

MCA NEWS

McLean Citizens Association | Voice of McLean for Over 100 Years

MCA Adapts in Response to Health Emergency

In view of the current health emergency, the MCA has suspended physical (in person) meetings, until such meetings are once again safe.

MCA Committees meetings and Board of Directors meetings are currently being conducted by videoconferencing. To participate in MCA virtual committee meetings, check the MCA webpage for Zoom links or send an email to the Committee Chairs identified on page 3.

To view the MCA Board meetings, either in real-time or after the fact, please go to the MCA webpage and click the link for the MCA Facebook page where a link to view the Board meetings is available. Please note that you do not need a Facebook account to view the live streamed event.

Draft New Zoning Ordinance - MCA Resolves, and Commissioners Hear Testimony

The current Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance was approved in 1978, although a number of Amendments have been adopted since then.

Beginning in 2017, County Staff, authorized by the Board of Supervisors, embarked upon the Zoning Modernization (zMOD) Project. The purpose is to prepare a new Zoning Ordinance, which would modernize permitted uses and regulations, while also making the Zoning Ordinance more user-friendly with tables, graphics, and hyperlinks. While much of the substance of the existing Zoning Ordinance will be preserved, the new Zoning Ordinance does include some substantive changes. The draft new Zoning Ordinance, as proposed by County Staff, and dated November 24, 2020, was the subject of a public hearing before the Planning Commission held on January 28, 2021.



MCA resolution on zMOD

At its meeting of January 6, 2021, the MCA Board approved a resolution prepared by the Planning and Zoning Committee on the draft new Zoning Ordinance. The resolution may be viewed at this link: [Planning & Zoning Committee, zMOD Resolution](#).

How do you get up to date information regarding COVID-19?

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Chairman McKay and our Fairfax County Supervisors have sent frequent email notices with information about COVID-19.

Subscribe to the newsletters and the information conveniently arrives in your email inbox. Click on the links below to sign up:

Chairman, At Large:
[Jeffrey McKay Newsletter](#)

Dranesville District:
[Supervisor John Foust Newsletter](#)

Providence District:
[Supervisor Dalia Palchik](#)

Useful Links:

Fairfax County COVID-19 website:
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/

Sign up for text message alerts from Fairfax County Health Department alerts:
text FFXCOVID to 888777

Visit [MCA COVID-19 Webpage](#) for additional COVID-19 local resources

Fairfax County Health Department

Email:
ffxcovid@fairfaxcounty.gov
(monitored M-F, 8am-6pm)
Phone: 703-267-3511
(M-F, 9am-7pm, S/S 9:30am-5pm)

The resolution expressed support for the goals of zMOD, and for the inclusion of new uses, such as solar power facilities, electric vehicle charging stations, data centers, and last-mile distribution hubs. It supports revision to rear setbacks on residential corner lots, to prevent overbuilding these properties.

The resolution expressed opposition to some other substantive changes put forward by County Staff. It opposed removing the requirement that an Accessory Living Unit (ALU) is only to enable accommodation of elderly or disabled persons, because expanding housing units in neighborhoods without expanding public facilities for the additional residents will degrade the quality of life for all residents. Regarding home-based businesses in residential districts, the draft resolution (with the interests and concerns of neighbors in mind) opposed allowing large yard signs, recommended limits on the number of customers at one time and customers per day, and urged stronger limitations on Special Events hosted by home-based businesses. The resolution opposed the proposed treatment of "Freestanding Accessory Structures" as incompatible with residential neighborhoods. It urged additional standards for Food Trucks, in relation to neighborhood impact. It recommended strengthening of regulations on storage of vehicles outdoors.

The resolution opposed changing the permitting of ALUs and home-based businesses from existing procedure (public notice and hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals) to just an administrative permit approved by County Staff.

Consideration of zMOD by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors

The Planning Commission public hearing on January 28 was held by videoconference, with the Commissioners at different locations. Chairman Murphy announced that 46 persons had signed up on the Speakers' List. Testimony was provided either over the telephone, or by pre-recorded video. MCA's testimony, by President Rob Jackson, was provided by a video, which may be viewed [here](#).

The topics attracting the greatest attention from speakers

Committees are the Heart of the MCA

The MCA's Committees, identified below, study issues affecting residents of the McLean Area; develop resolutions and letters on issues of public significance; and organize public citizen information sessions where local elected officials, Fairfax County representatives and others address specific areas of interest.

Budget & Taxation

Chair: Dale Stein.

b-t_committee@mcleancitizens.org

Planning & Zoning

Chair: Scott Spitzer

p-z_committee@mcleancitizens.org

Transportation

Chair: David Wuehrmann,

david.wuehrmann@gmail.com

Education & Youth

Chair: Jim Beggs,

jimbeggs@icloud.com

Environment, Parks & Recreation

Chair: Barbara Ryan,

barbara.ryan@verizon.net

Tysons

Chair: Sally Horn,

s-horn@msn.com

Public Safety

Liaison: Patrick Smaldore,

patricksmaldore@rocketmail.com

Membership

Chair: Linda Walsh,

membership@mcleancitizens.org

were ALUs and home-based businesses. A majority of speakers addressing those topics expressed opposition to zMOD proposals to diminish existing restrictions. Such speakers expressed concern that zMOD proposals, if enacted, could lead to densification and/or commercialization of single-family residential neighborhoods, in such a way that their existing character would not be preserved.

Some speakers argued that zMOD had migrated away from its originally advertised objective by including important substantive changes, which more appropriately should have been proposed as freestanding Zoning Ordinance Amendments, each with its own Staff Report. Some speakers questioned whether the County should be pushing forward substantial, separable, non-urgent reforms as part of zMOD in the midst of a pandemic, when it is difficult for citizens to meet in person.

The public hearing lasted until 12:50 p.m. A recording of the meeting may be viewed at this link: http://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/1969?view_id=10&redirect=true

Four former Fairfax County planning commissioners have written to the County in opposition to enactment of zMOD as proposed.

At their meeting of February 10, the Planning Commissioners voted to extend their consideration of the draft new Zoning Ordinance until their meeting of February 24. The record remains open for additional public comment.

After the Planning Commissioners have completed their review and markup, the draft new Zoning Ordinance will be passed on to the Board of Supervisors for public hearing and enactment in due course.

Note: Please also see article about Workforce Dwelling Unit policy revision.



What To Do About Running Bamboo?

An invasive plant species is a plant that originates outside a region and causes damage to the environment, the economy, and human health after its introduction to a new region. Some bamboo species spread aggressively and are difficult to control, and consequently are deemed invasive. Such species are called “running bamboo”.

Running bamboo is spreading rapidly in several Fairfax County parks.

Running bamboo is not currently banned from sale in Virginia. However, Section 15.2-901 of the Virginia Code enables localities to adopt ordinances for control of running bamboo, and in recent years Stafford County and Fauquier County

have adopted such ordinances. Fairfax County does not have a bamboo control ordinance, but has been following an educational approach to inform landowners of the risks and harms associated with running bamboo.

Legislation currently being considered by the Virginia General Assembly (House Joint Resolution No. 527) would, if approved, mandate a study that will explore options to reduce, mitigate, and eliminate continued sale and use of invasive species, and promote the use of native plants.

At its February 3 meeting, the MCA Board approved a resolution on this subject, prepared by the Environment, Parks, and Recreation (EP&R) Committee.

The resolution recommends: (a) that the Board of Supervisors revisit bamboo strategy to develop more effective control measures; (b) that the Fairfax County Park Authority develop strategy for regular bamboo removal efforts; (c) that the County support the Invasive Plants Study legislation; and (d) that the County establish more effective strategies to control other invasive plants on public grounds.

The resolution may be viewed here: [Environment & Parks Committee, Control of Invasive Bamboo Resolution](#).

MCA Endorses Proposed Cellphone Tower at Wolf Trap Fire Station

At its meeting on February 3, the MCA Board considered a resolution on a proposed cellphone tower in the Wolf Trap area.

The Milestone Communications company proposes to construct a tower, 114 feet tall, on the 11-acre property of the Wolf Trap Fire and Rescue Station, which is located at the southeast corner of

Route 7 and Beulah Road. The tower will be located in the southeastern portion of the property, a considerable distance from property lines and the closest residence. The tower will accommodate telecommunication facilities for Verizon and other service providers. In order to proceed, Milestone will need to obtain a Special Exception and a Proffered Condition Amendment. Relatedly, as a “public utility facility”, this project will need to undergo a Section 2232 review under Virginia law, to confirm that its location, character, and extent are in substantial accord with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

The visual impact of the tower will be partially screened by trees and shrubs as well as by the Fire and Rescue Station. Milestone performed a balloon fly to provide visual impact photographs, and held a virtual town hall with the surrounding community. In response to community concerns, Milestone has agreed to provide additional buffering to mitigate visual impact, with the specifics to be agreed with County Staff.

The resolution points out that wireless services are a public necessity that benefits the community, and that the proposed tower would lead to improved service in its vicinity. It assesses that the proposal is consistent with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. The resolution was passed unanimously except for one abstention.

The resolution may be viewed here: [Planning & Zoning Committee, Milestone Communications Resolution](#).



MCA Issues Resolution on Sustainability of FCPS Pensions

At its meeting of January 6, 2021, the MCA Board passed a resolution, prepared jointly by the Budget and Taxation Committee and the Education and Youth Committee, regarding the sustainability of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) pension plans.

Most FCPS employees, in addition to participating in Social Security, participate in the Virginia Retirement System Teachers (VRS Teachers) pension plan and in the Education Employees' Supplementary Retirement System of Fairfax County (ERFC). VRS Teachers is run by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and ERFC is run by the Fairfax County Public Schools.

The pension benefits that FCPS owes to its employees under ERFC and VRS Teachers for payments in the future, but which they have not yet funded, are extremely large and continuing to grow. The unfunded liabilities that FCPS owed the plans grew from \$2.7 billion on June 30, 2010, to \$2.8 billion on June 30, 2015, and \$3.4 billion on June 30, 2020.

ERFC is the main focus of the resolution because of its control by FCPS. On June 30, 2020, ERFC owed pension benefits to employees of \$3.54 billion, had assets set aside to pay those benefits of \$2.59 billion, but had unfunded liabilities of \$0.95 billion. The shortfall in unfunded liabilities for ERFC alone is a long term problem that consistently grew, from \$0.56 billion on June 30, 2010, to \$0.61 billion on June 30, 2015, and to the \$0.95 on June 30, 2020. ERFC's unfunded liability is likely to be significantly understated because ERFC is assuming it will earn a 7.25% rate of return on its assets, which may not be realistic.

FCPS payments to ERFC have increased from 3.4% of payroll in Fiscal Year 2006 to 6.4% of payroll in Fiscal Year 2020 and are crowding out other critical expenditures. The employee contribution rate, on the other hand, was reduced from 4% to 3% starting in Fiscal Year 2013. Although the School Board introduced less generous Tier 2 benefits for employees hired from July 2017 onwards, most of whom will not be retiring for many years, this modest step has been insufficient to arrest the trend of ever-increasing unfunded liabilities.

Among the nine trustees of VRS Teachers, four are required to be investment experts. There is no requirement for any of ERFC's seven trustees to have a background in investments or pension plans, and six out of the seven ERFC trustees are FCPS employees

Accordingly, the resolution recommends that the School Board hire an independent pension actuarial firm to conduct a sensitivity and stress test for ERFC, and to recommend changes that would ensure that FCPS pension benefits are sustainable and consistent with best practices.

The resolution may be viewed here: [Budget & Taxation Committee, FCPS Pensions Resolution](#).

County Considers Policy Revisions for Workforce Dwelling Units

Background

Since 2007, Fairfax County has had a number of programs and policy guidelines to encourage and/or provide housing for residents whose household incomes are deemed to be too low to enable them to afford market rate rents or sales. Some of these programs currently target households that earn 60-120% the Average Median Income (AMI) in the area (roughly \$76,000-\$151,200 for a household of four). Some target households whose incomes are below 60% of AMI. The former households are eligible for Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) housing programs; the latter, for Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) programs.

County Staff Proposal

In 2019, the County established a Task Force to evaluate and recommend policy updates to the existing guidelines regarding new for-rent WDUs both in Tysons and elsewhere in the County.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed revisions in the form of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment on January 27; the public hearing before the Board of Supervisors will be on February 23.

The proposed County-wide policy revisions would effectively double the developer commitment to provide WDU rental units for households at the lower income tiers (60%, 70%, and 80% of the average median income, or AMI) when they build new apartment buildings; these are households that cannot afford market rate rentals today. The revisions also would eliminate the units for households at the 100-120% of AMI – essentially households that the review concluded typically can afford market rental rates. The proposed revisions provide for density bonuses to help offset the cost to a development project of providing rental WDUs at the lower income tiers; these density bonuses allow developers to build a specified percentage of additional market rate units in exchange for providing a specified percentage of units at below market rates. No County subsidies are involved.

The proposed policy changes would be reviewed five years after implementation to ensure that they are both continuing to increase the number of new WDU rental housing for those in the 60%, 70%, and 80% AMI brackets, and that developers and subsequent rental property owners are securing a sufficient return on investment to continue to make the larger contribution of lower-tier AMI rental units.

MCA Position

The MCA President has sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors endorsing the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment, with the objective of encouraging more WDU rental units at the lower income tiers. The letter also supports revisiting the program guidance in five years to ensure that the goals are being met effectively

MCA Supports “Independent Living” on Chain Bridge Road

A developer has requested a Special Exception to allow a proposed Independent Living (IL) facility, for seniors or adults with a disability, on Chain Bridge Road.

The 3.2-acre property is located on the north side of Chain Bridge Road, at the intersection of Chain Bridge Road and Davidson Road. Currently there are three old houses on the property, which have been unoccupied in recent years.

The developer, Tri-State Chain Bridge Road LLC, proposes to demolish the vacant houses and construct 35 individually-owned independent living units, having the appearance of attached townhouses. There will also be a clubhouse. Buffering on the west, north, and east sides of the property would be provided by a 7-foot brick or architectural wall in some areas, and by preservation of existing trees and other vegetation in other areas. The proposal includes frontage improvements on Chain Bridge Road, and stormwater management facilities to meet County requirements.

After the development has been constructed, responsibility for ensuring that necessary common

services are provided will be turned over to a Condominium Owners Association (COA), to be created.

The MCA Board considered a resolution on this proposal at its meeting of February 3. The resolution expresses support for the Special Exception, provided that the restriction for age or disability be maintained, that the Applicant pay for a traffic light if recommended by FCDOT or VDOT, and that the COA be required to employ an experienced management company to provide necessary common services. The resolution was approved by the Board, and can be viewed at this link: [Planning & Zoning Committee, Tri-State Development Resolution](#).

Upcoming MCA Meetings & Events

- March 1, 7:30 p.m. Review of Proposed FY22 County Budget, Guest Speakers Supervisor Foust and Joe Mondoro, Fairfax County CFO .Registration required ([MCA Events Calender](#)).
- March 2, 7:30 p.m. Monthly Board of Directors Meeting - Livestreamed on our [Facebook page](#) -
- March 10, 7:00 p.m. EP&R Guest Speaker Tami Sheiffer, FCPA. Registration required ([MCA Events Calender](#)).
- March 15, 7:30 p.m. Review of Proposed FY22 School Budget, Guest Speaker Elaine Tholen, Dranesville District School Board Member. Registration required ([MCA Events Calender](#)).
- April 21, 7:00 p.m. - MCA Public Safety Panel: Use of Force; Police Oversight; Police Accountability; and Police Reform. Registration required ([MCA Events Calender](#)).

Nomnations for MCA Board Vacancies

The McLean Citizens Association (MCA) is seeking candidates for a limited number of soon-to-be-open Officer and Director positions on the 2021/2022 MCA Board of Directors. Directors serve either as a Homeowners Association Representative, or At-Large. This is an opportunity for members of MCA to become more involved with this effective and influential citizens association that advocates for the interests of residents of the Greater McLean area. The Board of Directors meets via Zoom web conference on the first Wednesday of each month.

If you are interested in serving our community as a member of the MCA Board, please complete the [Nomination Application](#) and email it to Nominations@mcleancitizens.org no later than March 20, 2021. Postal applications should be mailed to the Nominations Committee, PO Box 273 McLean, VA 22101, on or before March 20, 2021.

JOIN MCA

The McLean Citizens Association (MCA) is a volunteer, non-governmental organization that has served as an unofficial town council for McLean area residents since 1914. If you would like to join or renew your membership select "Member Signup" on our web page www.mcleancitizens.org.