

McLean Community Center
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
July 25, 2007
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, VA 22101

Board Present: Sean Dunn, Chair; Katherine Armstrong, Jan Auerbach, Julia Berkson, Drew Clark, Kevin Dent, Nyka Feldman, David Sanders, Ed Shahin

Board Absent: Jeb Byrne, Nyka Feldman, Charisse McElroy

Staff Present: Michael Cadwallader, Executive Director; Clare Kiley, Deputy Director; Carol Pardon, Administrative Assistant

Guests Present: Page Shelp, former MCC Executive Director
Cheryl Patten, Beverly Manor Homeowners' Association
Rachael Bail & Susan Baumel, McLean Drama Company
Nancy Perry, McLean Project for the Arts (MPA)
Monte Tayloe, *McLean/Fairfax Times*

Convened: 7:35 p.m.

Agenda adopted.

Citizen Comment:

- **Page Shelp** provided some history of the MCC as its first executive director for 25 years. She said that the MCC was originally privately funded, and that it became a government agency in order to establish a special tax district. Subsequently, the MCC for many years received private financial donations from individuals, clubs, businesses, organizations, and wills and trusts. It was her opinion that the MCC's governing boards wanted to maintain and even emphasize the private nature of support for the MCC, so that the sense of community ownership would not be jeopardized and the facility would not be viewed just as a government facility. She listed some of the items within the facility that were provided as gifts from private donors. Private support was put front and center when the balcony was added to the Alden Theatre. Subsequently, every donor of a significant gift was honored with a plaque placed on the outer wall of the lobby. Today, however, there are no plaques honoring those who gave. Gone also is the bronze plaque set in concrete from the Philip Sperling Memorial Garden. Shelp said she considers it as a personal embarrassment that promises were made to good people but not kept. Donors have been hurt and angered, not to mention what has been done to private giving. She urged the current Governing Board to return to honoring the commitments that were made not so very long ago.

Dunn responded that there is a plan to commemorate the donors. Shelp said she was aware of a plan to screen print the names of donors on the lobby wall. She made it clear she didn't think screen printing was particularly appropriate when permanent, individual plaques were promised, but at least something should go forward. Dunn said the Board approved screen printing of the names a year ago and asked what the holdup was. Perry said the MPA has received the donor names, and the screen printing should be completed by the end of September. Dunn requested that the removal of the Philip Sperling plaque be looked into. Sanders thanked Shelp for coming in and for her decades of public service. He agreed that sometimes the original concept is lost when government agencies become more bureaucratic. It is an embarrassment that the donor names haven't been put

up and an insult to the people to whom commitments were made, he said. The confidence of the citizens and organizations needs to be restored.

- **Cheryl Patten** brought up three items. First, she asked if the MCC has been invited to an upcoming meeting with the library, the Supervisor's office, the Park Authority, and Fairfax County Water Management. She said a meeting had been held between the Dolley Madison Library and the neighbors without representatives of the other entities in the complex. One of the issues brought up in the meeting concerned a planned new parking lot which would require clear-cutting a couple acres of parkland. Part of the rationale was that the library was planning to hold classes, which, the neighbors felt, could be offered at the MCC instead.
 - Auerbach responded that she called the Dranesville Supervisor's office when she saw a newspaper article about the meeting. She was told that the meeting was originally supposed to be just a small gathering and that a newspaper reporter wasn't even present. She said she believes the Supervisor's office is sensitive to ensuring that the MCC will be notified before a meeting of substance takes place. She added that the MCC Board has been coordinating with Fairfax County Library's Sam Clay, but not regarding program issues.

Patten's second item was to announce that traffic studies have been initiated on Ingleside Avenue. MCC will be invited to the task force on traffic calming measures. She said two traffic speed counts have been done on Ingleside. The first was between Churchill Road and the MCC. In a 24-hour period there were 603 cars at an average speed of 37 miles per hour. (The speed limit is 25 mph.) The second count, done five weeks later between Dolley Madison and the MCC, showed 1,302 vehicles traveling at an average speed of 32 mph within a 24-hour period. She requested that the Potomac School busses no longer use the MCC parking lot for drop off and pick up. Eliminating this would help to alleviate some of the danger and traffic on Ingleside.

- Sanders asked if the times of the excessive speeds were consistent with the Potomac School pickup and drop off times. Patten said the study didn't give times. Neighbors have reported anecdotally that parents speed into the MCC lot. Also, the volume is 70-80 cars.

Patten's third concern was the MCC-MPA Management Agreement which is under review. She said she was the MCC Governing Board chair when the current agreement was negotiated. She has some concerns about funding; e.g., the MCC has given \$10,000 of taxpayer funds to the MPA, a private, non-profit group. She said the MCC is a county building with county policies. Every other group signs an indemnity clause because it protects the MCC. Regarding the MPA not wanting to turn over any class fees to the MCC, all other groups have to pay, she said. The MPA is a tenant who does not pay rent for the spaces it occupies. No other group gets that kind of accommodation. Giving the MPA space downstairs in the facility could lead to the MCC wanting to expand to accommodate its own programs. Moreover, it leaves the MCC open to requests for space from other private groups.

- Dunn said the indemnity clause issue has been sent to the Fairfax County attorney. In response to Patten's inquiry, he said the Board minutes and meeting agenda are on the MCC Web site.

- **Rachael Bail**, President of the McLean Drama Company, announced that she is working on a ten-minute play contest and asked for the full cooperation of the MCC in helping them out.

- **Nancy Perry** called the Board's attention to a *Washington Post* review of the MPA's current art exhibit. She said the MPA was awarded a plaque by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for their ArtReach Program for school-age children.
- Dunn appointed Sanders as acting secretary in the absence of Nyka Feldman.
- Minutes of June 27, 2007, were adopted.

Chair's Report: Sean Dunn

- Dunn, Auerbach, and Sanders met with Dranesville Supervisor Joan DuBois, who wanted to know about the plans for renovating the MCC's Ingleside facility. She also made it clear that the County finance people think the MCC should lower its tax rate. In addition, she said she wanted the MCC to consider contributing \$450,000 to the Dead Run Storm Water Management Project so that the project could be taken to Churchill Road.
 - Clark asked if the MCC Board has been invited to the next meeting about the Dolley Madison Library. Dunn said not yet. Patten said the meeting will be about the auxiliary parking lot behind the library, storm water management, and programming management. She said the MCC should attend.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Cadwallader

- The Executive Director's report and project report were included in the Board folders. Building maintenance will be done in August, Cadwallader reported.
- A formula has been devised to ensure that the Board-mandated reduction in class prices for residents will not result in class instructors making less money.
- In response to a question from Sanders, Cadwallader gave a brief report on the 4th of July celebration sponsored by the MCC at Langley High School. He said there was good music and audience participation. There were some weather issues and also product issues with the fireworks from China, so that the show didn't go off as planned. One of the mortars exploded, causing the box to tip over and explode. No one was hurt.

Executive Committee Report: Sean Dunn

- MCC/MPA Management Agreement: Dunn reported that the Committee met on April 23 and on July 9 to go over the proposed changes in the Management Agreement between the MCC and the MPA. Substantial portions of the Agreement have been rewritten over a number of months. Issues of liability and liquidated damages have yet to be resolved.
 - Dunn asked Perry to give the Board a history of the relationship between the MCC and the MPA. Perry said the relationship was defined in the 1989 Management Agreement, which stipulates that the MPA will provide the arts program for the MCC in exchange for space. When the MCC's Community Hall was built, the MPA was asked to raise \$300,000 in exchange for moving the art galleries into the old Community Hall space upstairs. The MPA also runs the DuVal Art Studio, which was a gift from Clive DuVal in memory of his wife, Susan, and was opened in 2000. Perry said that the MPA is not just a tenant in the MCC building but that the MCC and the MPA are partners, with the MPA running the visual arts classes and art exhibitions. The MPA also does community art reach and other programs.

- Referring to the minutes in the Board folders, Dunn briefly went over some of the changes in the Agreement, which include dropping the requirement that the MPA pay fees to the MCC out of the revenues it receives from classes and discontinuing use of the gallery upstairs for the Antiques Show. Auerbach added that the Management Agreement clarifies that the MPA will not rent the spaces upstairs. In response to Armstrong's question about dropping the fee payments, Auerbach said that the MCC will lose about \$20,000 in revenue from the MPA in exchange for additional services the MPA will be expected to provide, such as opening the gallery when there are performances in the Alden Theatre or when other MCC evening events are held.
- Dunn referred the Antiques Show issue to the Program Committee, since Board policy requires the Program Committee to approve a proposed significant change to a traditional event. In response to a question from Dent, Dunn said the next steps are to receive clarification from the County Attorney on the outstanding legal issues, after which the entire revised document will go to the MCC's Executive Committee and then to the County Attorney. After receiving approval from the County Attorney the document would be sent to both the MCC and MPA Boards for their approval.

Capital Facilities Committee: Jan Auerbach, Chair

- The Committee met on July 16 and discussed some rough cost estimates for expansion and renovation efforts to provide the Finance Committee. The primary focus of the meeting was on proposed internal modifications to the MCC's Ingleside facility that could be undertaken this year. Staff looked into making the Community Hall more soundproof when it is divided into three rooms, and was told by a contractor who was not a sound technician that not much can be done as long as the wood floor stays. The Committee asked the staff to investigate it further. The Committee is waiting for a proposal to improve sound abatement in the theatre shop area and for recommendations from neighbors on building and grounds beautification.
- Staff is proposing to enlarge conference rooms (CRs) 1 and 2 in the lower level of the building by extending the walls out into the lobby area to make them flush with the hallway. CR 1 would be used for children's art classes and CR 2 would be able to accommodate larger meetings than currently possible. Staff is also proposing to modify the front reception area to make it wider, correct airflow problems, and to otherwise be reconfigured so that the receptionists do not have their backs to patrons and the office cubicles make optimum use of space. Touch-screen computers would be put in the lobby for patrons to register online. In addition, reconfiguring the current registration area would be considered.
 - In response to a question from Clark, Auerbach explained the genesis of the recommendation for enlarging CR 1 and dedicating it for use as a children's art space. It has not yet been determined if it would be largely dedicated or wholly dedicated to the MPA for that purpose, she said. By renovating rather than expanding, the proposal responds to the need expressed in the public survey for more children's art space. The reception area would be extended out into the lobby area to make it more welcoming and allow for better interaction with the public. There would be no increase in the footprint of the building. The modifications would be financed out of the FY 08 budget.
 - ***Committee Recommendation:*** *Approve \$62,500 to reconfigure conference rooms 1 and 2 downstairs (\$22,000) and to modify the front reception area (\$40,500).*
Approved by the Board.

Program Committee:

- Dunn reported on the July 11 meeting in the absence of Program Chair Feldman. The Committee discussed the possibility of renting space downtown to pilot some MCC programs as a test. Alden Theatre space utilization data was requested from staff, including turndowns, to know when the theatre is busy, when it's not, and what the demand is. During the Board meeting, in response to a question from Kiley, Dunn said to use Joe McGovern's space utilization for the MCC as a guide. Kiley said she wanted to make sure it was understood that that people who are turned down for the Alden Theatre are not potential users for a smaller black box theatre. Auerbach mentioned that both the Program and the Capital Facilities Committee discussed piloting the use of the Old Firehouse Teen Center space for adult programs when the teens aren't there, and that this should go forward as soon as possible. Cadwallader said one or two adult classes are being planned for the fall. They will be announced in the Fall *Program Guide*. He said someone from the staff will have to open the Old Firehouse in the evenings and remain there to supervise.

Finance Committee: David Sanders, Chair

- The Committee met twice. On July 3 the Committee went over budget guidance to give to the other committees in the development of the FY 09 budget. The Committee agreed the committees and staff should hold the line to County budget guidance for current programs, and to provide separate justification for any new or expanded programs staff wants-.
- In the meeting with Joan DuBois (referred to earlier by Dunn), the Supervisor was broadly supportive of a cut in the MCC's tax rate, given the large surpluses the MCC has been experiencing. The latest generation of actual budget figures at the closeout of the 2007 fiscal year showed that there was a budget windfall due to a larger principal and higher interest on that principal (\$430,000) than expected. At the July 24 Finance Committee meeting, the members recommended as planning guidance a reduction in the tax rate from 2.8 cents per \$100 of assessed real estate value to 2.6 cents.
 - Shahin said he believed the Board has to lower the tax rate because it is politically necessary due to public perception. In response to a question from Armstrong, Sanders said the original tax rate of 3.0 cents was lowered to 2.7 cents in 1989, and then, in the face of projected deficits, raised to 2.8 cents in FY 1998. Auerbach said she didn't favor lowering the tax rate because if all the proposed projects go forward the MCC could be in a budget deficit situation by the time the building downtown is completed. She said there was very little support expressed for a tax cut in the public meetings. About half of the current surplus could be spent or committed this year to make improvements. If the MCC has to go out to bond to finance expansion, it would probably go through but there is no guarantee, and Board members would have to actively campaign for its passage. She noted that the 1982 bond to renovate the Ingleside facility passed by 62 percent. Previous Boards accrued a surplus so that the MCC could pay cash for the expansion, she said. A cut in the tax rate to 2.6 cents would result in an average savings of \$18.25 per household. It is better to wait until the new facility is built and there is a good sense of what the operating costs will be and how costs and revenues are aligning before considering cutting the tax rate.
 - Dent said some of the proposed projects on the wish list are speculative. Given the surplus, lowering the tax rate is the right thing to do. Armstrong said it is wrong to lower the tax rate just for public perception, but expansion is not imminent. If the economic situation changes, the issue can be revisited. Clark said that lowering the tax rate

shouldn't be taken as a sign that expansion is not taking place. Every proposal on the wish list would have to be done in order to get to a negative balance situation. There will still be enough money to go forward with expansion. Berkson said that the public will approve of the tax cut, and that will be noticed more than their \$18.25 in tax savings. Sanders said that last year was not the right time to cut the tax rate but the situation is different now. Revenues and expenses have gotten out of line. It is a matter of tax equity. A few dollars here and there do make a difference to people living on fixed or lower incomes. It is inequitable to tax people now for the benefit of others sometime in the future. He added that while the Board has only changed the tax rate twice before, the tax rate is set by the Board every year. Dunn said that the Board is not setting the tax rate right now. Rather it is setting a working assumption for developing the FY 09 budget. The final decision on the tax rate will be made at the Board meeting in September.

- ***Committee Recommendation:*** *Set a working assumption of a tax rate reduction from 2.8 cents [per \$100 of assessed real estate value] to 2.6 cents, recognizing that the assumption is made on the basis of continuing to maintain a surplus for a likely expansion downtown by FY 2011.* Approved by the Board (Auerbach opposed).

Marketing/Communications Committee: No report.

Liaison to Friends of the MCC: No report.

Continuing Business:

- **Potomac School Buses:** In response to a question from Dent, Cadwallader said an agreement was signed with Potomac School in January 2005 to allow for school buses to use the MCC's upper parking lot to drop off students for their parents to pick up in the afternoon. Dent asked if there were multiple busses. Cadwallader said that most of the time there is one bus, but every now and then there is a second bus. Patten disagreed, saying there are two or three and sometimes four buses. There was uncertainty as to whether the buses come only in the afternoons or also in the mornings. Dunn asked Cadwallader to check how many buses there are and when they come, and provide the answer to the Program Committee at its next meeting.
- The Finance Committee's "Meeting of the Whole" on the MCC's FY 2009 budget will be held on September 5 at 7:30 p.m.
- Shahin said the Widowed Persons Service was delighted to learn that it is an affiliate program of the MCC and won't have to pay to hold meetings on available evenings at the MCC.

New Business: None.

Adjourned: 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Sanders, Acting Secretary