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June 12, 2020

The Honorable Libby Garvey
Chair
Arlington County Board
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mrs. Garvey:

On behalf of the Green Valley Civic Association, please remove item #14 from the Arlington County Board agenda set for June 13, 2020.

Some of the reasons for this removal are outlined in the attached commentary published in the *Sun Gazette* on June 10, 2020. We would appreciate you adding the attached commentary and this letter to the agenda item.

We would be glad to add supporting evidence for the issues raised in the commentary, as well as other examples, if requested.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Portia Clark
President
Green Valley Civic Association

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Sun Gazette

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Arlington Leaders Once Again Fail Green Valley

ROBIN STOMBLER
and PORTIA CLARK
For the Sun Gazette

While millions marched for equity and racial justice last week, the Arlington County government posted a board agenda item that turns these actions into mere slogans.

A license agreement would have the county government turn a newly acquired \$1 million property in the Green Valley community into a parking lot for WETA. This action is but one in a series of events that draw attention to the inequity systemic within the county.

The county government in 2018 stated that "acquisition of the property is essential for the expansion of Jennie Dean Park." Not quite two years later, the county is willing to use the land for private parking for an undefined period of time.

The cost for this benefit is a dozen "15-second promotional underwriting credit spots" on FM radio. The county boasts

a level of engagement that includes two notices placed in the Washington Times, then states "the staff has not received any negative feedback" related to the proposed agreement.

Let's be clear. This transaction occurred without notification or input from our community. Yet, when officials want to host a fish fry in our neighborhood, the phones ring.

This particular agreement brings questions as to if the county government will once again store its large vehicles in the front of Jennie Dean Park. Improvements to the park, scheduled to begin in early 2020, never materialized. Staging for the construction vehicles is supposed to occur away from the residential area.

We have no confidence that the county will honor this prior commitment, since it will not speak with us about it. Must we march to be heard?

This is but one example of how the county government, through entrenched practices and *laissez-faire* attitudes, marginalizes our community.

In December 2019, after numerous inquiries, we wrote officially to the county

government for assistance in obtaining general information about plans for the Shirlington Road bridge and a possible pedestrian crosswalk, all located in Green Valley. A reply was received in January that design work had begun and a "full-some public review of the plans and designs is not rolled-out until plans reach at least 30-percent design." Yet, the County has presented its "pre-30%" plans to others, including the Shirlington General Land Use Plan Special Study group. The county continues to refuse to inform Green Valley on this local topic.

On the County Board agenda for March 21, 2020, a staff report stated that "All three (3) civic associations participated in the [Site Plan Review Committee] meeting conducted on March 2." As representatives of one of the three civic associations referenced, we were not aware of such a meeting nor were we present. We do not know if this was a clerical error or a deliberate attempt to misrepresent, but it is not the first time others have attempted to speak for Green Valley in absentia.

We recognize these issues individually may seem insignificant, but examples such

as those have multiplied, and they take a toll on our community. They also harm the integrity of our county government as a whole.

The county government must reassess its engagement processes to correct these actions, and must be held accountable for practices that marginalize segments of our community. More innovative and compassionate solutions should be encouraged. Local hiring, paid internships, job fair hosting and community clean-ups beat 12 ego-boosting radio spots any day.

This editorial will not stop these actions from continuing. We have tried, time and again, to work with our policymakers and county-government staff to address these habitual practices. For a historically African American community, with a majority-minority population, these actions are not one-time mistakes. It is no longer acceptable for the County to say "we'll try to do better" or we're "for equity," it's past time to prove it.

Stomblor is chair of Community Affairs for the Green Valley Civic Association. Clark is president of the Green Valley Civic Association.