

Committee Report: ROADS, GROUNDS & RECREATION COMMITTEE (MAY 2022)

This is the May 2022 monthly status report on the four major activities that the Roads, Grounds & Recreation Committee identified as its priorities for the balance of this term of the FLCA's Board of Directors.

Lobbying For Additional Exits From The Shops at Dakota Crossing. The Roads, Grounds & Recreation Committee identified at least three steps that will be necessary to have the D.C. Council appropriate funds for, and approve, at least one additional exit from the Shops at Dakota Crossing, which in turn will ease congestion in and around the Fort Lincoln community.

The first step in that process was collecting contact information, and particularly email addresses, for the 14 stores at The Shops for which the FLCA does not have contact information. With the assistance of the FLCA's Communications committee we were able to do that and to then email or deliver a letter to each business to determine whether their business supported the concept of a 3rd exit from The Shops at Dakota Crossing.

On October 18th the D.C. Federation of Civic Associations and the FLCA co-authored and emailed a letter to the Mayor, the chair of the D.C. Council's Transportation and Environment Committee, all members of that committee, and Councilmember McDuffie, to urge funding for and construction of a 3rd exit from the Shops at Dakota Crossing. The committee also learned that Everett Lott's nomination to become the new Director of the District Department of Transportation was scheduled for hearing on October 26. The acting chair wrote an email to Mr. Lott, (with a copy to all members of the D.C. Council's Transportation and Environment Committee) that enclosed a copy of the October 18th letter and asked that he include in his testimony a statement regarding the priority that funding a 3rd exit from The Shops at Dakota Crossing would have while he was Director.

Mr. Lott wrote back that he was aware of the congestion problem and that he was elevating our request to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (who decides what the Mayor's budget requests will be).

In a related development, on November 1, 2021, the acting chair of this committee, emailed a memorandum to members of this committee that read in part:

Today I learned that the longtime manager of the Costco at The Shops at Dakota Crossing ("The Shops") retired about five months ago and there is a new manager (although he is a 23 year long employee of Costco). His name is Michael ("Mike") Hall. On a trip to Costco for a flu shot today, I introduced myself to Mr. Hall and we struck up a conversation about how congested traffic leaving The Shops is. Turns out it is the number one complaint Mike has heard, from Costco customers, over the past five months. Coincidentally, ANC Commissioner Pierre Hines reached out to me, last week, about forming a couple of "working groups" to propose solutions to the lack of exits from The Shops. I thought that put the cart before the horse, and so I asked only to be cc'd

on their communications. In my view, the first challenge, which the Fort Lincoln Civic Association had prioritized and was actively pursuing, was obtaining funding from the D.C. Council for both the planning and construction of exits.

But because he is confronted with the issue on a daily basis, Mike has invested some time, over the past five months, in determining whether there are practical solutions to it. I walked around The Shops with him this afternoon and he showed me two, low-cost, potential exits that take advantage of already-existing roads leading **into** The Shops. I was dumbstruck by how obvious the solutions are.

The memorandum then described, and pictured, the two exits Mr. Hall proposed. Copies of the memorandum were copied to Mr. Lott and D.C. government and shopping center officials with decision making authority.

In another happy development, in early November of 2021 the U.S. Congress passed and President Biden signed, a national infrastructure bill that will result in a reported “\$3 billion in federal funding for infrastructure investments [in the District of Columbia] over the next five years, including a 50% boost in funding for this fiscal year.”

<https://wtop.com/local/2021/11/how-the-infrastructure-package-could-impact-the-dmv-area/>

Newspaper reports stated that Mr. Lott would convene meetings in each Ward in the District of Columbia to solicit input into how to prioritize use of the funds. We have already placed the 3rd exit project high on everyone’s list. But to ensure that our message is reinforced when the meeting is held for Ward 5 residents in the coming months, we identified the Ward 5 DDOT liaison, Dalando Baker (dalando.baker@dc.gov). On December 20, 2021, the chair of this committee wrote to Mr. Baker to inquire into the date for any hearings in Ward 5. Mr. Baker responded made no commitment, at all, to advising the FLCA of any hearings, or extending an invitation to the FLCA. His perfunctory response was: “Thank you for reaching out regarding DDOT’s infrastructure plans over the next 5 years. Once projects are identified and funding is allocated, DDOT will go out to every Ward in which those projects will be and host meetings to ask for the public’s input.” The Committee is awaiting that scheduling.

Monitoring Construction of Campus, Recreation Center and Hagans Cultural Center. More than \$39 million dollars has been approved for major construction and/or improvement of everything on the Fort Lincoln Park footprint. DPR spent a number of years surveying the Fort Lincoln community to identify community priorities for the construction and re-design. Studios Architecture completed a 25-page Power Point display in October 2020 that is available at: https://www.cfa.gov/system/files/meeting-materials/8-CFA-15-OCT-20-7-Ft_Lincoln_Park_Community%20Center_sm-pres.pdf It describes their proposal for every aspect of the construction and re-design in great detail. Studios Architecture completed a second Power Point display in November 2021 that can be viewed at: [file:///C:/Users/12025/Documents/FLCA-FORT%20LINCOLN%20PARK%20DESIGN%20\(NOVEMBER%202021\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/12025/Documents/FLCA-FORT%20LINCOLN%20PARK%20DESIGN%20(NOVEMBER%202021).pdf).

The person at DPR who is supervising the architects is: Brent Sisco, Brent.Sisco@dc.gov., 202/615-9824, DPR's Capital Projects Officer. And Mr. Tommie Jones is DPR's Chief of External Affairs. Tommie.Jones@dc.gov, 202/431-8676. Mr. Jones is the designated community liaison. The main website for tracking the history and status of the project is: <https://dgs.dc.gov/page/fort-lincoln-park-and-theodore-hagans-cultural-center-and-new-recreationearly-childhood>

DPR has to have any design approved by three different agencies: (1) the United States Fine Arts Commission, (2) the National Capital Planning Commission and (3) the DC Historic Preservation Office. That, coincidentally, provides time for the Fort Lincoln community, through the FLCA, to weigh in on the design. This committee has tracked its presentations to the U.S. Fine Arts Commission.

October 15, 2020. The DPR made its first presentation to the Fine Arts Commission on October 15, 2020. The Commission gave them conditional approval, but required that they make changes and make another presentation as soon as possible.

November 18, 2021. The DPR decided to make their re-submission in two parts. The first part focused on the community center proposal, and was presented on November 18, 2021. The second part of DPR's re-submission to the Fine Arts Commission was supposed to focus on Fort Lincoln Park and (we think) the Hagans Cultural Center. That presentation was then expected to take place at some point early in 2022.

Prior to the November 18 meeting with the Fine Arts Commission, DPR convened a WebEx videoconference for the Fort Lincoln community two days earlier, on November 16, 2021. At the November 16, 2021 community meeting DPR has said it would schedule an in-person community meeting, at some point in January 2022. However, because of the omicron variant of Covid 19, it is clear now that any such meeting must be via video or telephone conference call. And, at this point, it does not appear that it will be scheduled for January.

Immediately after the November 16 meeting was announced, the chair of this Committee, twice, reached out to Messrs. Jones and Sisco, but received no response. And when Mr. Jones (who lives in Fort Lincoln, on Apple Road) finally responded it was plainly to pacify the Committee. His response did make clear that he is only a public relations person and has no decision making authority. DPR did not provide their updated drawings in advance of a November 16 online community "discussion." Fortunately, an investigation resulted in committee members being able to see the drawings on the U.S. Fine Arts Commission website, beginning on November 14th. And, in a later email, Mr. Sisco seemed to commit to being open to input following the November 16th "discussion."

On the afternoon of November 16, the President of the FLCA submitted a detailed list of questions regarding the budget for, and specific aspects of the campus project to DPW. Mr. Sisco wrote back stating that DPR would respond, but would commit to no date by which they would do so.

The DPR made its presentation to the Fine Arts Commission on November 18, 2021. Following that presentation, on November 20, 2021, the Fine Arts Commission issued a letter in which it still found fault with portions of the design – primarily with the planned exterior materials. As a result, the DPR must again return to the Commission. Presumably that will take place some time in early Spring of 2022.

As a result of that delay, the window for major community input into the design remains open. SMD 5C03 Commissioner Hines resigned his position in early January of 2022, and moved from Fort Lincoln. That opens the door for the FLCA to consolidate all of the Fort Lincoln housing developments around a single set of priorities in the coming months. The directly affected FLCA committees include: (1) Senior Affairs Committee, (2) Roads, Grounds and Recreation Committee, (3) Youth Committee, (4) Education Committee and the (5) Social Committee.

Those committees have been urged to draw up a list of priorities for the FLCA Board to approve, so that as an organization we can engage with DPR to ensure that the planned programming and space will meet the evolving needs of the Fort Lincoln community (and provide an office for the Fort Lincoln Civic Association, Inc.).

On March 23, 2022, DPR held another videoconference on the Fort Lincoln Campus. And on March 30, 2022, Brent Sisco, of DPW, finally responded to the 16 questions the FLCA submitted to DPW. The FLCA’s request for dedicated office space was denied and no funding is planned for improving the Hagans Cultural Center. The Roads, Grounds & Recreation Committee should consider whether to recommend that the FLCA Board elevate the request for dedicated office space, for the FLCA, to the Director of DPW. The FLCA can expect to spend over \$1,000.00 each year for a P.O. Box and to store its archives and records (or shuttle them between volunteers). It appears the trade-off would be that there would be no space for the unsecured “community room” that the current plans call for. Board representatives have to be sure that their communities are willing to make that trade-off.

The DPR made a presentation to the Fine Arts Commission on April 21, 2022. Following that presentation, on April 29, 2021, the Fine Arts Commission issued a letter in which it approved, based on its prior review of the submission materials: (1) the final design for a new community center building at Fort Lincoln Park and (2) the final design for the renovation of Fort Lincoln Park.

Monitoring Bus Routes In Fort Lincoln. Because of the pandemic, bus service was cut throughout the District of Columbia. However, “[t]he \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package [signed by] President Biden . . . would continue funding Metro through 2030 . . .”
<https://www.axios.com/local/washington-dc/2021/11/09/infrastructure-bill-dc-region>

The Roads, Grounds & Recreation Committee has been monitoring WMATA’s plans for the H6, and any potential restoration of the B8 bus service. In early January WMATA announced its proposed budget for the year and invited comment by February 15, 2022. The proposed budget anticipates increased bus service on the H6 bus line. The committee then began inquiring – particularly of the Tenant Association at the Jamison Apartments – whether they wished the FLCA to advocate for an extension of the H6 bus line, to include a stop at The

Jamison Apartments. The committee received no response and so submitted no comments to WMATA.

In March 2022 the Acting Chair of this committee was advised that residents of The Petersburg were agitating for restoration of the B8 bus line. They were advised to look into whether or not it was too late to submit their comments.

Bike Connection Between Anacostia Trail and Fort Lincoln. The committee will endeavor to provide updated information to the community about the status and progress on the long-planned bicycle connection between the Anacostia Trail and Fort Lincoln. Committee member, Parraize Butler, is knowledgeable about this and will be able to provide updates.

Bladensburg Road Study. The committee has not adopted the Bladensburg Road Study as a priority. However, Parraize Butler did send a message to the full FLCA Board about it. He included a link to a questionnaire/survey for the Board to share within their clusters to ensure the Fort Lincoln Community has an opportunity to provide input and feedback.