



*Respecting Tradition
Welcoming Progress*

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Old Glebe Civic Association

October 2022

PRESIDENT'S CORNER *by Howard Solodky*



As you know, OGCA takes an active role on issues that affect our neighborhood. For years we have been interacting with County transportation staff and Board members concerning the proposed permanent **roundabout** at the intersection of Military and Nellie Custis (at a cost of around \$1.5 million). Our involvement with the "public engagement" process on this issue actually goes back five years to a meeting with County staff and local residents at Taylor Elementary School. Residents there were asked to express a preference



between a roundabout or a traffic signal at the intersection. I assumed (perhaps naively) that the County wanted to narrow down its options, but that one option would always be to make no structural changes there.

Old Glebe Civic Association (OGCA) is an organization formed to give residents a voice in local, County, and State affairs. Any resident may become a member.

OGCA is a member of the Arlington County Civic Association—which provides policy inputs to the County and State governments.

Old Glebe Officers:

- President* Howard Solodky
- Vice President* Burt Bostwick*
- Secretary* Peter Jaffe*
- Treasurer* Ruth Gordon**

Members of the Executive Committee

- Officers listed above, plus:
- Rich Samp
 - Tony Spadaro**
 - Marx Sterne*

Arlington Civic Federation Delegates*

Alternates**

Karen Rosenbaum, *Newsletter Editor*

More recently, the dominant issue in our neighborhood and throughout the County has been the **Missing Middle Housing** draft framework proposed on April 28. I am a member of a coalition of 15 civic association leaders which has met with County Board members to express our concerns about the potential adverse effects of increasing density in our neighborhoods— particularly if 6-unit and 8-unit

apartment buildings are developed on former single-family lots, which the MMH framework would allow as *a matter of right*. OGCA has sent you two surveys regarding MMH.

I mention both of these matters because I have learned recently that the public engagement process was never intended to help guide the County, since it turns out it was decided years ago to build



a roundabout and adopt some form of MMH approach. The public engagement process was intended only to provide the County input on some of the details of these projects. I believe my misunderstanding of the role of public engagement is shared by others and has caused unnecessary frustration and, in some cases, anger. Later this year or early next year, the OGCA Executive Committee intends to discuss the public engagement process with the County Board and how it can better handle expectations.

If you have opinions about the County's public engagement process, please contact me at president@oldglebe.org

MORE ON THE PROPOSED ROUNDABOUT *by Peter Jaffe*

In a public survey regarding the pilot roundabout, County Staff received 702 responses to some of the questions posed. The full text of survey responses and email comments, along with the county staff's summary, are available at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation-Projects/Military-Road-Safety-Improvements#PublicProcess>.

According to staff: "The majority of respondents reported feeling less safe while using the pilot intersection."

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CONNECT WITH US!

www.oldglebe.org

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Old-Glebe-Civic-Association>

OGCA Listserve:

<http://groups.yahoo.com>
Search "oldglebecivicassociation"

MORE ON THE ROUNDABOUT (continued from page one)

In particular, 53% of drivers reported feeling less safe or much less safe because of the temporary roundabout, and only 31% reported feeling safer or much safer. Staff stated that, "Those who reported feeling less safe highlighted concerns with operational confusion, the size of the pilot roundabout and the perceived lack of sufficient space for a well-designed roundabout in the future condition."

Two County staff members recently stated that the County will be building a permanent roundabout, which will take about 12 to 15 months, independent of the public feedback. They said that the permanent roundabout will be larger than the temporary one and that the increased size will help address confusion by drivers about who is in the roundabout and who has the right of way.

Residents have also noted that in past months, signs in the middle of the roundabout have been knocked down and later repaired at least twice, suggesting that incidents have occurred at the roundabout. An Arlington County Police spokesperson reported that no incidents have been reported to the Police Department, but redirected the inquiry to the Department of Environmental Services (which is responsible for streets); no further information has been provided. County staff are soliciting feedback at militaryroad@arlingtonva.us. If you are interested in participating in this public discussion through the Old Glebe Civic Association, contact roundabout@oldglebe.org.



OPEN SEATS ON PLANNING COMMISSION

by Ruth Gordon

Has the Missing Middle Housing initiative in Arlington piqued your interest in the whys and hows behind development in Arlington? Did you know that there are three open seats within the Planning Commission?

Established in 1956, the Planning Commission promotes the orderly development of Arlington County by advising on development and use of land, facilities and zoning. The County Board encourages citizens interested in being appointed to attend a meeting to learn whether its purpose and goals meet the expectations of the prospective appointee. The next two meetings are of the Planning Commission are November 02, and December 05, both at 7:00 pm.

Interested in applying? Complete the "Advisory Group Application" here: <https://bit.ly/ArlingtonPC>

OPINION: A CYCLIST'S PERSPECTIVE

by Peter Jaffe

Arlington County staff need to go back to the drawing board on the proposed Military Road / Nellie Custis Drive roundabout. Staff have justified the roundabout as a safety measure. If there's really a safety issue at the intersection, then **cyclist safety** deserves thoughtful and data-driven consideration, since two of the three reported accidents over the past nine years involved cyclists. Why then has cyclist safety been treated so cavalierly?

The previous intersection design had dedicated bike lanes that allowed cyclists to continue straight without stopping from two approaches; from the third approach, cyclists had to stop and then enter the street. Under the current design, cyclists must merge into car lanes from all approaches, possibly stop at the entrance, start again, and then merge again into the circle. That's difficult and dangerous for a few reasons:

- It's dangerous to give cars and cyclists separate lanes and then abruptly force everyone to merge. Drivers simply don't look out for us, or even if they do, they speed to get around us or engage in other aggressive behaviors. Even well-

meaning drivers tend to drive in ways that aren't predictable. The universal trend has been separate car and bike lanes for good reason.

- Cyclists aren't like cars; we are human powered, and it's not easy to stop and then accelerate again, which we now potentially have to do from all three approaches. I've been cycling for some 20 years, and most cyclists that I know who have experienced accidents or injuries have done so when forced to stop.

- The previous points are especially true at this particular intersection, which sits near the top of two hills, meaning that all but the strongest cyclists are already winded when they need to merge with cars, potentially stop, start again, merge with cars a second time, and then exit the roundabout.

When I discussed the matter with county staff, I learned that the data shows that, in the months after installing the pilot roundabout, the county measured an *increase* in dangerous interactions between cars and bikes (and, for that matter, pedestrians) —not enough to be statistically significant—but I also learned that the staff wasn't even

looking at the right data: They had measured the number of times that cars did or didn't yield to cyclists in the pedestrian crosswalks. That's a pointless measurement, since cyclists shouldn't even *be* in the crosswalks. Instead, the staff should have been measuring how often cars yielded to cyclists trying to merge when the cycling lanes abruptly end in the approach to the roundabout.

To their credit, county staff recognized that before they spend \$1.5 million on a permanent roundabout that affects safety, they should collect and consider data. But they need to collect and consider the *right* data. They haven't. Before going forward with any change to the intersection, county staff need to collect data that actually bears on cyclist safety. And if they fail to do so, the County Board needs to step in to ensure that county staff are giving fair and data-driven consideration to the safety implications of this proposal.

*From the Editor:
Please note that this is an
opinion piece, a departure from
our usual content.*

PICKLEBALL NOISE PROBLEM PERSISTS *by Richard Samp*

The Old Glebe Civic Association (OGCA) has been working diligently throughout the past year to broker a compromise between pickleball aficionados and residents whose houses abut Glebe Park who complain of the noise created by pickleball rackets striking balls. Unfortunately, a compromise plan adopted by County officials last spring at the urging of OGCA has been abandoned, and the noise issue has become even more contentious. We hope that a new compromise can be reached before affected parties turn to law courts for resolution of the issue, as has happened repeatedly in other cities throughout the country.



Pickleball is a trimmed-down version of tennis that uses a smaller court, rackets akin to ping-pong paddles, and plastic balls that move more slowly—but make much more noise—than tennis balls. Pickleball lines were drawn in 2018 on a paved area at the southwest corner of Glebe Park, and play began. The growth of pickleball's popularity has led to increased demand for pickleball courts, and the number of courts at Glebe Park has increased steadily.

Glebe Park also has three tennis courts and a basketball court. The noise from pickleball has become a major problem for residents of nearby houses—particularly those living on the section of Tazewell Street off of 38th Street. Some of the houses are only 135 feet from a “stand alone” pickleball court; the noise from the court reverberates across the amphitheater-like terrain downhill to Tazewell Street and can be heard distinctly (and constantly) inside the houses. Pickleball is also played on two of the three tennis courts. (Two pickleball courts can fit onto each tennis court.)

In response to the neighbors' concerns, the County (with OGCA's encouragement) in April adopted a five-month “Pilot Program” that sought to accommodate both sides. The Program entailed: (1) closure of the “stand alone” pickleball court; (2) drawing pickleball lines on a second tennis court (thereby increasing the total number of pickleball courts from three to four); (3) turning off park lights at 10 p.m. instead of 11 p.m. (thereby reducing late-night play); and (4) investigating potential noise mitigation measures, including placing sound barriers around the tennis courts.

Neither side was fully happy with the Pilot Program, but it appeared to be a win-win solution. Pickleball players got more courts, and neighbors achieved closure of the one court that caused the greatest noise problem. OGCA's Executive Committee was therefore quite disappointed when, following completion of the five-month Pilot Program, the County announced a “Phase Two” Pilot Program that is likely to exacerbate the noise problem considerably.

Under Phase Two, the “stand alone” pickleball court is being re-opened, and pickleball will continue to be permitted on two of the three tennis courts—thereby increasing the number of pickleball courts from four to five. The County has promised to install acoustafence (a sound baffling measure designed for pickleball) around three sides of the “stand alone” court before the end of 2022, but it has apparently abandoned all plans to place sound barriers around the tennis courts. Moreover, nearby residents argue that studies indicate that acoustafence is an ineffective noise mitigation measure when (as here) a pickleball court is only 135 feet away from residences.

OGCA's Executive Committee has voted to express its opposition to the Phase Two plan. In a September 19, 2022 letter to officials in Arlington's Parks and Recreation Department, OGCA urged the County to reinstate the original Pilot Program and to take additional measures designed to reduce pickleball noise and to ensure that Glebe Park facilities are available for use by all Arlington residence on an equal basis. OGCA will continue to monitor the situation and to work toward a solution that accommodates the needs both of park users and nearby residents. But at the moment, a solution short of litigation appears unlikely. We encourage local residents to share your views on how the park's facilities can best be utilized. Contact pickleball@oldglebe.org.

THE FALL HERITAGE FESTIVAL

by Marx Sterne

On a glorious autumnal October 15th, after a two year hiatus due to Covid, the Fall Heritage Festival returned to Gulf Branch Nature Center. It was a great afternoon with games and such fun activities as churning butter, pressing apple cider, and making corn husk dolls, potpourri and candles. The Andrew Acosta Band provided a sound backdrop of blues and bluegrass. It was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the resources that the Nature Center offers.

Staffed by friendly and knowledgeable people, Gulf Branch Nature Center features exhibits on natural and cultural history, as well as live animals. The Center hosts year-round programs and special events, including seasonal festivals, nature walks, hikes, campfires and summer camps. They also present virtual programs for area schools.

Regrettably, with County budget decisions, the Center is only open Thursdays through Saturday though the woods and trails are open every day from sunrise to sunset. Volunteer assistance —of almost any age— is always welcome. For more information check with the Center staff or read more at the Gulf Branch Nature Center website. The Friends of Gulf Branch friendsofgbnc.org hopes to resume a more active support role in the near future.

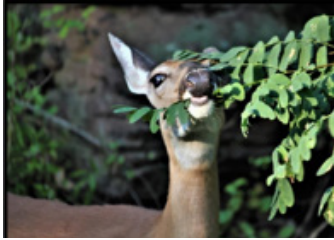


DEER AND THE OLD GLEBE NEIGHBORHOOD: IT'S COMPLICATED

by Tony Spadaro

White-tailed deer are strikingly beautiful to behold. However, the growing deer population has negative impacts on the environment and the health and safety of humans and other animals. Wildlife management professionals and Arlington officials have been arguing about the precise deer population size, growth, and impacts.

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) have resided in our area for centuries. As human settlements grew and farmland was cleared, white-tailed deer were hunted to virtual extinction by 1925. Between 1930 and 1950 deer were imported from other states. But with the loss of natural predators and the decline of hunting near urban centers, the numbers have greatly increased. Also there are high birth rates and much deer immigration into Arlington via the Pimmit Run watershed.



Last year, when funds and drone technology became available, a survey of deer populations showed the second highest deer population in Arlington to be the northern

Military Road area in Old Glebe— 33 deer per square mile, versus an average of 13 deer per square mile elsewhere. The Animal Welfare League of Arlington and others criticized the study because areas not allowing drone overflights were excluded; also, the survey was conducted in daylight and in the spring—versus at night in winter when deer would be more easily counted. Thus, the population may have been seriously undercounted. In any case, the large number of deer has negative impacts:

- Native plants supporting other wildlife suffer, insects and ground nesting birds decline, invasives spread and prosper, erosion and compaction increase, and landscape and garden plantings are eaten.
- High populations make it easier for disease transmissions. Tickborne illnesses increase.
- Deer-vehicle collisions and related human injuries increase.

There are also positive impacts to be considered. Many residents welcome deer as members of a balanced ecosystem. (See <https://www.awla.org/animal-control/is-there-really-a-deer-problem-in-arlington-county-a-comprehensive-look-into-deer-wildlife-management-in-arlington-county>)

Based on prior public and professional inputs, any ultimate deer management approach will need to prevent irreversible ecological damage, be humane, and be sustainable. However, lethal deer culling in Arlington seems off the table for now.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT THIS YEAR

Early, in-person voting began on September 23rd. Democratic incumbent **Don Beyer**, seeking reelection in Virginia's 8th Congressional District, is opposed by Republican **Karina Lipsman** and Independent **Teddy Fikre**. Democrat **Matt de Ferranti**, looking to return to the Arlington County Board, is opposed by Independents **Audrey Clement** and **Adam Theo**. **Bethany Sutton**, endorsed by the Arlington Democratic Committee, and **James Vell Rives IV** hope to fill a seat on the School Board. Party affiliation does not appear on the official ballot for County Board and School Board.

Arlingtonians are also considering six bond referenda this year to provide funding for: (1) METRO and other transportation projects, (2) local parks and recreation, (3) miscellaneous County

infrastructure projects, (4) capital projects for Arlington Public Schools, (5) capital projects for the County Stormwater Program and (6) expansion, renovation and improvement of the County's Water Pollution Control Plant and aging water and sewer system. Over \$165,000,000 of these general obligation bonds would finance APS capital projects and around \$177,000 of bonds would be used for the Water Pollution Control Plant and water and sewer system.

If you have not yet registered to vote or need to update your registration, you have until October 28th. This year Virginia allows voters to register on Election Day, but such new voters will cast provisional ballots to allow for confirmation of their registration information. Let your voice be heard!



IS YOUR OGCA MEMBERSHIP CURRENT? JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

Membership funds are used for community events, beautification, and causes such as Gulf Branch Nature Center. Please send the information below with a check made out to Old Glebe Civic Association to join or renew for one year (\$10), three years (\$25) or a lifetime membership (\$100). Mail to **OGCA, 4522 North 37th Street, 22207**.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Arlington, VA. 22207

Phone #: _____ E-Mail: _____*



Interested in volunteering? Check here:

* [Your email address is **vital** for us to be able to keep you up to date with OGCA news.]

You may also renew with a credit card online at <http://www.oldglebe.org/contact/>