



Barcroft News

March 2003

Vol 100, Issue 7

President's Report

— by *Pat Williamson-Edwards*

Needed -- candidates for the Barcroft School and Civic League election of officers in May 2003. Hopefully most of our dedicated officers will agree to serve a second term or ascend the ranks but there will be some openings. Please contact me or Randy Swart right away if you would

consider serving. The slate of candidates will be published in the April Newsletter.

Please catch up on the many big issues directly affecting our neighborhood by reading in depth articles throughout the newsletter. Plan to attend the March 6 regular monthly meeting at the Community House to vote on support of the new traffic calming plan (pgs. 4-6) for Wakefield and the Safe Routes to School sidewalk proposal.

Progress on the Pike: Questions to be Answered

Thanks to continuing efforts by the County staff, Tim Lynch and the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO), and the numerous citizens, real progress is being made in revitalizing the Pike.

The County Board was to consider the Columbia Pike Initiative package (the Form Based Code (FBC) and attachments) on February 25.

There are four main issues that Barcroft residents wanted to see addressed before the meeting. These four points are not the only issues that have been raised in our community, and there is not a complete consensus in the community on these issues; there has been a lengthy and healthy discussions on all these points. They are offered here as a summary of the most significant issues and possible remedies.

1. The Northwest Corner at George Mason Drive and Columbia Pike: Barcroft residents near this intersection have asked for a four story maximum at this location. The current draft allows six stories. Barcroft would like the FBC to include

a narrative which clearly states that the development at this location would minimize the impact on the adjacent properties by establishing the starting point at the lowest point of the lot perimeter. This would vary from the current averaging approach, and would allow the slope to help mitigate the impact on the nearby residents. The FBC could also state that the transition requirements should be bolstered in this case, considering greater setbacks for the point where maximum height is permitted. Finally, the FBC should limit the height by total feet, in effect limiting the permissible height of the first story.

2. Administrative Review Team: The FBC at this draft does not include the revised/draft regulations which will govern the review process. The FBC should include these regulations as an attachment. The staff has briefed on proposed changes, which are supported by Barcroft residents.

In addition, Barcroft would suggest the establish-

(Continued on page 7)

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For Sale: Girl's bike, 10-speed Huffy, 20" wheels, 16" frame, \$75; Girl's rollerblade bladerunners, size 3, \$40; and Microbladers, size 13, \$30. All in excellent condition. Call 271-5361.

For Sale: Nordic Track cross county ski machine, Model 505. \$75.00. Call Ron, 920-7014.

Looking to Buy a Home: Our family of 5 has returned to the area, and we want buy a 4 bedroom house in the Barcroft school district. If you are selling your home, contact Richard Rieman at 553-0526 or rrieman@att.net, or our realtor, Susan Sarcone, at 522-0022.

Around the Neighborhood...

CONGRATULATIONS to Carrie Tucker of 6th Street. Carrie, a sophomore at HB Woodlawn, won the high school National District Diving championship. Carrie also won the championship last year as a freshman. HB does not have a sports program, so Carrie plays sports for Wakefield HS, where she currently is the only member of the dive team. Carrie placed eighth of 24 divers at the Regional meet, qualifying to dive at the State meet in Virginia Beach. Good luck Carrie!

SIGHTED: In a February showing of "West Wing," an alert neighbor reports catching sight of Barcrofter Tom Palance playing the trumpet at President Bartlet's inaugural ball. Maybe Tom has an anecdote to share?

Have anything to contribute to the Barcroft News? Submissions are due by the 15th of each month. Contact Christina at 271-0631 or editor@bscl.org or 618 S. Stafford St. Ads are due by the 10th of each month; contact Jim Kerr at Jim@bscl.org

Next BSCL Meetings:
 March 6, 7:30 PM
 April 3, 7:30 PM

Barcroft Community House, 800 S. Buchanan

Special Election on March 11th— Don't Forget to Vote!



By now you are receiving campaign mail for the Special Election for County Board on Tuesday, March 11th. Should you bother to vote? In the last Special Election in 1999, only 19% of Arlington's voters turned out, but Barcroft turned out 499 voters for 28%. Mike Lane carried Barcroft by 77 votes. His winning margin was only 170 votes for all of Arlington. So yes, you should make a quick stop--no long lines this time--to vote. Our neighborhood can make a difference, and your vote will count!

Voting on March 11th is from 6AM to 7PM at Barcroft School.

Element Art Show features Barcroft Artists

— by *Peter Wood*

Two Barcroft Residents have helped organize the kick-off event for the Falls Church City Center for the Arts Inaugural Exhibition Show and Sale: Element.

The Falls Church City Center for the Arts (FCCCA) is under development. To jump start this effort, come join 10 artists (including Barcroft residents Peter Wood and Lisa Chun) for the kick-off event. These artists interact and reflect with nature to bring you incredible art for sale. A portion of the sales benefits the FCCCA. Come find out what FCCCA is all about and support your local Artists!



The Show: **Element**, featuring 10 artists in an inaugural exhibition and sale, located at 240 West Board Street, Falls Church, VA.

Opening reception: Friday, March 7th, 6 pm - 10 pm: music, food and, of course, ART.

Meet The Artist Opening: Saturday, March 8th, 10 am to 6 pm.

March Gallery Hours: Thursday and Friday evenings: 6 pm to 9 pm; Saturdays: 10 am to 6 pm; Sundays: noon to 5 pm

Thanks for your support— Peter S. Wood,
www.rustymetal.com.



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Promising Alternative Proposed Instead Place of Traffic Circles

— by Sue Tennenbaum

Residents, parents, school crossing guards and safety officers, Principal Miriam Hughey-Guy and others turned out on a cold February evening to look at the new plan for slowing traffic on Wakefield St. near the Barcroft School. Most were very pleased with Neighborhood Traffic Calming Coordinator Jeff Sikes' proposal for a 4-way stop sign at South 8th St (the only intersection which qualifies for one under County guidelines) and raised crosswalks at South 6th and 9th streets and another just in front of the school. (Raised crosswalks are speed humps stamped with a brick-like pattern and color. They function both to slow traffic and to guide pedestrians to a logical [and in

some cases, guarded] crossing spot.)

This plan replaces an earlier proposal for traffic circles at the intersections --- one which met with a distinct lack of community enthusiasm. A lopsided vote recommended that the new plan be voted on at the next BSCL meeting on March 6th, after which we hope to petition Wakefield St neighbors and get the devices installed this spring. Many thanks to the neighbors who have taken an interest in this, and -- in particular -- to the crossing guards who first raised appropriate safety questions and then helped place the proposed crosswalks for maximum safety.

Barn Dance

Saturday, March 22, 8:00

Traditional American dancing (contras, squares, and circles) for everyone. Liz

Donaldson, caller, will teach all the steps and dances, so non-dancers can participate immediately. Live music provided by Kathy Kerr, fiddle, and Julie Gorka, piano and fiddle, and Jim Besser, guitar and concertina.



Barcroft Community House
800 S. Buchanan St

Info: Julie Gorka (703) 979-0339

\$7/adults; \$5/kids; \$15/families

Snowy Skies but Clear Sidewalks

— Contributed by observant neighbor
"Anne N. O'Mous"

Imagine my surprise when--driven from my home on an afternoon in early February by cabin fever -- I was able to walk all the way from 8th and S. Taylor to Betty Brite dry cleaners on Columbia Pike WITHOUT WALKING IN THE STREET.

Sidewalks were clear for four blocks running. I thought I had died and gone to Minneapolis.

Many thanks to my public-spirited (and possibly stir-crazy) neighbors

-- and particularly to whoever tackled the Community House, which was shoveled along the whole length of both Buchanan and 8th Streets!



Letter to 9th Street Residents (to be discussed at March 6 Meeting)

Dear Ninth Street Resident or Property Owner:

As you may be aware, Arlington County is actively working to make walking in the County easier and safer for all our residents and visitors. One of the County's recent initiatives is intended to improve the safety of walking routes in the vicinity of County schools. As part of the "Safe Routes to Schools" program the County is constructing needed sidewalks and other pedestrian safety facilities on streets near neighborhood schools.

One of the projects identified by the Safe Routes to Schools program is to construct a sidewalk along Ninth Street South, between South Taylor and South Wakefield streets. The new sidewalk would provide a safer walking route for students attending Barcroft Elementary School as well as help residents and visitors walk to the churches, pre-school and residences along the street and in the neighborhood.

The County's concept is to construct a four-foot wide, concrete sidewalk within the public street right-of-way along the south side of Ninth Street. The project would be undertaken with County funds and property owners would not be assessed for any cost of the improvements. Arlington Department of Public Works staff will be working with the residents and property owners along Ninth Street to develop the design for the project. A presentation on the project will be made by County staff at the March 6 meeting of the Barcroft School & Civic League.

For more information on the Ninth Street Sidewalk project or the County's Safe Routes to Schools program contact you may contact me by phone at 703 228-3699 or by e-mail at rviola@co.arlington.va.us . I look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,
Ritch Viola
Planning Section Supervisor

Why Not Stop Signs? A Neighbor's Editorial

— by *Bill Nehrke*

Beware of stop signs: they cause controversy in the Barcroft community and other neighborhoods. How can an octagonal red sign with white letters cause controversy? Here's how: Traffic engineers basically don't like them. Some citizens in the community do like them. You see we have controversy: two different opinions. The county staff, i.e., the traffic engineers, say the community has to meet certain standards in order to have stop signs installed. In Arlington, these standards are called warrants, which emanate from the U.S. Department of Transportation as The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), and are supposedly based on studies done throughout the country.

The traffic engineers say these critters are put there to control traffic. When they are used, a traffic engineering study has to be done to justify them. They also say they SHOULD NOT be used to control speed. To address the speed issue in the neighborhoods, Traffic Calming was initiated. It is certainly comforting to know that there are standards and they are being applied in Arlington.

The Barcroft community had a speed problem with traffic on Wakefield and Buchanan Streets so we went through the Traffic Calming process. It's good when the citizens of the affected neighborhood get involved with the process. We were told what we could get to solve the speed problem. Since traffic averaged over 32 mph on Buchanan, it qualified for speed humps. The speed on Wakefield was around 31 mph, so it did not qualify for humps, but did qualify for traffic circles. Stop signs were not considered as a traffic calming device. At that point, the traffic calming plan was offered to Barcroft with no other choices: it was take it or not take it. It was approved by a significant margin. From there, it worked its way through the Arlington process and was funded.

Some Wakefield Street neighbors found they 2/15/03 did not want the traffic circles that had been approved and funded. This was signified in a petition signed by about 30 Wakefield residents, but not allowed to be presented to BSCL for action. The Wakefield petition called for replacing the expensive traffic circles (around \$20-30,000 each) with stop signs (\$150.00 each) for a trial period of 6 months with another traffic engineering study be done to confirm whether they worked or not. The traffic engineers continued to say no because they are not warranted. At the BSCL November meeting, a motion was made and passed to have a stop sign warrant developed by our traffic engineers that addressed school zone stop signs. The request did not get to Arlington County as moved and voted.

Also at the BSCL November meeting, a motion was made and passed to allow us to reconsider the traffic circles. A major factor had not been considered: safety, particularly for the children going to and from Barcroft School. Traffic crossing guards were not consulted, nor were school bus drivers, who find it difficult to get around even the smallest circles. There was no consideration given for the school crossing patrol who were posted at the select intersections.

The reconsideration has been going on for several months now. The traffic engineer continues to bring presentations and provide "results of studies discouraging the use of stop signs." By the way, many of the arguments used to put down stop signs apply for the circles and humps but the engineers won't own up to that. We need a whole lot more honesty in the arguments from the traffic engineers. The DOT MUTCD has a provision which addresses stop signs for "pedestrian and school walking routes." It is Section 2B.05, the same section as the unimpeded warrant is taken from. We need to have that stop sign warrant developed here and now in Arlington.

Columbia Pike Revitalization (Continued from page 1)
 ment of a "Liaison Group" to oversee and monitor implementation and actual impact of the FBC. This group should report directly to the County Manager, and should be comprised of reps from the appropriate Commissions, CPRO, and civic associations; and should meet quarterly. The purpose of this group is to provide an opportunity for information sharing and for direct feedback to the County Manager on issues and concerns.

3. Parking: Barcroft supports the use of permit parking, and the continued focus on how and where parking facilities should be located. The "maximum" parking requirements remain troubling, and many in Barcroft would like to see this requirement removed from the Form Based Code. If it remains, the County's commitment to the Parking Strategy, including adequate resources and implementation of the permit process, must

be clear.

4. Street Widths/Required Building Lines (RBL): While there is no consensus about the "right" answer on street widths among Barcrofters, it is clear that most would like to have more information and dialogue on this issue. The package on the 25th should include provisions for such efforts (as laid out by the Planning Commission), and the County Board should adopt rigorous timelines for completing this additional review/dialogue. Even with this approach, some Barcrofters will object on the 25th to the RBLs as included in Draft 3 of the FBC.

The next *Barcroft News* will include a summary of the board meeting and future developments in the revitalization process. Further information is also available at <http://www.columbiapikepartnership.com/>



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Ray, N. Granada St.

"Thanks for the very professional renovations performed on my home -- fast, reasonable, and well designed. Hard to find attentive service like you provide!"

Bill, S. Pershing Ct.

**NAIL IT DOWN &
FIX IT UP**



Announcements

- ◆ **Barcroft Play Group-** If you are a Stay-At-Home Parent and looking to meet others and their children in the neighborhood, join the Barcroft Play Group. We meet every Thursday between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM at the Barcroft Community House. We are currently a group of moms with children between the ages of 5 months and 10 months old. Please feel free to stop on by and enjoy the company, conversation and other children. Parents with younger infants and children older than 10 months are more than encouraged to join.
- ◆ **Citizen's Police Academy:** The next session of the Arlington County Police Department's Citizens' Police Academy will begin on March 5. The classes will be held on Wednesday evenings for 12 weeks, with graduation scheduled for May 28. Topics include search & seizure, laws of arrest, traffic enforcement/radar, firearm safety, gangs, and K-9 uses. Participants will also be introduced to basic self-defense techniques. If interested in attending, contact Sergeant Regina Heising at 228-4247 or e-mail rheisi@co.arlington.va.us
- ◆ **New Art Gallery on the Pike:** Columbia Pike Renovation Organization (CPRO) is bringing visual art to the Pike. Thanks to the initiative of Shauna McBay from Ski Chalet and the cooperation of the Columbia Pike Artists' Studio we've turned the front room of the CPRO office (2611 Columbia Pike) into an art gallery. The works of local artists Deb Crierie, Sara Linda Poly and Anne Hancock grace our walls and are for sale. Feel free to drop by to view the work and check on the future of Columbia Pike.
- ◆ **Volunteer at Nature Center:** Long Branch Nature Center will sponsor a Volunteer Workday on Saturday, March 29th from 11:00am - 3pm. Our friends and neighbors are invited to join us for a volunteer work day at the center. We will be cleaning up the gardens, raking leaves, mulching trails and other worthy outdoor chores - like putting up flying squirrel nest boxes. A great family activity and an opportunity to give back to the community. Please bring work gloves and wear old clothes. Please call Long Branch at 703-228-6535 to register.

Calling All Thespians! BSCL Players Plan for Barcroft's 100th Birthday



The Barcroft Players are going to put on a play about tales of the early years of Barcroft in honor of Barcroft's 100th birthday. We need actors, actresses, tech people - in short everyone - to help us get our act together, so to speak. Please come to a meeting on Saturday March 15th at 2:00 PM at 4611 S. 7th Street. Our last production was great fun and a sell-out to boot. If you can't make it on the 15th, but are interested in participating, please call Barbara Swart at (703) 521-2080.



HERE WE GO AGAIN! NEW ROUND OF REAL ESTATE ASSESMENTS

— by James Casey

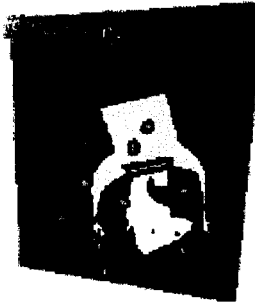
Long before the last of this year's snows arrived, and the crocus bulbs began to stir beneath the frozen soil, the County's Real Estate Assessment Department was busy churning out residential valuation notices for 2003. While most of my immediate neighbors received their notices in mid-January, mine did not arrive until February 12th.

Given last year's experience with appeals and partial assessment reductions, and given the rumors that assessment increases for houses would once again to be in the 20% range, with increases for condo values even more dramatic, my delayed notice had a certain psychological effect. In other words, I was anticipating the worst.

Therefore, I am pleased to report that, in percentage terms, my increase was a modest 10%. My immediate neighbors, at least the ones who joined in last year's appeal, also seemed to fare about the same. Our respective land values, however, increased by about 35%, so that the improvement components of our assessments were held virtually constant. Mine actually went down slightly.

For me and my neighbors, this is a happy result overall, because it virtually ensures that tax bill increases for this year will likely be held to within 10%. But here is one lingering concern: that the house-to-land value ratio has been pushed toward a further distorted relationship. In my case, it is 52% (house) and 48% (land). The corresponding square-footage land value went from about \$25 in 2002 to \$35 this year. This is on top of a nearly 50% increases the year before (from \$17 to \$25).

There can be no doubt that there has been a dra-



matic increase over time in favor of land. In the six years between 1997 and 2003, for example, my land value shot up about 250%, whereas my improvement value, gained a modest 6%. Even during the hard real estate times of 1997-1998, land assessments held essentially constant. At the current rate, it is conceivable that next year at this time many Barcrofters' could

see land values finally overtake improvement values.

One might reasonably conclude that assessment increases in Arlington are driven by land values. One also might reasonably ask (without intending a pun)—is this trend for real? To its credit, the County Board has occasionally expressed a willingness to address the whole issue of fairness in the methodology used to make assessments. By fairness is meant: fairness in the relative timing of assessments vis-à-vis the annual tax rate decision; fairness in the relative increases experienced by commercial and residential real estate property owners; and fairness in the appeals process for homeowners who feel that the County staff has not adequately considered quality-of-life factors.

Some Barcrofters who follow this issue had hoped that the results of the Board-sanctioned study would be available prior to this year, but have now resigned themselves to wait and hope for next year. Speaking for myself and no doubt some of my neighbors, affordable housing is not simply an issue for the less affluent among us, but is one that applies to all Arlingtonians.

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Need to Unload?

Any interest in a neighborhood-wide garage
sale? A few people have told me they would
like to participate— if there are any ideas out
there, get back to me so I can include them in
the next newsletter— call or email Christina at
271-0631 or editor@bscl.com



Barcroft School and Civic League
800 South Buchanan Street
Arlington, VA 22204

Know your Credit Score

If you are in the market for purchasing a home and are curious about your Credit, you will want to check your FICO score. The first FICO score was developed by San Rafael, Calif.-based Fair, Isaac & Co. The three major credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion) provide a FICO score to lenders. FICO is the score most widely used by lenders and the one you have to pay to see. There are also credit scores you can get free that use factors similar to, but not the same as, those used by Fair, Isaac. Free scores are available from many online firms, such as E-Loan. In exchange for a free score, however, you may be swamped with e-mails offering you various loan or consumer credit products. Consumers can get their FICO score for \$12.95 from three main Web sites: www.myfico.com, www.equifax.com, and www.transunioncs.com. Although Experian uses Fair, Isaac's scoring formula, the credit score it sells to consumers for \$14.95 is based on its own model.

TransUnion also provides consumers with a credit score based on its own scoring system at no additional cost when you buy a basic

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