

Boulevard Manor Civic Association

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201
February 1, 2010

Re: Reevesland Property

Dear Members of the Board,

This is in follow-up to the Boulevard Manor Civic Association's (BMCA) letter to you dated November 13, 2009. In that letter we articulated our concern related to basic maintenance of the Reevesland property in Bluemont Park. On further consideration, we would like to highlight a more significant, deeper apprehension we have about this property.

Through your administrative staff, we have requested meetings with each County Board Member to express face-to-face the views of our neighborhood in connection with Reevesland. This letter is to preview what we would very much like to personally discuss with you.

To begin, we fully recognize budgetary constraints that exist in the County – we emphasize that what we lay out below is carefully measured to have as little budgetary impact as possible.

Background: In June of 2001, Arlington County acquired the Reevesland property for \$1.8 million. At the time of the acquisition, the Board noted that it would go through a public process to determine specific uses for the property.¹ Reevesland was the last dairy farm in Arlington County, having been continuously run by the same family for 89 years. In December of 2004, the house and two acres of adjacent open space were officially designated as the Reevesland Historic District by the County Board.

Since 2001, this property has been un-used. You may be aware that there are 29 historic districts in Arlington – some of those districts include historic structures; of these, *Reevesland is the only shuttered/un-used, County-owned historic property in all of Arlington County.*

After more than 8 years of County ownership, there is yet no plan for the use of the Reevesland buildings and no known prospect that any planning will begin in the foreseeable future. BMCA and others have repeatedly been told by certain County offices that no planning for the re-utilization of Reevesland can occur until the entire Bluemont Park is "re-Master Planned." Funding for such a Master Plan is not included in any future County Capital Plan.

Fundamentally, we do not agree that a Master Plan is a prerequisite to re-utilizing Reevesland. Reevesland is on the edge of the park and will have little role in the *active recreational* uses of the park. As well, at least one other significant project in Bluemont Park has gone forward without a new Master Plan – the playground (~\$650,000

¹ <http://www.arlingtonva.us/NewsReleases/Scripts/ViewDetail.asp?Index=544>

awarded contract value, below budgeted amount of ~\$900,000). *This is clear precedent that a targeted project within the Park can go forward absent a Master Plan.*

We are thoughtfully concerned about the long-term preservation and security of Reevesland. Even with the best maintenance strategies and intentions, buildings will deteriorate from lack of use over a long period of time. We also understand that in a September 22, 2009 letter to the County Board from one of its subordinate offices, the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board, it was noted that Reevesland is "in danger of 'demolition by decay.'" With no one on-site and no activity inside the house on a regular basis, it remains unknown what sort of damage may be occurring to this historic property. *The house is quickly sliding into neglect.*" Concern about the property was also expressed by the County Planning Commission in a letter to the County Board of June 10, 2009. Historic property in Arlington County deserves more attention than Reevesland is being given.

Our Request: In short, BMCA is asking the County Board to direct/authorize either or both the County Historic Preservation Office and the Economic Development Office (or appropriate offices) to prepare an in-house study in a reasonable period of time that assesses the viability and benefits of various re-utilization scenarios for Reevesland. The study should make a recommendation to the Board about which re-utilization scenario is most likely to succeed, so that implementation can soon occur.

It is our understanding that such an in-house study would be a no-cost proposition; further, we acknowledge that the various re-utilization scenarios studied should include those with minimal budgetary impacts to the County. We would request that the community and potentially certain non-profit organizations with historic preservation expertise be given an opportunity to comment on a draft version of the study.

Possible Potential Specific Uses: We believe the aforementioned study should review the property's possible utilization as a "Green" / Sustainability-in-residential-properties demonstration site. BMCA believes that such an initiative might fall under the umbrella of the new Community Energy and Sustainability Task Force. Corporate sponsorships and/or governmental grants could be used to fund such an initiative.

Consistent with the HALRB's September letter to the Board, the study should also include assessment of the viability of a short-term lease by one of Arlington's target population groups – perhaps county employees, low-income large families, or other particularly deserving or interested parties. HALRB's letter details the basic outline of such a project.

In conclusion, we look forward to speaking with you directly soon and to working with you to help bring this important County-owned historic property back to life in a way that befits both its park surroundings and its status as an Arlington County asset.

Sincerely,



Philip T. Klingelhofer
President, Boulevard Manor Civic Association

CC: BMCA Board of Directors