

Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA)
Minutes of General Meeting, April 19, 2017
Crystal Park Condominium Party Room

The second General Meeting of 2017 of the Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) was held in the Crystal Park Condominium party room on Wednesday, April 19 at 7:00 pm.

President Christer Ahl opened the meeting by making four announcements of great interest to the community and urged attendees to talk with the POCs following the meeting.

1. Long Bridge Park indoor facility: A decision on how to proceed is expected by the end of the year and we are encouraged that the result will be positive. There is a \$50 million budget with specific components required that the County will adhere to. So bidders can design their proposal within those restrictions but not exceed them. The community will have input when the bids are submitted. He noted that Eric is the POC for this issue.
2. Pop-Up Library The Connection: The news here is not as good, since the County budget only allows for one Pop-Up Library in the County and staffing restrictions mean that our library may close in June and be moved to another part of the county. He noted Carol is the POC on this issue. [Note: On April 21, we learned the Connection will stay open until at least December 2017.]
3. 12th and Clark Streets renovation: Planning for this intersection could pose traffic problems for our area. Barbara is the POC.
4. VRE Train Station: There has been one main outreach session by VRE and they are considering 3 proposals: 2 surround residential buildings so we believe only the third around an office building is viable. There will be a second meeting before the final decision on location is made. Christer is the POC.

Christer then introduced the first speakers from JBG: Matt Ginivan, SVP for Development and Andy Van Horn, Principal. He made it clear that the agreement will not be signed until perhaps July, when JBG will take over Vornado and become JBG Smith, so comments would be aspirational rather than definitive.

Matt Ginivan gave a general overview of JBG, their priorities, and objectives, using a PowerPoint presentation. He is generally responsible for Pentagon City and Rosslyn. He explained that JBG is a local DC-based real estate investment development company with 60 years in the field. Whereas Arlington has always been their focus (Rosslyn/Ballston), their merger with Vornado will help them enter the Crystal City market. Their strategy is to focus on place making in specific areas. What does this mean for Crystal City? Crystal City is now JBG's most important asset (approximately 1/3 of its value). Final decisions will not need to go now to New York, as they did under Vornado.

Andy Van Horn then explained that he has responsibility for Crystal City. JBG owns all of the commercial properties from Potomac Yard north through the Crystal Plazas to 12th Street. Because of the split 10-12 years ago between Vornado and other developers, the residential properties are not JBGs, other than Parks 1-5, We Live and 220 12th Street. For the most part, JBG expects to continue with a lot of the "great" ideas that Vornado had for development, but some retweaking is in process. They are aware that 99% of the people never go beyond the first floor of most properties. As a strategic change from Vornado, they hope to change from mostly office space in Crystal City to a lot more attraction for visitors and residents.

JBG's goals and methods are:

1. Diversity of offerings
2. Strategic anchor (which is missing here in CC)
3. Public Space Landscape and Scale
4. Transportation and Walkability
5. Sense of Community

During a question and answer period, Van Horn was somewhat forthcoming but still circumspect about concrete answers. Key issues were:

Anchor/Grocery Store: A Wegmans is not appropriate in size because it would not serve the local community, but bring in more traffic from outside the area. Ideas include: bowling alley, cinema, live entertainment, grocery—a team is working on the merchandising plan.

Pop-Up Library: JBG has been talking with County and offered to continue the same rent-free deal, but the problem is the lack of staffing for all the libraries. JBG recognizes this is a “core” for Crystal City.

Vornado Development Plans: No decisions yet, but JBG has done a lot of “whiteboard” planning. Likely to focus first on 1900 Crystal Drive reconstruction and the block to the north (1750 etc.) The question is open whether 1750 will be residential or office space, so plans are on hold. Buildings that are vacant will go first.

Green Space: Lots of concern for maintaining parks and green space. JBG plans a renewed focus on a “core” for Crystal City and understands the importance of the Water Park.

Traffic/crossovers: Complaints about traffic and loss of overhead walkways.

Metro Entrance: JBG is talking with the County but no plans are final.

Kids' facilities: Aside from Library story hour, there is nothing for children. Could there be a Little Gym?

After an hour, Christer then introduced Joshua Nadas, Community Planner with the George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Park Service. He has been with the NPS for only two years and his job is to handle the outreach to adjacent communities as a community planner. He noted that the NPS has suffered a lot of turnover in the last few years. The NPS has a huge job in the area because it covers different types of parks from Mount Vernon up to Great Falls and part of Montgomery County, as well as other parks and trails in our area. Most of his time was spent on answering questions or making notes to get answers.

Roaches Run: Is the water rising beyond the normal Potomac River tidal flow? Can anything be done about the algae growth?

Bike Trails: There is currently no plan for redoing the trail near Gravelly Point, but there are many proposals in the National Capital Bike Trails Plan. There may be a bike share station, perhaps a boathouse. They are looking at the parking situation because taxis tend to stay and wait there.

VRE Station and crossover to airport: This is not an NPS issue, but NPS would have to be a partner on any decision to cross over the parkway, along with VRE, Arlington County, MWAA, and CSX.

Mount Vernon Bike Trail: The trail was built originally as a recreational trail, but it's become a commuter trail. Safety issues abound. It was not designed to be plowed for snow and there is no funding for this or expansion. But thinking 20 years out, it's possible. The Park Police sometimes police the trail.

The meeting adjourned around 8:50 pm.

Submitted by Carol Fuller, April 24, 2017