Reeder Nominated for County Board Race

Long-time Arlington resident and civic activist John Reeder unanimously won the Arlington Green Party’s nomination to run as its candidate for Arlington County Board on the November 2008 ballot. Reeder won the nomination at the Green Party’s monthly meeting held on April 10.

In accepting the nomination, Reeder highlighted his priorities if elected to a seat on the County Board. “As a Green Party member on the Arlington County Board, I would be an independent, progressive who would seek to have more cost-effective county government and to have the county government serve the interests of its residents rather than those of developers. If the county government cannot help the mentally challenged, the elderly, and the poor, it certainly cannot afford to build recreation centers and trolley cars for the rich.”

Reeder is a 30-year resident of Arlington and a graduate of its public schools. Earlier this year, he retired as an international trade analyst with the U.S. International Trade Commission where he worked for more than 30 years. Reeder is a former president of labor union USITC Local 2211 of the American Federation of Government Employees. He is vice-chair of the Social Justice Committee of Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, a co-founder of Tenants of Arlington County, a former leader of Matthew 25, which advocated for a temporary moratorium on the destruction of affordable housing, and was an active member of the Arlington Living Wage Coalition.

Elimination of Moderate Cost Rental Apartments

By John Reeder and Don Rouse

Although 2007 may well be the year when the U.S. housing bubble and frenzy stopped, it was also a year when another 500 to 1,000 moderate cost apartments in our community of Arlington were eliminated. Hundreds of empty million dollar houses and luxury condos remain unsold, but developers keep bulldozing the older apartments that house moderate income people in Arlington. Arlington like the rest of the United State is faced with a paradox: thousands of empty luxury homes and condominium apartments and thousands of homeless or housing-squeezed tenants unable to afford their next months rent.

In 2000, nearly 50 percent of all rental apartments in Arlington were affordable to people making 60% or less of the median income, but by 2005, less than 23% of rental apartments were affordable. The number of affordable rental apartment units in Arlington fell from about 20,000 in 8,700 in 2005 according to Arlington County data. Then, in 2006 and 2007, another +1,000 units were demolished or converted to luxury condominiums, meaning a loss of 13,000 units in 7 years. In 2007, the average rent in Arlington rose 6 percent over 2006 to about $1,600 per month.

The latest Arlington complexes to fall victim to the bulldozer were Chesterfield House (100 units), Colonies of Arlington (400 units), Windsor (continued on page 2)
Petitioning for Green Presidential Candidate

Petitioning is underway for the Green Party of Virginia (GPVA) 2008 presidential candidate. Ten-thousand valid signatures are needed by August 22nd to get the GPVA presidential nominee on the ballot in time for the November 4, 2008 election. Petitioners are needed in every congressional district in the state.

To help out contact:

Tom Yager
GPVA Petition Coordinator
703-534-2187
tom@vagreen.org

Audrey Clement
GPVA Co-Chair
703-532-5339
aclement65@hotmail.com

Candidate (from page 1)

Explaining his motivation to run for County Board, Reeder stated: “As a long-time Arlington renter and homeowner, I am concerned that the too-rapid development in Arlington has eroded the high-quality of community life, including the loss of affordable rental housing which has been the bedrock of Arlington for the past 50 years. Excessive development has eroded the environmental quality of many neighborhoods as uncontrolled building of McMansions and in-fill has eliminated trees and green space.

The loss of affordable rental housing adversely affects young people just beginning their careers and the elderly who need modestly priced rental housing. It makes it impossible for Arlington public employees, teachers, police and firefighters, and for the adult children of longtime Arlingtonians to live in Arlington.”

Reeder vowed to try to end one-party rule in Arlington, stating that “My main concern has been that an Arlington County Board composed of only one political party has lost touch with the interests of Arlington residents, acceding to the interests of outside developers, spending vast sums of money for public works of dubious value, and under-spending for preserving housing and assisting vulnerable Arlingtonians, such as the mentally and physically challenged and frail elderly. The 30-year rule of the Democratic Party in Arlington aptly demonstrates that power corrupts.”

Apartments (from page 1)

Apartments, Towers, and Stratford Apartments, according to the Winter 2007 newsletter of the BRAVO Tenants Organization (www.bravotenants.org).

During 2006-07, about 300 units at Buckingham Village were emptied and destroyed, and another 200 units likely to be eliminated in the near future. One can drive by North George Mason Drive and Henderson Road in Arlington and see the million-dollar townhouses being built on the land where nearly 90 apartments provided shelter to grandparents, government workers, immigrants, families, and handicapped persons for nearly 70 years. Who will buy these million dollar townhouses in today’s glutted real estate market?

The Arlington County Government’s answer to developers’ elimination of moderate rental apartments may be summarized by the acronym MANASSAS (Move Your Ass Outa’ Here). The county government solution is to move tenants, humanely and with relocation assistance, to Prince William County’s City of Manassas.

The role of the Arlington County Government has been to facilitate the exodus of moderate income tenants by insuring that developers’ plans to demolish and gentrify are met with open arms. County officials claim that they are saving a few hundred units for people making over $50,000 yearly (for example in Buckingham Apartments), but in fact the county government refuses to use its considerable powers to halt the developers.

The County’s goal to preserve 400 units annually has not been met for years, and in any case, is totally inadequate to address the 13,000 units that disappeared in the past seven years. Meanwhile in 2006-07, the County cut $6 million in spending under the LPACAP program that would have gone to group homes and nonprofits to house vulnerable elders, and mentally and physically challenged, as well as some of the 450 homeless living on the streets in Arlington.

For this reason, the Green Party has endorsed the creation of a housing authority that will have the power and the financial means with which to halt development and demolition of the few remaining apartment complexes.
Thank You Speakers

By Don Rouse

The Arlington Green Party regularly invites active community members to speak at our monthly meetings. Thank you to all our recent guest speakers!

Christian Dorsey, Executive Director of the Bonder and Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation, spoke to us about the imperative of providing housing for middle and lower income people in our area, and what is needed to help bring that about.

Albert Monroe of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty discussed the current status of legislative initiatives.

Daniel Hayes, president of the Arlington Gay and Lesbian Alliance, addressed what is being done, and what may be done, to promote human/civil rights for the LGBT community as well as all citizens in Arlington.

Rich Bailey, a naturalist at Potomac Overlook Regional Park in north Arlington, discussed ways to live healthier, happier, and more sustainably. See the below article in which he summarizes his talk.

Sustainable Living in Arlington

By Rich Bailey

As recently as 1940, the lands containing my soon-to-be park in north Arlington were an equal mix of forest and field crossed by streams and a relatively sparse network of country roads. Aerial photographs taken over the subsequent decades tell the story of rapid development and population expansion. Arlington is now an “old” urban community.

By most standards, we have excellent parks, effective public transit, and plenty of mixed-use commercial/residential space. Despite the advantages that we enjoy as a community, we face a number of serious environmental and cultural hurdles on our path to becoming wholly sustainable. I believe that these difficulties can be traced to the way we live our lives - that our problem is cultural. I strongly suggest that the solution will be cultural as well.

Put simply, we must change the criteria for what makes us happy as individuals and families. The ideology of consumerism leads us to believe that material possessions are vital to our contentment. The cost of this way of thinking can be seen all around us: loss of open space, soaring energy prices, long commutes and much more.

A happy life that does not fuel this positive feedback loop must be predicated on the values of conservation and efficiency. Both of these must be used in combination with each other if we are to succeed. It is not enough to buy a Prius instead of an SUV. We must drive less as well. Vacations could be local and based on services offered by local parks and attractions. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, for example, provides numerous recreational opportunities close to home. These ideals should carry over into all aspects of our lives.

Ironically, a well-planned community should require little driving at all. An ideal mixed-use community would include integrated commercial, work, and living space in close quarters. Adding components like green roofs for food production could further reduce our net energy and land consumption. The possibilities are endless.

One thing is for certain: we must change the way that we do things. We are beginning to bump up against fundamental limits on our ability to obtain natural resources. The best way for us to maintain healthy communities in this context is to base our standard of living on happiness rather than consumption and material wealth.

“A happy life that does not fuel this positive feedback loop must be predicated on the values of conservation and efficiency.”
By Dana Thomson and John Reeder

The Green Party in Arlington has long been involved with affordable housing. John Reeder, a housing activist and member of the Green Party, was interviewed about his work with a local church to expand affordable housing in Arlington.

According to the latest count of homeless individuals in Arlington in January 2007, there were 272 in county-funded and nonprofit organization shelters, but there were 190 individuals who were living in the open. There are additionally many invisible homeless or near homeless people in Arlington who need safe, affordable, and decent permanent shelter.

“Homelessness in Arlington is fueled by overpriced housing and mental illness,” states Reeder. In a letter this month, Arlington church Queen of Peace is calling on the county government to commit $10 million in funding toward emergency and transitional housing, counseling, and food assistance for the homeless.

Hunger in Arlington has been growing despite efforts of community groups and churches to donate canned and dry goods. The Arlington Food Assistance Center feeds 700 people monthly, and despite thousands of pounds of donations, its supplies are inadequate to handle the need.

Reeder explained that in 2006-07, the Arlington County Board cut $6 million in mental health programs aimed at creating permanent group homes and modified apartments for the mentally disabled, including the elderly, as well direct mental health programs for homeless people struggling with mentally illness. The cuts included up to 400 apartments for adults in group homes, 50 apartments in the Oak Springs apartments for elderly mentally ill, prescription drug assistance for the mentally ill, and counseling and social services.

Queen of Peace proposes the County Board restore the $6 million and provide an additional $3 million to Arlington homeless shelters and another $1 million to the Arlington food bank, AFAC. The letter insists, “the $10 million will be the first step in creating permanent housing and emergency homeless shelter for the many neglected in our community, and insuring that people have minimum food to live.”

The citizens' advisory board on health and human services, the Arlington Community Services Board, on March 12, 2008 asked the County Board to restore or add $1.7 million for mental health and substance abuse treatment in Arlington to the budget proposed by the county manager (see: www.arlingtonva.us/csb).

The County Board adopted a $1.1 billion budget in April, and added $260,000 to the budget for housing and human services, including $60,000 for the Arlington Food Assistance Center (see: "County Board approved FY 2009 county budget." (www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/ManagementAndFinance/budget/ fy09adopted/page62664.pdf))

Despite the controversy this year over the threatened closing of the Arlington Courthouse Shelter for the homeless, there was no significant increased funding for homeless shelters operating in Arlington that currently provide shelter to only about half of the homeless and only for five months a year. Moreover, the budget does not fund the preservation of the 400 apartment goal for low-moderate income people that the County Board has set as its target each year.
By Joshua Ruebner

On a warm Sunday October morning, members of the Arlington Green Party went to several public parks in Arlington County to rescue recyclables from the trashcans. Visiting just four of the County’s 148 parks, Green Party members were astounded by how quickly they were able to fill up eight large 13-gallon trash bags with recyclables pulled from the garbage.

Based on the amount of recyclables picked up from these parks, the Arlington Green Party calculated that 3,700 cubic gallons of plastic and metal recyclable containers are being thrown away every day in Arlington’s parks. This rate of waste translates into the equivalent of approximately five million one-liter plastic bottles going needlessly into landfills each year.

According to the Container Recycling Institute, it takes 2,600 barrels of oil to produce 5 million one-liter plastic bottles, which adds about 295 metric tons of CO2 emissions to the atmosphere, according to the National Center for Policy Analysis. Recycling plastic bottles saves 80% of the original energy costs of producing it, meaning that if Arlington recycled from its parks, then it could save about 235 metric tons of CO2 emissions each year. Armed with these alarming statistics (and the actual trash bags filled with the recyclables), members of the Arlington Green Party used the public comment period at the Arlington County Board meeting on October 13 to press the County to expand recycling opportunities in 2008 when the County’s current recycling contract is due to be renewed.

Members of the Arlington Green Party are urging the County to institute a comprehensive recycling program for Arlington’s parks and schools, switch to a pay-as-you-throw trash disposal pricing system to reduce household waste and to encourage recycling and composting, and broaden curbside residential recycling to include additional plastics.

County Board Chair Paul Ferguson responded positively to the Green Party’s recycling initiative. Following the Green Party’s presentation, Mr. Ferguson said that he was certain County recycling efforts will be expanded next year and that County staff is currently looking into pay-as-you-throw trash disposal pricing.

The Arlington Green Party has decided to make the expansion of recycling one of its top two advocacy goals in 2008. It has already launched informal discussions with
By Audrey Clement

On January 8, 2008 the State Corporation Commission (SCC) held a public hearing to consider Dominion Virginia Power’s request to build a coal fired plant in Wise County, Virginia. At a cost to ratepayers of more than $1.6 billion including a 13.6 percent guaranteed profit for Dominion, this behemoth will spew forth 5.6 million tons of CO2 pollution annually. Even if Dominion had demonstrated the need for this plant, opponents, including Sierra Club, Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) and Virginia Conservation Network (VCN), claim that coal, as the most polluting source of electricity production, is not the way to go. Furthermore, the plant is going to be fueled by coal obtained from mountain top removal (MTF) strip mining operations. By some estimates MTF has already laid waste to twenty-five percent of the terrain of Wise County, Va. Opponents also object to Dominion’s promise to explore the use of carbon capture technology at the plant, arguing that the utility plans to pass the R&D cost of the unproven technology onto ratepayers.

Most of the common citizens who testified were opposed to the plant, citing the devastating health and environmental effects of the existing coal fired plants and the MTF operations that feed them.

Wise County resident Matthew Sutherland declared tearfully: “I live there. I’ve been hearing a lot of if’s then’s and maybe’s. There are a lot of people who couldn’t come today because they were sick. They asked me to come and speak for them… My family has been here 300 years. We have a birth right to these lands… I lost my mom and dad two years ago to black lung disease. We got a life time of pollution… This project amounts to a conspiracy to murder our children. This isn’t about people. This is about money.”

Given the powerful alliance between the coal and power industries in southwest Virginia, the Wise County coal fired plant is probably a done deal at the SCC. But the hearing proved that grassroots opposition is strong, and environmental groups see the plant as a bellwether for halting the construction of new power plants in the region. Regardless of how the SCC rules, there is likely to be a protracted court battle over its decision, and CCAN promises to lead the fight against the plant.
Greens Victorious in Campaign to Remove Robert E. Lee Quote from Tax Decal

The Arlington Green Party expressed satisfaction today that its campaign to remove a quote from Confederate General Robert E. Lee from the 2008-2009 Arlington County tax decal proved successful.

The initial design of the tax decal featured a picture of the Pentagon superimposed over a U.S. flag with the following quote from Robert E. Lee: “Obedience to lawful authority is the foundation of manly character.”

Members of the Arlington Green Party criticized the tax decal as a manifestation of racism, sexism, and militarism which had no place on the windshields of Arlington County car owners.

Josh Ruebner, a two-time Green Party candidate for Arlington County Board who helped lead the campaign against the tax decal, stated: “The Arlington Green Party is enormously pleased that the County has seen fit to remove the Robert E. Lee quote from the 2008-2009 tax decal in the wake of our protest. Lee was a racist slave-owner who rebelled against the government of the United States in order to perpetuate slavery. There is no way that we should honor his memory by putting a quote of his on our cars.”

The Green Party also expressed satisfaction that Arlington County Treasurer Frank O’Leary affirmed publicly that Arlington residents may cut out the offending image of the Pentagon on their tax decal or request a temporary permit without the offending image. O’Leary made these comments in a March 4 Arlington Sun Gazette.

At its March 5 monthly meeting, members of the Arlington Green Party vowed to take up the Treasurer’s invitation to serve on the committee which selects the finalists in the tax decal competition.

“Members of the Arlington Green Party are definitely interested in serving on the committee to select the finalists for the tax decal so that in the future Arlington County residents will not have to be embarrassed to stick racist, sexist, and militaristic tax decals on their cars,” stated Ruebner.

Get Involved

I would like to get involved with the Arlington Courthouse Greens in the following way(s):

☐ Attend monthly meetings (check website for time/place)
☐ Help organize events
☐ Work on Green Party campaigns
☐ Donate (thank you - fill out & return reverse form)
☐ Receive newsletters (fill out & return reverse form)

What are your issues?

Please let us know what your issues are so the Green Party can make the most meaningful impact in Arlington. Check all that apply, and write in other important local issues. Thank you for your feedback!

☐ Affordable housing
☐ Recycling - residential
☐ Recycling - commercial
☐ Sustainable building / development
☐ Living wage for employees in Arlington
☐ Eco-friendly transportation
☐ _____________________________________________
☐ _____________________________________________
☐ _____________________________________________
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Please return to: Arlington Green Party, c/o Kirit Mookerjee, 1201 N. Kensington St. #9, Arlington, VA 22205
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* Federal law requires the Arlington Green Party to collect the name, address, occupation and employer from donors contributing more than $100 per year. Please include this information with your check. You must be at least 18 years of age in order to contribute. Contributions to the Arlington Green Party are not tax deductible.

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