of those people is, I don't own property here, so why would I get involved? They don't get the Citizen anymore, so how will they know about what is going on? Can we make a partnership/condition with MFU buildings that allow us to have a box where people are able to drop off newsletters?
- We have to move forward, more diversity in age, coordination with the PTA schedule, have the demographics of the CivFed representative of what Arlington is. As we go forward, we are going to need more support for civic engagement for residents living in multifamily buildings
- What is the CA's responsibility in engaging with the condo associations? I have single family homes and some condo associations. Are we supposed to be filtering this information out?
- I am the newly elected president of the condo association and don't know if I want to be the contact, but the Manager of the condo might be more helpful. However, it would be helpful for me to know how communications between the condos and the County typically work
- It's important to not just reach out to Condo board members, but the managers of the condos. I completely Our manager's take three to four communications to the County to get anything done.
- Ashton Heights has said that they have a member assigned to each condo association and keeps them connected
- Our Condo--We don't have a front office. DES twitter feed is very helpful during storms and clean ups
- We have a hybrid CA, 1000 single family homes and one condo, along with 10s of 1000s of rental units. We have about 200 members. We have a paper newsletter, listserves, the condo has no central point of contact, we have to know someone there. It is very difficult to get transient people. I was thinking that since we have a lot of site plan projects, it should the responsibility of site plan managers to create a bulletin board where we can send our newsletters
- How is information supposed to reach out to the condo associations? County -> CA-> condo associations?
- The vast majority of our residents are in high rise. They don't even know that they live in a neighborhood or can be part of our civic associations. It would be helpful if the County could put together a list of the condo association managers so that we know who to contact. We can't get in the door. We don't have the money to mail. The post office has a cheaper way to target small areas, but even that has not been too successful. We are going

into a planning process for a new neighborhood plan and we want to have meetings in those buildings. But there are barriers (psychological and physical) that don't allow them to come in.

- There was a suggestion that we have a joint meeting with the managers of the buildings, but that never came to pass. My suggestion is that maybe if we combine your public engagement discussion and the building managers, then we could accomplish a couple of purposes
- Our committee has submitted things to our newsletter. We have an intra condo communications system (Building Link) that has been very useful. We have bulletin boards and monthly board meetings (15-20 people who show up). We have a hard time getting people engaged. We have tried a floor by floor pizza party/pie party. We have no communication with Civic association leaders.
- A list of condos should be on the website
- Condo Association information is updated by Richmond, so recommendation to explore.
- We would be happy to have the Civic Associations contact us and ask to speak at the condo association meetings
- We have a mix of types of housing. A lot of the diversity is in multi-family housing. It has been very difficult to get into multifamily buildings.
- We have nothing but HOAs and they have portals for their residents. In our neighborhood, they are more than willing to post about the Civic Association. I've never been turned down.
- Condos often have Facebook like pages and they are kind of desperate for comments. The other thing is, let's get over meetings.
- Crystal City is working on hosting a lunch with multi-building managers to have a conversation about coordination and communication.
- Some of the buildings have community benefit clauses in the site plans.
- Would the County be open to adding a community benefit requirement to site plans for the ability to post flyers in multi-family buildings? Also, when one of the buildings come for a zoning approval or something, this could be leverage for asking for more community involvement.
- It would be helpful to know what the County knows along the lines of generic email addresses of property managers
- We need to make sure that we get updated POCs from building managers.

Engaging renters

- What about the renters list?
- People who are renting don't join as much as condo or homeowners.
- More than 50% of the units are rented. I have to be very active to become civically engaged with my CA. We have put together a list of activist organizations in order to enhance diversity and keep people who are involved because of their association with Arlington wide organizations even if they move from unit to unit in Arlington. People want to be active, we might want to connect them to the community by including some

balance between issues based engagement and social engagement (parties, networking, etc.)

- One of the things that have worked for us best is a short survey. One was overwhelming with 200 responses. I think that there are different ways to get input that are totally legitimate.

RESOURCES FOR CA PRESIDENTS

- We are part of the Pike Presidents group. Our CA has not been involved with CivFed, but they are not as representative of us as coalitions in south Arlington
- Consider onboarding training for new Presidents
- Convene Presidents on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to share common practices
- If the County wants CAs to serve as a conduit between the County and residents, they need some supplemental support from the County to help that.
- Are we there to give information or get information from the County? The County wants us to participate, but you have to focus on the things to help us do this- especially the people we are new to this work.
- When it comes to experience, the main person who is going to share it are the people who have experienced things. Having conversations like this with all of the CA presidents together really helps
- Something that can be passed on from president to president
- Toolkit would be really helpful. We used to get training on online resources and practices. We find that everyone goes to the schools and say that we want to go to the schools and have a meeting without paying. But in order to get the resources we need, we have had to use who we know. We need more of these resources from the County.
- The idea of surveys has to be better because you get distorted answers. The survey process is fundamentally flawed. Answers might be duplicated.
- A face to face meeting for training or orientation for new presidents would be very helpful.
- Consider offering facilitation and other topical training for CA leaders
- Consider a listserv for Condo/Civic Association Presidents
- That might be an opportunity for cocounseling and help with onboarding. Especially if we are not being talked at by the County
- I think the County should foster dialogues among presidents where we learn from ne another
- There's no reason why we couldn't do that on our own or through the Civic Federation.
- I think it would be really helpful and maybe institutionalize it- have a few of these a year.
- Yeah this is very beneficial. In the Pikes Presidents group we meet once a month. While we don't agree with all topics, we can at least come to an understanding and come to the County with one voice.
- I think that it would be really helpful if I got a welcome resource kit. I didn't even know that there was a My Arlington Project map.

- I think that this roundtable would be really helpful at our single CA and Condo association meetings.
- Maybe the welcome kit would help
- I need resources like contacts and websites from
- Maybe we can invite experienced presidents so that they can provide reality checks and support
- Maybe when people move into their new presidency roles, they can be welcomed by the County with some sort of coaching- like the neighborhood college concept. I cannot tell you how wonderful it is that you are doing this. Single family homes get involved with APS and maybe older people get involved with CAs, but it is a very complicated problem to try and get people engaged. It's not the easiest and we need to find out the best way to reach our immediate residents

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATION

Website Platforms

- If I could pay \$20 a month for one person to update all of the websites, I would.
- We don't have a website because we don't have people to develop or maintain it
- A portal will be amazing
- I'm hoping that the civic federation can have a listserv for the CA presidents where we can communicate with one another
- would like to see the County create the communication platforms- emails, phone numbers, etc. I think that it would be really helpful for everyone coming into this role to have access to a toolkit/ website and listserv that everyone can use to get started.
- We would like an infrastructure in place for someone to maintain our websites- we would be willing to pay. Members don't want to do it for free.
- Can we get one central contract with a website company where we could all buy into at a discounted rate? Some sort of portal? Most of the movers and shakers are planning their own fantasy campaigns for somewhere along the lines.
- We use Facebook and our website to communicate with one another and store all of our documents. It is a useful depository.
- We need software that helps us not recreate websites on our own. The civic federation does not have an office. We need to strengthen the CivFed. The County should find funding or a way to update the website CivFed
- There are a lot of free services for developing websites. If all you're looking to do is communicate with someone, there are resources that can be used.
- We don't have funding for a website. Can the County have a page for everyone to update information? What do we do for people who don't have internet connections?

Newsletters and other Communication Tools

- We do direct mail, \$200. Even though renters get the newsletter, they still have a transient mindset. The mentality has to be broken- not just access
- The County can at least set it up. You have the resources, can we get an infrastructure that will allow us to
- Use of block captains has been successful in several neighborhoods
- I wanted to get a mailing list so I could send flyers . One participant indicated You can get that from the post office. If we are going to grow in population, the traditional CA model will not cut it. We should move to a rewards system- a quasi-official source or resources/ funding that is supported by the County. Nextdoor has been very helpful. County should make more use of this
- I find the County's emails really useful; I just get them and immediately forward them on to my membership.
- It is a lot of work to forward every email. Perhaps it would be easier if we had less notifications of surveys. What if we had a monthly list of surveys so that it wasn't so often.
- The post office will print out a list of all the domiciles in civic associations for you.
- You can also use google maps that will give addresses and phone numbers
- How do we distribute papers from house to house?
- Make master list of addresses for each CA available (apartments, condos, SFH)
- How do we reach out to people who don't speak English as a first language?
- The Nextdoor app is really helpful. It could help bridge the gap between Arlington County and us. Arlington police has been using it to notify us about anything going on in our neighborhood- people spread the word about who has power and who has not. I agree with staff being friendly/responsive.

A ROLE FOR THE CIVIC FEDERATION

- I think that we need to maintain the neutrality of CivFed. If the County pays for it, I think that they might have some sort of control on the content
- I agree with Nick. CivFed is kind of a check for government
- Civic Federation can do a better job of making sure that we are not recreating the wheel. We can have more updated contact information, etc. We can get out of this issue and more into meaningful conversation.
- I think CivFed needs to have more investment in better web infrastructure
- It's important for Civic Associations to look at who the delegate list for CivFed. In some ways we need to bring in more blood, revitalize our committees, etc. All of our committees are tied into our bylaws, so we have some limitations to the existing organization. But the biggest thing that we can do is have CAs look at their delegates and see who is coming to the CivFed meetings.
- I would like to see the federation do some outreach to communities that don't show up. There might be people who don't recognize the CivFed as a helpful element of civic engagement

- CivFed has about 53 civic associations. County Club Hills does not want a CA. CIVFED having such a wide range of representation, is because of neighborhood conservation efforts. Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations has recently asked for our help. Those that actually come to the meeting are very small. We have All Stars that being 2 or more delegates come to the meeting. We only had 14 members who only brought them.
- One reason is that there are literally so many committees, planning groups, etc. that make it really hard to get together. CivFed meets on the first Tuesday of the month- which is the same night as the 4MRV working group meetings.
- Let's not reinforce it to the County. Let's do them through civic federation. The County needs to have input, but I don't want us to drive the County telling us how to do things. The more the County strengthens us, the more it benefits us.
- Don't want the County doing everything for me, which is why I like CivFed, so that we can have a bit of separation
- Have CivFed meetings in south Arlington to increase diversity in meetings.
- Consider livestreaming CivFed meetings
- Suggestion for CivFed to organize a meeting of CAs that are having these issues, that weren't single family issues, this could be useful.
- Is it possible for CivFed or the County to send a message to new residents/ condo/ rental buildings that say the civic association will be reaching out to you.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES (APS, VDOT, DOMINION, ETC)

- Need to look at how they are written. VDOT vs. Arlington accountability. We don't know who is responsible for work done by either. We don't know who to turn to when we have complaints about VDOT.
- Service providers have been working our property, mess it up, and the condo associations never get notified.
- Lee Highway Alliance- Lee highway needs redevelopment- VDOT puts up lights and cuts down trees without telling us.
- It doesn't feel like Arlington fights for us (w/ VDOT). We are begging for a sidewalk which is a safety concern, but we aren't getting a response. County and VDOT point at each other as the people who should be accountable. They work in Silos. VERY FRUSTRATING
- Using the state delegates can be helpful
- Its new that APS is reaching out to CAs more regularly
- Cross purposes. Walkability for schools- there are school ambassadors, but CAs are being asked if they can help with walking tours and things like that, but the information is coming from different places and that makes It hard for us to coordinate. Some of these need a quick turn around, but it is very difficult to keep up with all that the County and APS are asking of us. A lot of people aren't able to make meetings. As a CA president, I'm trying to filter what's going out so that people aren't ignoring me when I really need them to pay attention. There is really little succession planning- I thought I HAD to go to

all the meetings. I don't know what the County needs from us. What would you like to see from us as a future strategy for what you would like us to do?

- BIDS are not County run; they are a public private partnership. They do a really good job of throwing a party once in a while and getting the community to talk to one another. North Rosslyn really appreciate the relationship that we have with the BID building
- We do a lot of partnerships. We share meetings and topics. I am sharing a lot with JBG Smith and the Crystal City BID. For example, when we tried to deal with the airport, JBG gave us the space, the BID paid for snacks and we ran the meeting.

OTHER

- Everyone is law-suit friendly in this age, we are concerned about getting sued
- Insurance can end up being the highest ticket in line items- have to raise fees, but keep dues reasonable
- Very interested in liability insurance.
- Revisit NC Process
- Bathrooms in Parks (e.g., Chestnut Hill Park)
- Concern with contractors digging up streets without notification
- Tracking 'use permits' and 'fire hazards'
- Lee Highway Development
- Use asset based community development more often
- Overcrowding at schools (beyond use permit authorization)
- I am also interested in NCAC processes.

Participating Associations in Civic and Condo Association Roundtables

Arlington East Falls Church Association
Arlington Forest Citizens' Association
Arlington Mill Civic Association
Arlington Oaks, A Condominium
Arlington Ridge Civic Association
Ashton Heights Civic Association
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
Barcroft School and Civic League
Bedford Park Condominium
Bellevue Forest Citizens Association
Berkeley Condo Unit Owners
Association
Bluemont Civic Association
Boulevard Manor Civic Association
Brandymore HOA
Buckingham Community Civic
Association
Carlyle Park HOA
Charleston Condominium Association
Civic Federation
Clarendon Courthouse Civic Association
Claremont Citizens' Association
Columbia Forest Civic Association
Columbia Heights Civic Association
Crystal City Civic Association
Crystal Gateway Unit Owners
Association
Dominion Hills Civic Association
Donaldson Run Civic Association
Douglas Park Civic Association
Fairlington Citizens Association

Forest Glen Civic Association
Foxcroft Heights Civic Association
Frederick Courts Condominium HOA
Glebewood Civic Association
Glencarlyn Citizens' Association
Hyde Park Community Association
John M. Langston Civic Association
Leeway Overlee Civic Association
Long Branch Creek Civic Association
Lyon Park Civic Association
Lyon Village Association
Madison Manor Civic Association
Maywood Community Association
Nauck Civic Association
North Highland Citizens' Association
North Rosslyn Civic Association
Old Dominion Citizens Association
Penrose Neighborhood Association
Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic
Association
Rivercrest Civic Association
Shirlington Civic Association
Southampton Condo Association
Waverly Hills Civic Association
Waycroft-Woodlawn Civic Association
Westover Village Civic Association
Westwind Townhouses Association
Williamsburg Civic Association
Woodmont Civic Association
Yorktown Civic Association