



Columbia Heights Civic Association Neighborhood Newsletter

Issue 7

www.on-the-pike.com/chca/

Fall 2011

President's Message: Holiday Party - Dec. 12

Please help us celebrate this past year by joining us at the second annual CHCA holiday party, scheduled Monday, Dec. 12, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Once again we will hold this at the CPRO office, located at 2611 Columbia Pike.

Last year this event was well attended, and included County Board Members as well as staff who had worked on infrastructure projects in our neighborhood and leaders from other civic associations along Columbia Pike.



County Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman enjoying gourmet catered fare by CHCA member Lindsay Haddox at the 2010 CHCA holiday party.

Sign up for CHCA Web Group

Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ColumbiaHeightsCA/join> and follow instructions to sign up.

CHCA Board:

Ed Miltenberger (President); Sarah McKinley (Vice President); Allen Muchnick (Secretary); Joshua Folb (Treasurer); Ron Haddox, Linh Ong and Jennifer Bagnell Stuart.

CHCA To Choose Next Infrastructure Project Barkley Condo - Monday, Nov. 14, 7:00 p.m.

Our next major meeting, scheduled on the East side of the neighborhood, will focus on our next major infrastructure project to be presented to the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC). The meeting will be held at the Barkley Condominium at 1016 S. Wayne Street, Street Terrace Level. We urge everyone to come!

To date our civic association has been awarded over \$1 million in projects to enhance the neighborhood. We have the ability to select one additional project and receive "bonus" points, based on our current neighborhood conservation plan, that boost our chances for receiving approval. The deadline for submitting this proposal to the NCAC (for inclusion in the Spring funding round) is November 15, so the decision we make at this meeting is important.

Even if this project is not selected next Spring, it's still important to get our "first priority project" identified because each funding round that it is not selected also adds points toward approval.

Funding for Branch Libraries Up for Discussion!

Another issue to be discussed at the Nov. 14 meeting is county funding for branch libraries, which has been slashed over the past year. This has resulted in dramatic reductions in hours for our own local library (next to the Career Center and near Patrick Henry Elementary School).

There is a groundswell in the community to encourage renewed funding for branch libraries, which would allow them to remain open longer, and for more days.

Last year CHCA and neighboring civic associations won a battle with the County to keep our neighborhood library. But shortly afterward the funding was cut for operating it. The Columbia Pike branch is now closed on Thursdays, only open 10:00 to 5:00 on Friday and Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, and 1:00 -9:00 p.m. on Sunday Tuesday, a schedule that is confusing at best.

Arlington County to Revamp Rules on Signs

For the first time in decades, Arlington County has proposed revamping its ordinance on signs, an issue that has become much more controversial than anyone expected. The original proposal was to have a completely revamped ordinance approved by the end of this year, but contentious public meetings have changed that schedule.

In December the County Board will consider amendments to just three portions of the sign rules--signs on commercial umbrellas, sandwich board signs outside of businesses, and the temporary signs that realtors use on weekends to advertise open houses.

The change in rules was prompted, in part, by the burden the County Board has experienced as a result of businesses going directly to the board for signage approval. Instead, the county staff is proposing a fixed set of rules that may be more liberal than the current ones, but can't be appealed in any way. They would be administratively approved by staff, and there would be no exceptions to the rules.

This inability to appeal to any authority is what bothers most civic groups who are considering the issue. One suggestion is for the County to create a Sign Advisory Committee that could make recommendations on any variances to the rules.

In December the County will consider whether the temporary commercial signs that realtors are allowed to use, from sundown Friday to sundown on Sunday, should be extended to any commercial venture. Neighborhood groups are worried that this will result in signage clutter near neighborhoods. The County says that it must make rules that are neutral as to content or face lawsuits (even though there has never been a lawsuit in Arlington over this issue).

Currently, political signs are allowed to be placed up to one month before an election, but are supposed to be removed within five days after the event.



Storms continue to take down trees. This tree recently fell into the courtyard of the Commons of Arlington.



Signs like this one, for the park, would be allowed, but currently it is illegal to post signs for lost dogs or children, or for civic associations to post the dates of meetings.


Another suggestion is to create a new category of time-limited signs for posters about neighborhood events, civic association meetings, lost dog posters, yard sales, in which the date that they are posted be written on the bottom right hand of the sign. In this scheme, anyone in the County could remove these temporary signs after a designated period (suggested times are 1-2 weeks). Currently, only certain staff from the County are allowed to remove signs. Others argue that we don't have the change the rules because these signs are everywhere and nobody is enforcing the rules.

Perhaps its a sign of the times!

--Sarah McKinley

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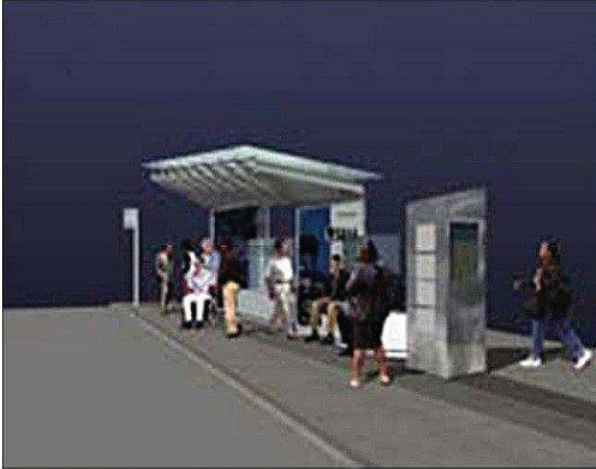
Make checks payable to Columbia Heights Civic Association,
PO Box 41556, Arlington, Virginia 22204

Membership in Columbia Heights Civic Association is annual, from
October to the following September.

Columbia Pike Transportation Projects Move Forward!

Several transportation projects affecting our segment of Columbia Pike are in various stages of development. These projects are listed below with a brief update and a URL link to more information.

Columbia Pike Multimodal Street Improvements [<http://tinyurl.com/6wmm6sc>]: Arlington County has been conducting an environmental and engineering study to extensively rebuild the Columbia Pike roadway and sidewalks in the short term (before future redevelopment) to precede and be compatible with the separate streetcar project. A final transportation study report and a final environmental document are being written this fall, and these documents will be followed by a public meeting this winter (December or January). The project team anticipates developing 50% engineering design plans by Spring 2012, a prerequisite before advertising for construction bids.



Columbia Pike Transit Initiative (Streetcar Project)

[<http://www.piketransit.com>]: The alternatives analysis, environmental documentation, and related engineering for a proposed 5-mile streetcar system, including alignment and yard options, is still underway. “Subject to the availability of funding, the current project timeline calls for: preliminary engineering and project development from 2012 to 2014; design and construction to begin in 2015; and system testing and service to begin in 2017.” Public hearings on the alternatives analysis and environmental assessment documents are anticipated in January or February 2012.

Columbia Pike Super Stops [<http://tinyurl.com/7vbo7xg>]:

The first of about twenty long-planned “Super Stops” for Columbia Pike bus riders is now under construction in Pike

Park in front of the Rite Aid. (See picture above.) Super Stops are larger, more accessible, and technologically advanced bus shelters for 10-15 passengers, with seating, lighting, wind screens and enhanced weather protection; real-time electronic and printed schedule information; maps for bus routes and surrounding areas; improved landscape, sidewalks, curb and gutter; and future ticket vending. Demolition has already been completed for the Walter Reed East Super Stop at Pike Park, and construction is targeted for completion by the end of February. A second Super Stop in our neighborhood, near South Barton Street in front of Penrose Square, is slated for construction beginning in Spring 2012.

Columbia Pike Bicycle Boulevards [<http://tinyurl.com/3rlzud5>]: This County project aims to improve 12th Street South and 9th Street South for bicycling and walking. “Currently, staff is refining the designs...taking into consideration community feedback received at the June 1st public meeting and the subsequent on-line feedback. By early Fall, staff will reach out to residents along these routes to share and discuss the refinements to the more challenging sections of the plan.”

Columbia Pike/Washington Blvd Interchange [<http://tinyurl.com/c2lu23q>]: VDOT’s \$60 million design-build project to reconstruct and expand this gateway to our neighborhood is finally underway. Weekday lane and shoulder closures on Rte 27 have already occurred from October 31 to mid-November, and the first of several citizen information meetings to precede the various stages of construction will be held in early 2012. The design should be completed by Spring 2012, and construction is scheduled to occur from Spring 2012 through Summer 2015.

Allen Muchnick



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