



Boulevard Manor Civic Association

August 11, 2016

Greg Emanuel, Director
Arlington County Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Emergency snow storage at Bluemont Park south parking lot

Dear Mr. Emanuel,

I want to thank you for taking the time to discuss neighborhood concerns about emergency storage of snow in the Bluemont Park south parking lot with me and for your detailed written response. At a meeting on August 9, 2016, the Boulevard Manor Civic Association Board approved unanimously this letter expressing our continued deep concerns and insistence that the County find other, better options.

While we strongly support the goal of getting the community going again as soon as possible after a heavy snowfall and understand that Arlington's small size and urban character make options for snow storage limited, we believe the priorities used by Arlington County in making the site selections are inappropriate. There is a monumental difference between disrupting home life and making sleep difficult or impossible for county residents because of 24-hour industrial-scope operation of heavy equipment, on the one hand, and having parking lots cleared for tennis players during winter months, on the other. We assert that home life for county residents, including allowing time for sleep and freedom from noxious fumes, should have a priority over sports needs and other elective activities.

As detailed in my initial email to you, utilizing the Bluemont Park south parking lot for snow storage has proven to be extremely problematic. Reviewing the current snow storage sites, this lot is the only location in a residential neighborhood that is not accessible from a major arterial road. Trucks driving through the middle of a residential neighborhood for the 24-hour operation and subjecting the residents to the noise and fumes day and night is a significant hardship, especially to the 28 residents unlucky enough to live immediately adjacent to the parking lot or along the truck route. Safety for pedestrians and children using the nearby sledding hill is a significant concern, as well as is damage to the park. The much-used Bluemont Trail was blocked (probably inadvertently) by the snow piles for many days. Lastly, there are serious concerns about the environmental impact to Four Mile Run from the forced melting of the snow with possible chemical and pollutant residue and possible spills of diesel fuel, and the associated noxious fumes from the melting operation.

We appreciate the job that you and your staff did in clearing our streets during the extreme snowstorm we had last winter. Staff worked tirelessly and effectively, while demonstrating good humor throughout the effort, yet the planning for snow storage and melting and site selection has been misguided and inadequate.

We know that other options do exist which could be relatively easily used to handle the emergency snow storage needs of the County for years to come and do not have the same significant shortcomings. Given that this will be a recurring issue, some planning and preparation would be warranted to make all emergency snow storage facilities accessible and efficient, yet provide all the necessary protections for the public and the environment.

In a few minutes, using an online mapping tool (so actual area figures are only approximate), we identified several nearby options accessible from arterial streets:

Location	Access	Size (sf)	Adjacent homes
Bluemont Park south lot	Access via five blocks of residential street	22.1k sf	6 immediately adjacent to lot, 28 on truck route
Bluemont Park north lot (entire)	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	23.4k	None
Bluemont Park north lot east section	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	13.9k	None
Bluemont Park north section	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	9.5k	None
Upton Hills Park lot (entire)	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	34.8k	None
Upton Hills Park lot north section	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	16.6k	None
Upton Hills Park lot south section	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	18.2k	None
Kenmore School field	Direct access from Carlin Springs Rd	99.4k	None
Wilson Safeway lot east section	Direct access from Wilson Blvd	18.0k	One immediately adjacent to lot
Arlington Blvd access road between N Columbus and N Edison	Direct access from Arlington Blvd.	12.1k	One immediately adjacent to spot

The Boulevard Manor Civic Association Board urges you to discontinue using the Bluemont Park south parking lot for emergency snow storage now and develop plans for a facility that really meets the community needs without placing an undue burden on a few in time for the coming winter. We are sure others in the Arlington Community feel the same and would willingly work with County staff to review options and make appropriate recommendations.

Thank you



Phil Klingelhofer

Boulevard Manor Civic Association President

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To stay informed about neighborhood news, events, and issues, join the Boulevard Manor group at Yahoogroups.com by sending an e-mail to blvdmanor-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com.

CC: Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Arlington County Board
BMCA Board

From: Greg Emanuel [mailto:Gemanuel@arlingtonva.us]

Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 4:10 PM

To: Phil Klingelhofer <phil.klingelhofer@gmail.com>

Cc: Antonio Escalante <aescalante@arlingtonva.us>; CountyManager <CountyManager@arlingtonva.us>; Carol Mitten <cmitten@arlingtonva.us>; Mike Moon <mmoon@arlingtonva.us>; Harry Wang <Hxwang@arlingtonva.us>; Jessica Baxter <Jebaxter@arlingtonva.us>; Jo Ann Harrison <Jharrison@arlingtonva.us>; Jane Rudolph <Jrudolph@arlingtonva.us>; Kurt Louis <KLouis@arlingtonva.us>; Albert English <aenglish@arlingtonva.us>; Dave Hundelt <Dhundelt@arlingtonva.us>; Mark Gundersen <mgundersen@arlingtonva.us>

Subject: RE: Snow storage and snow melting in county parks, specifically Bluemont Park - response requested

Mr. Klingelhofer,

This is the written follow up to our discussion earlier today; I hope you find the contents useful to share within your civic association. I really appreciate you taking the time to thoughtfully discuss the tradeoffs and challenges we face with snow removal in an increasingly urbanizing environment. Naturally, we do consider the neighborhoods and who we might be disturbing and when with our haul routes and storage locations—but our choices are limited and there will inevitably be some impacts.

I apologize for the tardiness of this response and thank you for your patience—the delay is on me. The January blizzard was an extraordinary event that required everyone working together to get our County back up and running— and that includes the cooperation of every single business district and neighborhood. It also provided us with the opportunity to assess service levels in an unprecedented way and we have continued to look at our snow operations since the blizzard, and will continue through the first snowfall.

I want to start by talking about our priorities in snow removal following a storm of this magnitude. Our overall goal in all of our efforts is to get the community going again as soon as possible—the private services and businesses, and government operations (County facilities, transit operations, schools and parks). To achieve this, we need to create safe and passable roads to ensure the safe movement of pedestrians, business patrons, motorists, and our die-hard community of year-round bikers.

Below are the responses to your questions regarding snow storage and melting operations.

Snow Hauling Operations and Hours: Our standard procedure for the activation of snow hauling from commercial corridors is for events of 6-8 inches or more. When the snowfall reaches this level, there is not enough room on sidewalks or parking lots/spaces to store snow without creating serious safety concerns for pedestrians.

As we approach each snow season we reassess what County owned land is available for snow storage. As I mentioned to you on the phone, these sites may change over time due to changes in the environment from either construction or redevelopment. When looking for locations, we search for large open surface lots and unfortunately those areas are extremely limited within the County and are becoming more and more scarce. We also look at proximity to commercial areas in order to maximize efficiency, get the job done quickly, and keep costs down.

During this past winter season, snow storage locations we used included:

- Virginia Highlands parking lot on South Hayes Street—this is a go-to location
- Fairfax Drive between George Mason and North Edison Street—Just north of ATS
- Bluemont Park parking lot off of North Manchester Street and Route 50—your neighborhood
- Arlington Traditional School parking lot on North George Mason and North Edison Street—when the magnitude of the storm dictates we notify the Superintendent

- Bon Air parking lot, Lexington Street and Wilson Boulevard
- Water Pollution Control Plant, 31st Street South—if space exists between construction and operations
- *Mosaic Park – North Quincy and North 5th Street*
- *Long Bridge Park – undeveloped area (future site of aquatics facility)*

These *last two locations* won't likely be used in future years because of redevelopment, putting additional pressure on the remaining sites. In order to get government and businesses back up and running quickly, we must work around the clock in the same way that we conduct snow removal operations until all roads are safe and passable. We do attempt to work with snow storage sites that are directly adjacent to residential areas and when possible convert to 12-hour day shifts for the actual snow **melting** operations depending on the forecast and assessment of risk. Actual hours and shifts are, however, determined on a case by case basis.

Every snowstorm is different and we activate these locations only when needed. For this blizzard, all of these sites were used and at full capacity given the sheer amount of snowfall.

You mentioned the Bluemont Parking lot just south of Wilson Blvd. In addition to what I mentioned on the phone, I want to affirm all the reasons we don't go there. That is a year round location for public restrooms and trail access. Many of the restrooms close in winter; that one stays open. It is ideally centrally located with quick access to Custis Trail, W O&D trail, and Bluemont Junction Trail—and all the activities people do on the multi-use trails—even cross-county skiing! Plus given the large concentration of tennis courts, it is where players come as soon as conditions permit, year round. In the balancing act, that's why we store snow at Bon Air and Lower Bluemont (in your neighborhood) while keeping the one parking lot available just south of Wilson.

Snow Melting and Contact Information: Hauling and dumping takes place during the initial snowstorm clean-up efforts, while melting operations can continue several weeks after the snowstorm depending on the natural melt dynamics and the equipment uptime of our one aging snow melter. The County is in the process of purchasing a new snow melter that has a better and quieter muffler system that will lessen the noise from the operation. We don't expect the new snow melter to come before this snow season starts because it'll take six months to build, but we're anticipating the equipment will be here sometime during the first quarter of 2017.

If there are specific concerns from residents while the operation is taking place, we ask that the public contact our 24/7 Water Control Center at 703-228-6555. We have County staff managing the work our contractors are performing in the field and we can respond to any issues raised via this phone number.

Concerns about power lines during snow storage operation & operator fatigue: We review with contractors and County personnel any challenges that the sites may have and describe and direct the areas that snow can be dumped at each facility. In this particular instance, the communication line was accidentally torn and the line was repaired as quickly as possible. Safety is a top priority in all of our operations. Our County employees normally work rotating 12-hour shifts to ensure adequate rest time.

Bluemont Trail Snow Piling: As referenced above, whether we use the trail is largely storm-dependent. In some storms, we may not have to block the trail or even use the Bluemont site. In severe storms, we will need to use all available area and melting follows soon after.

Storm Drain Marking: We instruct our contractors of where critical facilities are, including fire hydrants. In larger events and particularly with the blizzard, it is difficult to have this perfectly covered and some damage is inevitable following a storm of this magnitude. The storm drainage structure that you referenced in your email was repaired after the snow melting operation in March. Our normal practice is to repair any storm drains, curbs and other inlets that are structurally damaged during a snow event.

Repairs will likely not occur if the damage is purely cosmetic—scrapes and gouges that do not affect performance or longevity of the asset.

Environmental Impacts: We are not allowed to dump snow directly into the Potomac River, according to regulations set forth by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Runoff in our streams such as Four Mile Run does occur, but we try to minimize the impacts by placing basic erosion and sediment control devices (such as storm filter socks) in our catch basins. Scraping up snow does grab sediment and particles from the surface and we try in our melting operations to prevent these from reaching the River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

In terms of coordination, we work with Arlington Public Schools and the Department of Parks and Recreation year-round to manage snow operations, including hauling and melting. We hold a pre-season meeting that has representatives from multiple agencies (parks, schools, facilities and transportation) and there's particularly close coordination while we manage the hauling operation in a snowstorm.

If you have any further questions, please let me know. Again, thank you for your patience and cooperation and for the thoughtful discussion we had today.

Best,

Greg

Greg Emanuel

Director

Arlington County Department of Environmental Services

W 703-228-5022

From: Phil Klingelhofer [<mailto:phil.klingelhofer@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2016 12:52 AM

To: Gemanuel@arlingtonva.us

Subject: Snow Storage and Snow Melting in county parks specifically Bluemont

Dear Mr. Emanuel—

First, I want to applaud the job that you and your staff did in clearing our streets during the extreme snowstorm we had last month. While everyone wants their own street cleared first, it seems that Arlington County handled the near-record snow fall very effectively. Staff worked tirelessly and effectively, while demonstrating good humor throughout the effort.

I want to address concerns raised in the Boulevard Manor neighborhood over by the emergency snow storage operation at the south Bluemont Park parking lot. We don't dispute the urgency of needing to clear the urban corridors when the snow is accumulating. Our concerns are the significant impacts on residents during the operation, as well as the effects from long term snow storage and melting operations.

Utilizing the Bluemont Park parking lot for snow storage has proven to be problematic. Trucks driving through the middle of a residential neighborhood for the 24-hour operation and subjecting the residents to the noise and fumes day and night is a significant hardship, especially to the residents unlucky enough to live adjacent to the parking lot or along the truck route. Safety for pedestrians and children using the nearby sledding hill is a significant concern, as well as damage to the park. The much-used Bluemont Trail was blocked (probably inadvertently) by the snow piles for many days. Lastly, there are concerns for the environmental impact to Four Mile Run from the forced melting of the snow with possible chemical and pollutant residue and possible spills of diesel fuel, and the associated noxious fumes from the melting operation.

We have a number of questions regarding the snow storage and subsequent melting operation:

- How much snowfall will necessitate activation of the snow removal and storage process?
- When the process has been activated, must storage in locations within residential neighborhoods be conducted 24 hours a day or could there be quiet for a period (for example 11pm-7am)?
- When the overnight snow dumping can't be delayed or spread out during regular working hours, can the snow melting operation, which has proven to be also very noisy and smelly, be done during reasonable daytime hours?
- What safeguards or processes are currently in place to safeguard employees, contractors, and residents when the snow dumping is going on?
- What is done to ensure that power lines and other cabling is not damaged during the snow storage operation? I refer specifically to the green communication lines that were torn away from the utility poles at the Bluemont parking lot. Although the power lines are higher on the poles, it should be a concern when heavy equipment is operated in a dark lot during adverse weather conditions and visibility may be compromised by operator fatigue or lack of familiarity with the site.
- Bluemont Trail, which is a commuting route for some in the community and a daily exercise route for other neighbors, was entirely blocked by a mountain of snow stretching all the way to Four Mile Run. It would be very much appreciated if the trail could be kept passable and not buried under the piles. We are not requesting that this trail be plowed, since the W&OD Trail, which runs parallel, is plowed routinely.
- The concrete storm water drain in the parking lot was crushed by heavy equipment. I imagine it is expensive to replace these. Is it possible to mark the location during winter months so it doesn't get crushed during future storms?

- What is the impact on Four Mile Run and the Potomac River from the accelerated melting of the snow cleared from county streets? Could this snow not easily have been simply dumped into the Potomac River instead of hauled to storage sites?

Most importantly, I believe that there should be a comprehensive memorandum of understanding developed between DES, Parks and Rec, and the communities in which these snow storage sites are placed, to clarify responsibilities and ensure that concerns are addressed.

I would like to share your response and suggestions with the Boulevard Manor community. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or thoughts you may have to better address these concerns.

Thank you.

Phil

Phil Klingelhofer

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