

# The Current

The Newsletter of the Donaldson Run Civic Association

[www.drca.org](http://www.drca.org)

FALL 2001

## OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday, October 24th  
7:00 PM

Multi-purpose Room  
Taylor Elementary School  
2600 N. Stuart Street

Agenda: Candidates' Night

## Minutes of September Meeting

Discussion of proposed Neighborhood Conservation (NC) and parks projects and the recent contamination of streams running through Donaldson Run dominated the September 25 meeting of the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA). DRCA President Peter Fallon presided.

Fallon began the meeting by recognizing Arlington County's police, fire, and emergency workers for their heroic efforts following the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon. A resolution commending the workers passed unanimously.

Fallon then turned the meeting over to DRCA Parks Committee Chairman Larry Finch, who outlined a proposed integrated parks plan to be submitted for funding under the Neighborhood Conservation (NC) program (see page 6). The overall objectives of this plan are to integrate the network of local parks, maintain open space and natural beauty, enhance safety, and improve the appearance and accessibility of the parks. After

lengthy debate, including discussion of several grassroots streets/curbs/gutters projects that are currently in the works, members voted by ballot to:

- 1) accept the integrated parks concept plan as DRCA's number one funding priority, and
- 2) advance implementation of this plan for the December, 2001, NC funding cycle.

There was considerable discussion about the poor road condition of a portion of N. Vermont Street. Residents expressed frustration in their efforts to work with Arlington's Department of Public Works (DPW) to get the street repaved. It was noted that DPW had previously displayed public notices of immediate plans to repave the street, but action was never taken. Neighbors also mentioned other streets in need of repair, including a broken storm sewer pipe at Lee Heights Park (N. Taylor and N. 24th Street). In response to these concerns, Fallon will seek a meeting with members of the Arlington County Board and bring these matters to their attention in hope of finding resolution.

With respect to grassroots neighborhood projects, Fallon noted that DRCA's focus has been on projects that benefit the civic association as a whole (such as parks improvements), and he urged DRCA residents who are backing grassroots undertakings to attend future civic association meetings to outline and show support for their projects.

*The Current* is published four times each year and is distributed free of charge to all households

in the DRCA area. DRCA, like all civic associations in Arlington, is a neighborhood organization, administered by elected volunteers. The DRCA promotes information sharing and discussion on neighborhood, local and regional issues. **DRCA is not affiliated with any political or religious group or with the Donaldson Run Recreation Assoc. that operates the swimming pool on Marcey Road.** Meetings are held at 7:30 pm at Taylor Elementary School (2600 N. Stuart Street), usually in the third week of the month (see newsletter prior to meeting), from Sept. through May. Only dues paying DRCA residents are eligible to vote. DRCA boundaries are: Military Rd. on the east (including Marcey Rd., N. 26<sup>th</sup> St., N. 25<sup>th</sup> Pl., and N. Ridgeview Rd.); 26th/31st St. on the north; Lorcom Lane on the south (including N. Randolph and 27<sup>th</sup> Sts., south of Lorcom Lane); and Vernon St. on the West.

**DRCA Board**

President	Peter Fallon	522-5368
1st VP	Carol Fontein	243-7711
2nd VP	Anne Wilson	525-0344
Secretary	Maxine Nagel	524-5093
Treasurer	Ned Rhodes	741-0861
Director	Theresa Fallon	522-5368
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Director	Sherwin Landfield	525-0005
Director	Stephen Grand	807-5166
Newsletter	Elizabeth Apple	243-3837

A portion of the November 14, 200,1 DRCA meeting will be devoted to a discussion of how best to respond to grassroots projects. (see NC article, page 3).

On a second park-related issue, the membership passed a resolution endorsing the submission of DRCA’s 2001 small parks grant application. The grant application requested the installation of community bulletin boards at the eastern entrance (Military Road) to the Taylor Nature Walk and at the Marcey Road Park.

Fallon then turned to a discussion of the August 24-25 chemical run-off incident affecting the aquatic life in the Gulf Branch and Donaldson Run streams (see article, page 4). Following the discussion, the members passed a resolution instructing Fallon to draft a statement expressing DRCA’s strong concern over the pollution incident. This resolution will be

approved by the DRCA executive committee and communicated to WGCC and the Arlington County Board.

Before the close of the meeting, Fallon noted that the October DRCA meeting would begin at 7:00 (30 minutes earlier than normal) on Wednesday, October 24, and would feature DRCA’s annual Candidates’ Night. All candidates for School Board, County Board, and Virginia House of Delegates (48th district) have been invited. Neighboring civic associations have also been invited to join DRCA. After brief opening statements by each candidate, audience members will be invited to pose questions of the candidates (limited to one minute in length).

**DRCA Leadership Meets with Marymount President**

Anne Wilson and her husband, Steve, hosted a small get together for the DRCA Executive Committee to welcome Dr James Bundschuh, the new president of Marymount University, and his wife, Lois, to the Donaldson Run neighborhood. Background about the civic association and the NC Plan was shared with our new neighbors. Anne has volunteered to be the neighborhood representative specializing in matters concerning Marymount. By the way, did you know that if you have a valid Arlington County library card, you may borrow books from the Marymount Library?

**Answers to DRCA History & Geography Quiz:**

1. Donaldson Run is 1.5 miles long.
2. Glebe Road gets its name from a Latin word (lump of dirt) and an Old French word (land next to a church).
3. The first schoolhouse, built in 1871, had one teacher and 70 students.
4. The first house to use electricity in our area was owned by Frank Lyon.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The fiscal health of the Civic Association is good, thanks to the 221 dues-paying households in our neighborhood representing 369 individuals. Residents in approximately 729

homes are not members of the Association. The Association could use your support, and I hope that you will consider joining us for the coming year. In fact, if you join now, we will give you the rest of the year for free, meaning your membership will be paid up through 2002.

Just look at what the Association has done over the last year. We have held general meetings where we had presentations and discussions with the Department of Public Works on the state of our roads, with the Parks Department on the state of our parks and green spaces, and with the Department of Environmental Services concerning the herbicide incident in our stream; hosted a candidates' night; sponsored a summer social; unveiled 4 neighborhood signs at our boundaries; participated in Neighborhood Day; provided six newsletters and an informative web site (<http://www.drca.org>). Please support the Civic Association. You can visit the web site for a membership application or use the one included in this newsletter. Thanks.

Ned W. Rhodes

## **Neighborhood Conservation Report**

At our last DRCA meeting, members approved a park improvement plan as our neighborhood priority for the upcoming Neighborhood Conservation (NC) funding cycle. This project has been under development between DRCA's parks committee and the county staff for several months. We have discussed components of this plan at several DRCA meetings and updates have been included in our newsletters.

We are now entering a new phase in the implementation of our Neighborhood Plan. We will need to balance projects, which are intended to benefit a larger section of the neighborhood, and those "grassroots" projects that primarily benefit one or two streets within the community. These latter projects would include curb, gutter, sidewalk, and streetlight projects for individual streets within DRCA.

Projects intended to benefit the broader neighborhood (i.e., neighborhood signs, community bulletin boards, park improvements, tot lots, and larger-scale traffic calming measures) typically would be developed within the framework of the civic association's existing committees. Participation in these committees is

open to all DRCA members and your help is needed. To keep the neighborhood informed, reports of committee activities are given at DRCA meetings and included in our newsletter.

For grassroots projects, the affected residents would first contact Arlington's Department of Public Works (DPW) and go through the county's standard petition process. Responsibility for initiating these projects will reside with the petitioners.

Regardless of which path a project takes, the NC program requires that each neighborhood identify a "number-one priority" to be advanced for funding consideration by the countywide Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC). The NCAC is comprised of delegates from all participating neighborhoods in Arlington County. There are two funding cycles per year and various filing deadlines apply. DRCA's delegate, Ned Rhodes, advocates on behalf of DRCA's number-one priority project. All neighborhoods participate based on the scope and merits of their respective projects. Funding is limited and overall neighborhood requests far exceed the available funds. No neighborhood is guaranteed project funding, nor is any neighborhood entitled to receive a specific funding level. The Arlington County Board, based upon the specific recommendations of the NCAC, makes final approval of projects.

On November 14, 2001, we will discuss a process to ensure that grassroots projects are brought to the civic association's attention early in the petition process. This will allow DRCA's leadership to advise residents and lend support for possible alternatives to the NC program. Alternative county programs could include neighborhood traffic calming funds, missing (sidewalk) links, safe routes to school, and general capital improvement programs (CIP). We seek to ensure full cooperation among DRCA, the individual residents, and county staff. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that a project is given fair consideration for further advancement by the civic association. Potential projects would be summarized in our newsletter to enable an informed community discussion and subsequent vote of priorities.

I hope you will join us on November 14, 2001. The civic association seeks to work with our

members to resolve community issues, and your cooperation is necessary. Everyone's input is welcomed, respected, and needed. Following our discussion, the process will be finalized and details will be included in the January 2002 newsletter. We will use this process to evaluate potential projects for the NCAC's spring funding cycle.

A list of potential projects is included in our Neighborhood Conservation Plan. Once the plan is published by Arlington County, DRCA will distribute a copy to all dues-paying house-holds in our community. Until then, you can review a copy of the plan by visiting our web site ([www.drca.org](http://www.drca.org)).

Peter Fallon,  
President

## **Pollution Incident in Donaldson Run**

*The following report contains information initially reported on 8/30/01 to members participating in the DRCA email list. This information has been updated to reflect subsequent events.*

On Saturday, August 25, 2001, a group of neighborhood volunteers was participating in a regularly scheduled stream monitoring session of Donaldson Run. The volunteers found dozens of fish, crawfish, eels, and other aquatic animals dead in the creek. The Arlington County Fire Department's hazmat team responded immediately, investigated the site, and issued a "reverse 911" message to telephone prefixes in the Donaldson Run and Bellevue Forest communities. This message and signs at the park entrances warned people (and their pets) to stay out of the creek until the following evening. This incident was subsequently reported in [The Washington Post](#), [Arlington Journal](#), the [Arlington Sun-Gazette](#), and by local television news programs.

County officials believe that the incident was caused by the runoff of herbicides sprayed on the grounds of the Washington Golf and Country Club (WGCC) on August 23, and then washed into Donaldson Run by a subsequent heavy rainstorm. The golf course fairways drain directly into the Donaldson Run and Gulf

Branch streams, which run throughout the WGCC property.

The herbicide was intended to kill all plant and animal life in the top two inches of the soil in preparation for a new variety of grass for the renovation of the fairways. BASF (the company that applied the herbicide) applied about 8,000 pounds of the granular herbicide (Basamid) to 12 of the fairways on the golf course. Once applied to the soil and treated with water, Basamid transforms into a gas inside the soil. The herbicide has a half-life of several hours.

County, state, and federal officials met with representatives of the WGCC and BASF. Responsibility for the investigation came under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Preliminary information suggests that the WGCC will not be found at fault. The final report has not been issued, but DRCA will include a summary of the findings in a future edition of *The Current*.

District of Columbia officials tested water samples at the point where the creek runs into the Potomac River and found no trace of contaminants. They concluded that the substance had been diluted by the time it reached that congruence.

In September, Fallon visited the WGCC to meet with the general manager and head grounds-keeper to discuss DRCA's concerns. WGCC described this incident as a one-time use of this herbicide. For the remaining six fairways (which drain into Gulf Branch), the WGCC applied "Roundup" instead of Basamid. WGCC indicated that the Basamid was applied only to the fairways and not near the perimeter of the golf course. Since the "rough areas" between the fairways and the property fence appear unaffected, it can be reasonably assumed that the herbicide did not spread into the backyards of neighboring homes.

After visiting the Arlington's zoning office to review the WGCC's use permit, it appears that because WGCC began operations at the N. Glebe site around 1927, this site is not subject to a county-issued use permit. A use permit does exist for the tennis and racquet facility (added in 1957) located along Old Dominion Drive.

In our attempt to respond to community concerns, we devoted a portion of our September DRCA meeting to the pollution incident. The sentiment of residents attending our meeting was one of strong concern for the safety of the local residents, disappointment over damage to the stream's ecosystem, and hopes that the aquatic life will recover from the damage. A statement expressing DRCA's concern about the incident will be communicated to both Arlington County and WGCC.

During the meeting, DRCA received an update from Arlington County's DES staff. It was noted that in the absence of a use permit, the County cannot directly influence WGCC operations. However, DES is seeking to begin a dialogue with WGCC about golf course management strategies to protect water quality within and downstream of the golf course.

Representatives of the WGCC were invited to attend our meeting, but declined subject to the issuance of the final report from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Traditionally, our community and the WGCC have had a "good neighbor" relationship, and we value that friendship. WGCC has offered to attend a future DRCA meeting and we look forward to continuing a dialogue with them.

A special thank you to DRCA members Helen Lane, Larry Finch, Laura Peralta-Schulte, and Bellevue Forest resident Dan Radke for all of their efforts in alerting the community to this incident and following-up with county staff.

Peter Fallon,  
DRCA President

### **From the President**

In the past few years, we have taken many steps to reinvigorate the Donaldson Run Civic Association. Regularly, I receive phone calls, emails, letters, and comments from people on the street complimenting DRCA for its hard work and success. Of course, I occasionally get some criticism too.

DRCA is not the "official problem solver" for the neighborhood. The executive committee has always talked in terms of DRCA's service to "the overall neighborhood" rather than just "the

members." However, we do try to help people with neighborhood issues.

Almost a quarter of the households in our neighborhood contain dues-paying members, which shows their support for DRCA. Nonetheless, we would like to see more of you join our organization. Becoming a member is an important, yet easy way for each member of the community to make a contribution to our organization's success. Another way you can contribute is to complete the survey included in this newsletter. Give us your opinions and suggestions! We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our meetings.

Peter Fallon  
President

### **Antenna Report**

For the last three years, DRCA has received a copy of the measurements of the radio frequency fields near the Lee Pumping Station made on behalf of Sprint PCS as a condition of their use permit. The emissions are measured just outside the pumping station fence, at 24th, 25th, Wakefield, Vernon and Woodrow Streets as well as Wakefield Court. The emissions measured in 2001 were lower than those in 2000, and well within the FCC's 1997 standard for the general population. The measurements show that the antennas and transmitters are outputting less than 10% of the allowable energy set by the FCC standard, running from a peak low of 1.8% to a peak high of 7.6% of the allowable standard. DRCA will continue to monitor the tests.

Ned Rhodes

### **Integrated Parks Concept Plan**

Following is a summary of the integrated parks concept plan, including Lee Heights Park, Zachary Taylor Nature Walk, Marcey Road Park, N. 26th Street meadow, and the bike path running from Taylor Park to 26th Street. Some of these projects deal with existing problems (including maintenance), while others are intended to improve accessibility, park appearance, and safety. This concept plan was developed by the DRCA parks committee in consultation with Arlington County staff (neighborhood conservation, parks and recreation, and DES).

Install entrance gateways, neighborhood bulletin boards, and maps at park entrances.

Entrance gateways will be built, with appropriate landscaping nearby, to mark park entrances. Consistent with the natural setting, the gates probably will be made of wood or stone. County staff will assist in designing the entrances. Use of similar designs at the 26th Street, Military Road, and Utah Street entrances will strengthen the impression of an integrated neighborhood park network. In addition, a map at each gate will show where the trails lead and distances to key points. Signs in Lee Heights and Taylor Parks will link the two parks together. Use of split rail fencing should be expanded to limit intrusions by parked vehicles and to identify public parkland.

Replace bridges.

The bridges in Taylor Park will be replaced with safer and more attractive bridges designed to fit the natural setting. County staff or a consultant will design Bridges. Bridge designs will be compatible with the new gates at park entrances and similar materials will be used. The bridges along the bike path will be large enough to accommodate small County vehicles including light trucks, while those along the nature trail will be for pedestrian use only. A pedestrian bridge will also be built in Lee Heights Park to permit crossing the stream in the park.

Erosion Control and stream bank restoration.

The substantial number of streets, driveways, sidewalks, houses and other impervious surfaces -- together with the hills in the neighborhood -- result in surges of storm water into streams, accelerating stream bank erosion in the parks. Streams through Taylor Park and along the bike path have been identified in the Watershed Management Plan as requiring erosion control measures and stream bank restoration. There are a number of techniques for restoring and stabilizing stream banks, and the one chosen for each site should meet engineering criteria while minimizing adverse effects on the natural environment. A consultant will be engaged to study water flow and erosion in the streams and to recommend the best approaches for stream bank restoration. This study will be undertaken in close consultation with the Department of Environmental Services to ensure that recommended measures are consistent with

overall plans for implementing the Watershed Management Plan.

Rebuild stone and concrete basin.

The aging stone and concrete basin at the Utah St. entrance to Taylor Park catches water from two storm sewers. At present, the basin does nothing to slow the flow of storm water runoff. It will be redesigned to function as a stilling basin, with energy dissipaters to slow runoff and reduce erosion downstream. The present basin is particularly unattractive. When rebuilt, it will be more attractive and also more accessible for cleaning out the debris that collects there. In addition, landscaping around the basin will be designed to control erosion on the hillsides above the basin. This project will be coordinated with the Department of Environmental Services to ensure that the basin design is consistent with other erosion control measures to be undertaken in Taylor Park.

Replant trees in areas where mature trees have been lost.

There are several areas in the parks where mature trees have been lost in recent years due to storms and other causes. In the absence of invasive plants, the resulting open space would present an opportunity for young trees. In fact, it is the invasive plants that benefit most from the open space. This can be seen in an area near the Utah Street entrance to Taylor Park, where a large tree fell and knocked down several others a few years ago. The resulting open area was quickly overrun by invasive vines, virtually

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR DONALDSON RUN CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

Please check your mailing label to see how many residents in your home are members and the latest year for which dues have been paid. Dues cover a calendar year. Contributions are not tax deductible.

Dues: \$5 per person per calendar year. Payment for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 years (circle)

Total dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

New resident: yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

Thank you.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

(Please show name of each paying member)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests/Volunteer Areas/Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to Donaldson Run Civic Association.

Send to: Ned Rhodes, Treasurer, 2749 N. Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA. 22207

eliminating young trees and other native plants over a significant area. More recently, strong winds toppled several mature trees along the bike path above Vernon St., and invasive plants can be expected to take over those areas as well. In each case, removing invasive plants and planting young trees will help to restore the forest to a healthy state.

There is also an abandoned construction road down a steep hill from Taylor School where trees were removed years ago to provide access to the park. Previous use of the road by heavy equipment compacted the soil, which apparently has prevented trees from growing there. In addition, storm water runoff along the road is causing significant erosion. To control the erosion, the road should be raised to its original level, steps should be taken to hold fill dirt in place on the hill, and trees should be planted.

Install benches along the bike path.

Three or four benches will be installed along the bike path between Military Road and 26th St. These will provide places for hikers and bicyclists to sit and enjoy the woods. The walk

from Military Road to 26th St. is mostly uphill, and those who are not particularly athletic may appreciate an opportunity to rest. Sites for the benches will be chosen to minimize effects on trees and other native plants.

Label trees and native plants

Small signs will be placed along the trails in the parks to identify trees, native plants, and interesting geologic features of the parks. The signs will be developed with the advice of County naturalists, and in consultation with Taylor School, which plans to use the parks for expanded nature studies programs.

Larry Finch  
Parks Committee

**Future Meetings**

Please add these meeting dates to your calendars:  
Wednesday, November 14, 2001, 7:30 pm  
Tuesday, January 29, 2002, 7:30 pm  
March 2002- TBA- Elections

Donaldson Run Civic Association  
C/o Ned Rhodes, Treasurer  
2749 N. Wakefield St., Arlington, VA 22207

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**DRCA Meeting  
Wednesday, October 24, 7:00 PM**

**Multi-purpose Room  
Taylor Elementary School  
2600 N. Stuart Street  
Agenda: Candidates' Night**

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 14, 2001**

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