



TIMMONS

# STRATFORD LANDING CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION Newsletter

STRATFORD LANDING • MT. VERNON DISTRICT • FAIRFAX COUNTY

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June 2005

## AND FAIRFAX COUNTY SAID: "LET THERE BE STREETLIGHTS!"

Back before the turn of the century, in September 1999, many of the residents living on streets in our neighborhood which didn't already have streetlights signed petitions asking that they be installed. These were forwarded to the County, which at the time was in one of its budget crises, and vanished into somebody's filing cabinet somewhere in the bowels of the bureaucracy. Most of us forgot about them. Recently, Mary Lou Hoffman asked me what had happened to those petitions, so, I asked our Supervisor's staff to look into the matter. After a few weeks, I received an e-mail from a County Engineer, saying that the lights had been approved, and funded, and that they would be installed over the summer! Those soaring property tax bills seem to have at least a few benefits! For those of us who have forgotten, or never knew, about them, let me outline what we are looking at. Pennsylvania Boulevard and Monticello Avenue are in Phase One of the project. Four "Cobrahead" lights will be installed on Pennsylvania Boulevard and three on Monticello Avenue. These are identical to those now installed on Creek Drive, and similar to those installed where we have overhead utilities. Also in Phase One will be the installation of four "Colonial" style light poles on Childs Lane between Stirrup Lane and Blakiston Lane. The "Colonial" style fixtures, which will also be used for the rest of the project, are fiberglass poles about 14 feet high with a lantern-style light fixture at the top. They will be erected in the public right-of-way between the sidewalk and the curb. (They can't be used on Pennsylvania Boulevard and Monticello Avenue because those streets don't have sidewalks and curbs.) Phase Two, which I understand will be implemented immediately after Phase One, includes five "Colonial" fixtures on Stirrup Lane between Childs Lane and the cul-de-sac, three "Colonial" fixtures on Camden Street between Stirrup Lane and the cul-de-sac, and three "Colonial" fixtures on Cotswold Court. Since some of you who live on those streets now weren't here when the petitions were first submitted, your block captain or another Citizens Association representative will be contacting you in the near future to show you diagrams of these light fixtures and maps showing their proposed locations. We do not have a choice of the type of fixture to be installed. However, we do have the right to opt out of the program if a majority of the property owners on each of the segments listed above don't want street lights any more, or just hate the style they want to give us. If a majority still wants the lights, they will be installed. On the other hand, I realize that even after the completion of this project there will be some of us (I count about 125 homes) still living



in the dark. If your street is one of those still unlit, we will be glad to provide you with the forms you need to file to get into a future streetlight project -- and we hope that it won't take six years to get it implemented!

#### NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

We were supposed to have the training we need to get the Neighborhood Watch up and running on May 24; however, only about eight of us bothered to show up. It was a very rainy day, and apparently some of us think we might share the fate of the Wicked Witch of the West, and melt if we get wet! Undaunted, we will be trying again on Tuesday, June 28, at 7:30 pm at the Mt Vernon Government Center on Parkers Lane. If you are a block captain, or want to participate in our Neighborhood Watch, you need to be there!

#### BEWARE THE TEN-SPEED BANDIT

The Fairfax County Police would like your help in apprehending a person who has been stealing items from parked cars in several neighborhoods in our area, including ours. The person of interest is described as a black male wearing dark clothing and a backpack or fanny pack, and riding a ten-speed bike. He has been seen plying his trade in the early morning hours. His MO is to take what he can see out of unlocked parked cars, even if they are in driveways. He recently struck two neighbors, stealing loose change out of their consoles (he took only the quarters in one case, and left the pennies and nickels, but took a handful from the other neighbor), and he also helped himself to some milk from one of the cars, leaving some other grocery items. If you see this person, call the Police (703-691-2131) immediately! To protect yourself, LOCK YOUR CAR!

#### DUCK BLIND PREVENTION

If you read these pages, you may remember that last fall a hunter erected a duck blind in Little Hunting Creek. Had he, and others like him, exercised their rights under State law, errant shots could have potentially menaced EVERY HOME IN STRATFORD LANDING SOUTH OF WITTINGTON BOULEVARD OR WEST OF HIGHGATE ROAD AND WENDELL DRIVE! This is a substantial majority of the households in Stratford Landing. All of those homes are within 400 yards of the Creek at some point; the larger shot sizes usually used for hunting waterfowl can carry more than 300 yards from the point from which they are fired. Needless to say, this was a totally unacceptable situation. By mid-October, Supervisor Hyland was able to find the hunter another location for his blind, he agreed to move to that location, and we were able to breathe a sigh of relief. However, it was not clear what would need to be done to assure ourselves, and the residents of the other communities which adjoin the Creek, that this situation would not occur again. When we had our Annual Meeting late last October, nobody knew who had the authority to ban hunting in the Creek, or what



would have to be done, and who would have to do it, to enact and implement that ban, if we could get one. Acting on behalf of our Citizens Association, Jay Spiegel, an elected member of our Executive Committee, researched the State Laws and found that Fairfax County had the authority to ban hunting with firearms in the Creek (they had already done so on both banks), but that one or more signs would have to be erected to advise hunters of that fact before the ban could be enforced. He also determined that the County would not erect such signs themselves, but would have no objection if private citizens would take it upon themselves to do so. Since Mr. Spiegel was already maintaining a system of navigational aids under a permit from the Coast Guard, and some buoys to implement the "No Wake" restrictions in the Creek, he determined to replace some of the buoys with a fixed piling upon which the required signs could be posted. This meant obtaining permission from the Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, as well as finding contractors to drive the piling and prepare and install the signs. By late this winter, all of the required permits had been obtained, and the piling and signs had been installed. Mr. Spiegel then approached this Association (769 households) and the Associations representing the other neighborhoods which front the Creek (Riverside Estates (504 households), Wessynton (156), and Stratford on the Potomac (240)), and sought to be reimbursed for his out-of-pocket expenses in erecting the piling and signs, as well as some costs for maintaining the buoy system, the total amounting to over \$3,000 to be shared among the four Associations. This issue was debated by the Executive Committee at its May meeting, and a motion to reimburse Mr. Spiegel \$700 for his costs of erecting the piling, preparing and installing the "no hunting" sign was defeated, but with a motion to reconsider offered by one of the majority, it will be considered again at our next meeting. Among the objections raised by the majority were: 1) The Executive Committee does not have the authority to appropriate this much money without approval of the membership. Answer: True. There is a budget item of \$100 for waterway maintenance. The Executive Committee has the authority to increase budget items up to \$200 without going back to the membership at a Special Meeting, the Annual Meeting, or by Referendum (By-Laws Section 7.2). The motion would have appropriated \$300 now, and made the balance a budget item to be voted on at next fall's Annual Meeting. 2) The community as a whole doesn't benefit from this expenditure; only those who live on the Creek, or use its waters for boating would benefit. Answer: Only about 45 properties in our Community are actually on the waterfront, and only the owners of those properties, and a few of us who keep boats elsewhere and enter the Creek on occasion benefit from the navigation aids. BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT THIS APPROPRIATION WOULD SUPPORT. Mr. Spiegel has maintained the buoy system at his own expense for a number of years without installing any pilings or signs. The piling is only necessary to support the "No Hunting" sign; however, since it was installed for that purpose, it is also being used to support "No Wake Zone" signs, and a navigation beacon. The



residents of some of our neighboring communities enjoy full access to the creek, and therefore, directly benefit from the navigation aids. 3) These expenses should have been put in the budget last fall. Answer: The discussion above shows emphatically that the installation of the piling and "No hunting" sign addresses a problem that should be a significant concern for most of us who live in Stratford Landing. At the time of last year's Annual Meeting, we didn't have any idea whether there was a permanent solution for this problem, let alone what it would be and how much it might cost. Had we waited until this fall to appropriate funds for this solution, this year's hunting season would have come and gone before any action could have been taken to enforce the County's "No hunting with firearms" restrictions. Make no mistake about it: I strongly support the passage of this motion, and believe that it is the least that this community should do for Mr. Spiegel to partially repay his direct expenses for the major efforts which he has made on our behalf. Although this is not a referendum question at this time, I would welcome your feedback, pro or con, on this issue.

#### HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTING

So you have decided you want to build an addition, or renovate, or do some major repairs on your house. Congratulations! We are glad you are going to be staying in the neighborhood, and improving the housing stock. We are sure that you are going to obtain the necessary permits from the County, and conform with all pertinent building code, zoning, and covenant requirements, and that you have adequate financial arrangements in place. Now, how do you decide who is going to do the job? Here are some questions to ask your prospective contractors before you sign on the dotted line, to be sure your contractor is going to be doing the job FOR you instead of doing a job ON you:

1. Ask to see the contractor's license. Note whether it is a Class A State License, or a Class B County License (if so, be sure it is effective in Fairfax County) and write down the number.
2. Ask to see the contractor's business licenses, both State and County, write down their numbers, and be sure they are current.
3. Ask to see the contractor's liability insurance policy; note what company issued it, what amounts it covers, the policy number, and whether it is paid up and in effect.
4. Ask to see the contractor's workman's compensation policy; note the name of the issuing company, policy number, and effective dates.
5. Ask if the contractor will supply you with a Waiver of Lien? (If they will not, in the event of a dispute between you, the contractor could encumber your property rights by filing a mechanic's lien against your property.)
6. Ask your contractors for lists of similar jobs, with addresses, that they have previously performed.



7. Ask your contractors for letters of reference from previous satisfied customers.
8. Ask what types of manufacturer's warranties the contractor provides, and their terms. (Some items, such as siding, windows and doors, air conditioners and furnaces are warranted by their makers.)
9. Did the contractor provide you with a list of his suppliers so you can check their credit rating?
10. Is the contractor a member of the Better Business Bureau; have they received any adverse reports about the contractor?
11. Has the contractor received any special awards for their work?
12. Does the contractor belong to any professional organizations? (Annie McNeff)

### FORT HUNT CONCERT SERIES 2005

For many years, your Citizens Association has been supporting the Fort Hunt Concert Series, which is presented on Sunday evenings from 7 to 8 pm during the summer at Fort Hunt Park, Area A. Admission and parking are free (donations are welcome). Here is this year's schedule:

June 12	Random Act (Folk, Bluegrass, A Capella)
June 19	Jerry Bresee (Original Singer/Songwriter)
June 26	The Winstons (Acoustic Folk)
July 10	Blue Book Value (Swing/Blues)
July 17	Doris Justis and Pete Marionkich (Folk/Jazz)
July 24	The Cruiser/U.S. Navy Band (Rock/R&B)
July 31	Mount Vernon Swing Band (Big Band Swing)

Concerts go on rain or shine, on the lawn if it is good weather, and in the pavilion if it isn't. Bring your picnic and lawn chairs, and enjoy!

### HELP WANTED

WE NEED A NEW REPRESENTATIVE to the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Association EDUCATION COMMITTEE to relieve Leah Dymek, who has provided us with very effective and dedicated representation for about the last ten years. Leah's busy schedule is impacting on her ability to maintain her participation, and she has asked to be relieved of her duties. The Education Committee seat is an outstanding opportunity to learn about, and affect, county policies affecting our local schools. The time commitment is basically two evening meetings per month: the Education Committee meets at Walt Whitman Middle School at 8 pm on the first Wednesday each month; our representative is also a member of the Executive Committee of the SLCA, which meets at 8 pm on the first double-digit Tuesday each month. Both committees are in recess during August. If you would like to be considered for this position, please call Rick Edgerton at 703-360-2813. Our ideal candidate would have one or



more children enrolled in the Fairfax County Public Schools. We would also like to hear from you if you would be interested in any of the other jobs on our Executive Committee which are listed below.

This newsletter is published bi-monthly (normally February, April, June, September, October, and December) by the Stratford Landing Citizens Association, Inc. for the benefit and information of its member residents. Other contributions to this publication are welcome, subject to editing. All members may submit items for inclusion in the "Other News" and "Personal Items" sections by submitting them to the President or Secretary in writing by the 20th of the month preceding publication. The next issue will be circulated about September 3rd. Unless otherwise attributed, the President is responsible for the content of this Newsletter. The following are the members of the Executive Committee, which meets the first 2-digit Tuesday of each month but August in open session.

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\* Indicates elected officers; all other positions are appointed.