

**Rest of Master Plan Special Study  
Meeting Notes - Nicoson  
March 10, 2010  
Reston Association**

Attendees:

Patty Nicoson opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce him or herself.

Jerry Volloy, President of ARCH, said that the Reston Master Plan Special Study was the most important activity in the community. ARCH represents 4000 to 5000 people. It consists of clusters and homeowners associations. They have the heads of the clusters and HOAs on an e-mail list. They send messages to this list and the representatives, in turn, send out e-mails to members of their clusters or homeowners associations. They also have a website: [www.restarch.org](http://www.restarch.org).

Heidi Merkel described some of the outreach activities that the County had underway. It is a work in progress.

- Redesigned website. They wanted to be Center of information for the study
- Use of e-mail distribution list. They started compiling e-mails from the focus groups in 2008 and the land-use colleges. They now have more than 200 people on the list.
- The County is migrating to a listserv. Fairfax County already has a listserv for various activities. It is much easier to keep up the list and for people to sign in or opt out.

Question. Are these names publicly available? Answer. People are allowed to opt out of making their information publicly available. The Freedom of Information Act requires this. Also, you cannot reply all to a listserv.

- Supervisor Hudgins has a newsletter that is used to get out information.
- The County issues press releases for community newspapers. They do send out press releases to give notice of the meetings. A schedule for the whole process could be published in the Observer using the GRCC Doorway to Reston spot.

Bruce Manicelli, Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, said that there were several vehicles that the Chamber has that could be used to get information out: once a month they publish an insert in the Herndon

Observer. This is turned into an e-mail newsletter. The deadline is early in the third week of the month for the Doorway to Reston insert. Some of the digital newsletters are turned into hardcopy articles.

Jerry Volloy asked if there was a button on the Reston Association site to get to the Reston Master Plan Special Study webpage. RA could advise the public on the working groups that it has set up and on how they might get involved in the process. You can sign up on the RA website to get notices by e-mail.

Kohann Williams asked if RA could put in a newsletter button. Get information from a direct link to the County. Heidi said that they were trying to create a place on the County website to put up a notice of other meetings. But Brian Worthy, Office of Public Affairs, advised her that this couldn't be done.

Bill Penniman thought that there might be a way to do this since there are several task force members on a number of organizations and they have to have open meetings so that these meetings, while not of task force-endorsed groups, they have gone through the procedures to get them to advertise his public meetings. So maybe there is a way to include them on the special study website. **Brian said he would check into this.**

Bruce said that the chamber represented 30,000 members. It has a website. It will do a link to the study. It does not want to provide links to stale information. The chamber also has a TV show, Business Focus, which has three segments. They always want to provide some information about the Metrorail project. It usually features a new member and another topic of interest. The programs are recorded and are then put on the website. Leila noted that you could, even if you are not a chamber member, sign up to get the chamber's E-news letter.

The chamber also can include articles in the e-mail newsletter it sends out.

Jerry Volloy noted that we were getting agendas and summaries, but how could people get involved. How can we improve the process?

Heidi Merkel said it was important to wait until the final minutes had been approved before publishing them on the websites as some organizations have done. The staff would like to provide minutes within a week and give the task force members an opportunity to

comment and then will try to get them out by Friday or at the very latest Monday before the next task force meeting.

Leila noted that minutes that are incomplete could cause a lot of trouble. You want to keep the study positive and productive and to give the public minutes that the task force has confidence in-a final document. Several commented on the need to make these minutes more timely and to do them on schedule.

There was discussion about how to approve minutes. Kohann emphasized that they should be approved by the task force. During the Tysons Task Force effort, the task force always approved the minutes. Heidi said that she had hoped to handle this by e-mail so that would not take up time from a crowded agenda at task force meetings. **Several thought that it probably would not take very long to approve the minutes after meetings and that there would be value in doing so.**

John Bowman noted the need to get fresh and timely information.

Amelia Townsend was asked how RA gets the best results when it communicates with its members. How to avoid the problem of e-mails, which require self-selection. Amelia said that they sent out postcards with information about summer camps and put that information on their website. So far 60% of the responses have come from the website. People have the opportunity to get on the web after work at home. RA reaches 21,000 households-62, 000 residents.

Heidi asked about getting contacts from the homeowners associations. Amelia said that RA has a list of 133 homeowner associations and condo associations. It has a neighborhood advisory commission and the neighborhood advisory commission specialist, Arlene Whittick. This group sponsors an open mic night. There is actually going to be one on March 10 hosted by Paul Thomas, a task force member, on the subject of the Reston Master Plan Special Study.

Heidi also said she was interested in reaching out to PTO's and PTAs. How can we get their interest? It was suggested she contact Stu Gibson, who serves on the school board. Fairfax County public schools has current contact information for these organizations.

John said that there were two things that we're talking about: one. Informing people and two. Engaging people. It is tough to engage people. Brian noted that part of the solution is the process that you

design. In Tysons Corner there was a core group but despite the major outreach efforts not that great involvement. In Reston, there are number of very active organizations. The thing to do is to get the passion of those in the room who represent these organizations to get their members out.

Heidi said that the County staff has asked for money to hire a public affairs consultant. Several noted that The Perspective Group has served the Tysons Task Force and Reston Metrorail Access Group. They have done an excellent job of helping to design a communications plan and in reaching out to the community. Kohann said the plan consisted of workshops, fact sheets, accessible information, and a schedule that clearly showed where they were possibilities for community engagement by using colored charts, like a PERT chart. The Tysons task force used mailings, a schedule, fact sheets, and a website.

How effective is mailing? Leila noted that the Reston Community Center Summer Guide was about to be published. It was possible to put a full-page in it describing the work of the special study task force. She said she would pull the information off the website and would mark it up and provided to Heidi for review. It should include a calendar of meetings.

Bill Penniman asked if there was a cheaper way to do the community outreach? Heidi noted that what the task force is doing is quite different from Tysons Corner task force. There, they were planning for the downtown of Fairfax County. In Reston, we are looking at updating an existing plan.

Brian noted that Reston had an advantage in that you have more people that are engaged. This is important. You are the bulldozers-the passion. Communicate this to your groups and fire people up.

John had suggested positioning two bulldozers at Wiehle Avenue and putting a sign between them to get people to attend the next meeting.

Bill said that this was an important issue -- how the people provide input to the task force.

Patty introduced the subject of social media saying that she had seen a recent brief video at the Loudoun County Economic Development Commission Meeting on the effectiveness of social media and who does or doesn't respond to certain kinds of outreach.

Some noted that there was a lot of danger in some of the social media. There are problems with blogs with anonymous people publishing things. Leila said there would probably be a blog -- Friends of the Reston Community Center. She also noted that in a recent survey that was open ended when they asked about how people learned about meetings, most people said by mail.

John Bowman noted that the problem with email/social media is that people self-select themselves. RCA has its blog and it is very intensive keep it up-to-date.

We want to reach out to the business community and the next generation.

Brian said the county does have a countywide Facebook presence and does use twitter.

Amelia said they have calls to action.

We should place information on Comcast, Fairfax public access TV and Channel 10.

Jerry said that specific people might not know about the Reston Association's advisory committees. RA should get the information out to the public. Amelia responded that people are appointed to the advisory committees. The public could attend the meetings.

I suggested that provide Apache that would provide basic information about the process to the public, a one pager that would identify the groups and Bob. Lila volunteered that the RCC could put this together and that people should send information to her. Heidi had noted that this was not something the county could do. She also said that the rest of the environmental committee had provided input to the special study. And Dave Edwards's head of the transportation advisory committee and it is working on providing input to the study area it has already provided comments on principles.

We could also provide information on the Comcast bulletin board about upcoming meetings. **When we put information on it, could we also put information about upcoming working group meetings of the other organizations?**

Leila noted that the Reston Community Center and Reston Historic

Trust We're sponsoring a Program on March 25 About Generation X at the Reston Community Center in Hunter's Woods, 7 to 9 PM. **There is an opportunity to have a table for the Reston Master Plan Special Study.**

#### Action Items

A schedule of upcoming meetings should be sent to Lila as soon as possible to get into the summer guide.

We should also try to reach out to high schools as the next-generation.

If we want an article published in the Reston Chamber newspaper insert we should send an article to [BruceC@restandchamber.org](mailto:BruceC@restandchamber.org)

The group closed the meeting by agreeing to meet the following Wednesday, March 17, at 10:30 AM at the Reston Association to consider other outreach efforts, particularly in light of the upcoming public meeting on March 20 addressing the Wiehle Avenue transit station area.