



**2022-2023 MCC Governing Board
Public Hearing on DRAFT Strategic Plan
July 6, 2022 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

- Board Members present:** QUORUM (6) in-person: Barbara Zamora-Appel; Sarah Tran; Melanie Sletten; Charlotte Loving; Kristina Groennings; Bill Glikbarg
- Board members absent:** Lisa Mariam; Anna Bartosiewicz; Ari Ghasemian; Rasheq Rahman; Shivani Saboo
- MCC Staff present:** Daniel Singh, Executive Director; Holly Novak; Sabrina Anwah; Jennifer Garrett; Justin King; Jonathan Davis; Anne McAfee
- Guests:** Michele Walter (AMS); Deb Bissen (MPA); Lori Carbonneau (MPA); Kathleen Gillette Mallard; Mr. Mallard; Catherine Trauernicht; Paul Kohlenberger; Catherine Trauernicht; Richard Porter; Barbara Katz; David Goode; Merrily Pierce (*TOTAL = 18 individuals from the public attended; several did not sign-in*)

CONVENE MEETING

Chair Zamora-Appel convened a Public Hearing on the DRAFT Strategic Plan on July 6, 2022, at 6:37 p.m. The meeting was open to the public attending in-person. The stated purpose was for Small District 1A-Dranesville residents to have an opportunity to express their views about ongoing development of the DRAFT Strategic Plan.

OVERVIEW OF WORKING VERSION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Director Daniel Singh introduced Michele Walter (AMS Planning & Research consultant) to continue the presentation. A PowerPoint presentation of the DRAFT Strategic Plan was shown. Those present could view it on the screen or access it on MCC website.

The strategic plan has been in development over several months and is nearing completion. Ongoing participation by the public and MCC Governing Board members throughout the process has been robust. Civic groups in McLean have had an opportunity to review and provide suggestions to shape the final product. Fairfax County officials have reviewed the DRAFT and communicated their feedback – with affirmation of the approach of this strategic plan as being worthwhile and significant for MCC. This solid review process with significant input by community stakeholders and county leadership has been helpful in designing an effective road map to envision a bright future for MCC.

Michele Walter thanked the community for being so engaged in this process. There is nothing worse than being a consultant but not having the community being engaged. People really care about this place and that is very nice to see!

The plan is fashioned in three phases 1. Learning about the community; survey (800 participants); community listening session. 2. Presented some learnings from other thriving community centers in the U.S. 3. Then having another public participation moment as it related to the goals and emerging strategies. DRAFT plan has been posted and we are having this public hearing. 249 people responded to the plan and we received 309 individual comments. Every comment received will be included verbatim in the appendices to the final report.

This is a “breadth” plan as opposed to a “depth” plan. We want MCC to reach as many people as it can and serve as broad a swath of the community as possible. There has been much conversation about local vs. regional; which ecosystem are we talking about? There is a real focus on excellence; whether locally sourced or nationally sourced, the threshold will be excellence. Risk taking is a real emphasis. There was a lot of feeling that MCC was staid; stuck in the past – so there is an



emphasis on risk-taking and trying new things. Roles & responsibilities were examined. MCC has a new chief executive; the building opened after capital investment; technological lag and lack; understanding the financial structure (monies coming in; aging building and notion of “reserves”) and establishing a financial construct that everyone can agree on, from county Supervisor to the resident: we all understand it. Clarity of metrics and reporting structures (some of the technology needs freshening.)

What is not different: MCC thrives and succeeds because it sees itself as a ready partner. We see many agencies where our partnerships can deliver more value. First focus: delivering excellence to the taxpayers, aligned with priorities and policies of Fairfax County.

We revised purpose, mission, vision. We spent a lot of time on the mission. It is a community center – oftentimes you try to have a crisper statement; but these all happen here and we have to show that in the mission statement.

Values – how we deliver: equity (making sure that all voices are heard in a respectful manner.) “Client-first.”

Question from a public participant: What is the definition of “equity?”

Response from Michele Walter: Fairfax County has a definition of it. Supervisor Foust and Board of Supervisors Chair McKay focused on the county’s definition.

Ms. Walter continued her remarks: Five discreet goals with strategies. Online survey allowed people to weigh-in on different strategies. “Visibility” – making sure people know MCC is here so that this asset is used and appreciated by the community. “Being welcoming” – it’s all about the invitation. Everyone feels welcome coming. “Inviting discovery” – a place of learning, in the spirit of lifelong learning. “Modeling sustainability” – those things have resonated through the plan over the last 8 months.

In each of these and in the plan document online, they each have strategies. A lot of verbatim quotes in the appendices. It is the community’s plan. The board was very engaged and active on purpose, mission, values, goals. A lot of the strategies came out of the community listening sessions! AMS is a big funnel – the board and staff has not had as much influence on the plan as the public input did.

It has a lot to do with digital visibility and physical. Welcoming the community, listening to the community and understanding what they want. Identifying people who are missing and making special efforts to listen to them. Invite discovery by tackling topics that are of interest to the community. Focus on excellence. Robust discussions about this! Modeling sustainability = includes sustainable business practices and financial transparency and reporting/metrics as well as environmental sustainability.

It's very important that it has to stay in line with the county itself. There is clear intersection with the county’s plans: CEPAP, Strategic Plan, One Fairfax plan.

That is the work TO-DATE. Now I will close the presentation and listen to what you all have to say.

PUBLIC COMMENT **moderated by Michele Walter – AMS Planning & Research*

Some individuals requested in advance to speak; all were pre-verified as Small District 1A-Dranesville residents.

1. Catherine Trauernicht

Thank you for the opportunity. Was the search for the strategic planning process a competitive bidding process? Yes – all procurement for the county is a competitive bidding process.

How many other firms were considered?

Response by Executive Director Singh: Questions should be submitted electronically.

I’d like to know if any members of MCC or staff have a personal business relationship with AMS and its employees.



Is there a signed contract with AMS? Yes – the contract outlined a particular timeline for the work.

Is there a reason why questions are not being answered?

How long does this consultancy operate?

Does it have a timeline?

Is the May 2022 DRAFT strategic plan still out of date? The May and June DRAFT differ in some respects. Is that May version still under consideration?

Response from AMS: The plan that was posted for 30-day comment has not been changed.

786 respondents to a community survey – 78% of respondents were from small district 1A-Dranesville. Were the opinions of people not living in the tax district taken into account?

Response from AMS: We did a segmentation analysis and there was no statistically valid difference between those groups.

There are three other community centers that you compared MCC to – one in Florida, Texas; how do they relate?

[unnamed 2nd person commenting: These are questions that are being asked – they are being received.]

I think it is important to have answers to questions that no one seems to be addressing.

2. Richard Porter:

Like many strategic plans I have seen, the DRAFT Strategic Plan prepared by AMS seems overly burdened by “consultant speak” and vague terminology, resulting in a heavy serving of “word salad.” Whatever plan you may finally adopt, I would like to highlight several points that I believe the Governing Board should emphasize in its implementation of the plan.

1. Stay in your lane. The community that you must serve is the citizenry of Small District 1A-Dranesville, not some wider geographic area. Unfortunately, the AMS draft, while paying lip service to Small District 1A-Dranesville, lapses into proposed programs for the “region” (pages 7, 32, 53), the “wider area” (pages 7, 32) and even to the global community” (pages 6,7,18,31). If MCC loses its focus on Small District 1A-Dranesville and seeks to embrace a regional or county focus, you can be sure that McLean residents will seek to have the financial support burden they have carried since 1970 lifted.

2. Exercising good judgement in programming and activities. It is one thing to seek to embrace the “new, the bold and the unexpected” (page 5), but it is much more important to consistently exercise good judgement and common sense, while respecting broadly accepted community values. For example, there may be members of the community who might enjoy a pornographic film festival. That would certainly be bold, but I would not expect that type of program to be sponsored by MCC. I would feel the same way about bringing in drag queens to perform for young children. Being “innovative” must always be tempered by good judgement, an assessment of whether the particular program is a good use of taxpayer funds, and a consideration of whether the program is likely to be unifying or divisive. **3. Partnerships** – (Goal 3 page 32) calls for a commitment to more and deeper partnerships. I think that MCC should be very circumspect in the partnerships that it seeks to develop. Developing partnerships should not be a goal in and of itself. Rather, MCC should entertain partnerships only with organizations that have broad community support, are not narrowly agenda driven, and are not pursuing political or social engineering goals. **4. Crafting a definition of excellence.** On page 34, the DRAFT Strategic Plan calls for crafting a definition of “excellence.” You may want to rethink that as a designated task. I can’t think of a greater waste of time, energy and resources than attempting to come up with some abstract definition of “excellence” as it pertains to MCC. You will, I suspect, simply wind up with more “word salad.” As long as you collect, and periodically evaluate the attendance

of programs by residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville and solicit feedback from residents, that should tell you whether MCC's performance can be rated as "excellent" or not. **5. Definition of Purpose:** Finally, I would change the language regarding "Purpose" (page 5) to read: The purpose is to provide a unifying sense of community for residence of Small District 1A-Dranesville. Adding the word "unifying" would be intended to reflect the obvious, namely MCC should be an entity that seeks to to unify rather than divide the McLean community.

3. Sabrina Anwah – MCC Staff (Public Information Officer):

Good evening,

I am entering this statement into the record on behalf of the MCC Senior Management Team.

There is a distressing statement in the current MCC Draft Strategic Plan. MCC staff members learned that the MCC Governing Board specifically directed the consultants at AMS to place the following revised language into the plan's section about best governance practice: "*Conduct staff training on the role of the board as the ultimate governing body.*" page. 35, Goal 5, Section 1a.

The original draft strategic plan that was submitted to MCC for review on May 22, did not include this language. It showed a proper delineation of Governing Board - Staff roles (Goal 5, Section 1a.).

The statement about 'ultimate authority' that is now embedded in the draft strategic plan is inaccurate and highly inappropriate. The MCC Governing Board is not an 'ultimate governing body' in relation to MCC staff. As Fairfax County employees, MCC staff members must follow all policies and procedures of Fairfax County for implementation of programs and events. As such, the Governing Board cannot and should not overrule any decisions made by MCC staff, nor impose outside directives onto the staff.

The relationship between MCC Governing Board and MCC staff has become troubled over the last year. The 2021-2022 Governing Board often actively thwarted MCC staff efforts on several matters. Despite receiving an orientation at the beginning of their term, they continually misconstrued their role and relationship to MCC staff. This may now carry over onto the 2022-2023 Governing Board. The MCC Governing Board is designed to act in an *advisory and oversight* capacity. MCC staff are the actual implementors of programming and facilities decisions – as merit employees of Fairfax County.

As decisionmakers, we are required to follow county policy and procedures at all times to support public accountability and transparency. This fact is often ignored by board members and has led to frustration. Some board members have tried to dictate immediate action items completely out of context. They have often misdirected staff to pursue alternate methods which have no bearing on, or are contradictory to, county procedures. When *differentiated* action is taken by MCC staff, the board disagrees and persists in a maligned perception of MCC staff as being incapable and insubordinate. All senior management staff have experienced such ire from the board and it has become demoralizing.

In addition to pledging to uphold the MOU, each MCC Governing Board member is required to give their signature on two other important documents that define a proper relationship of the Governing Board to MCC staff. These policies chart a clear and constructive path forward; however, they have not been respected by the MCC Governing Board:

1. Conflict of Interest Policy

Section L:

Policy Role of Board Members

Board Members shall respect and adhere to their role as policy makers. The MCC Board determines MCC policies on the advice, information and analysis provided by MCC Staff, in conjunction with Board Committees as needed, and other sources retained by the Board or staff.

Board Members shall not interfere with the administrative functions and professional duties of MCC Staff; nor shall they impair the ability of staff to implement the Board's policy decisions.

2. The MCC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

V. Powers and Responsibilities: The Governing Board is responsible for the development of policies and long-range plans for the Center's operation programming, personnel and financial management. Such policies and plans shall be in compliance with established policies and procedures of Fairfax County.

With the heavy-handed language noted above that is currently embedded in the DRAFT strategic plan, a fractured relationship will persist. McLean Community Center's talented staff will become discouraged, and their creativity will be diminished and thwarted by the Governing Board. This cannot continue.

The MCC Senior Management Team requests that this problematic statement be removed from the plan and replaced with the original language supplied by AMS.

4. Kathleen Gillette Mallard:

Good evening, MCC Board – Holly Novak, and fellow Dranesville citizens and taxpayers. Thank you for this opportunity to remark on the DRAFT MCC Strategic Plan. First, however, I want to thank MCC Executive Director, Danigl Singh, and Holly Novak for your recent efforts to ensure that the MCC supported financially and physically Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and July 4th events with Flags for Heroes and other efforts by MCC. Also, for your presence at these events, Mr. Singh and Holly – thank you. This is greatly appreciated by a large segment of the McLean community. It's truly a beautiful sight to see the dozen or so American flags waving outside the MCC building.

I'd like to take a moment of silence – the flag is at half staff out front. Is this because of the shooting in Chicago? There was another shooting in Richmond, VA this afternoon.

I've reviewed the MCC DRAFT Strategic Plan and it is an ambitious undertaking. We wonder how the Plan with its impressive verbiage and presentation on paper, will look like in actual implementation. For example, under what is different, prioritizes "breadth of reach" or reconciles "local, regional national presence"? What does it look like? I also grow anxious when I see the words "One Fairfax" because despite the best of intentions, we are a diverse community and it's impossible to be truly "One." We can't be "one" and we can't be totally equitable. We can give opportunities to all – but "equity" denotes everyone having the same outcomes. That won't work.

I'm also concerned about the Plan's statements regarding energy and climate action. As I recall, MCC plans on installing EV charging stations to the tune of \$\$\$\$ lots of money. Also, coming over today I was listening to the radio explaining that electricity comes from natural gas, coal, petroleum.

Another word that is used multiple times is "equity" or "equitable." I know this is part of the One Fairfax agenda, but it goes without saying that MCC will continue to offer the wide array of programming that appeals to all the demographics.

I thank you all so much for all your hard work. I look forward to seeing the Minutes and how you respond to Catherine Trauernicht.



5. Paul Kohlenberger:

Good evening, everyone. I'm here on behalf of the Greater McLean Chamber of Commerce. I will be submitting more detailed written comments ahead of the Board's next meeting on this but I wanted to briefly touch on a few items in this forum. You are here to hear the good, and what we think should be changed. Our overarching concern is the proposal to fundamentally and needlessly change the mission statement of the Center. The current mission statement is longstanding and directly relates to the founding purpose and decades-old practices of the Center. The Center is to provide a sense of community through: 1. furnishing facilities; 2. assisting community organizations; and 3. offering programming. The proposed statement eliminates reference to the first two and focuses entirely on the offering of programming by Center staff. But the Center really is the stage for four different types of programming: public to public (i.e. McLean Day); public to private (classes or tours, where the focus and benefit is largely privatized); private to public (AAUW Book Sale; MPA Artfest; a candidate forum sponsored by the McLean Chamber or the McLean Citizens Association; private organizations programming for the public benefit); private to private (rentals for a child's birthday party or a wedding reception). These last two (private to public and private to private) historically account for between 10-50% of annual patronage at the Center. And yet, in the current plan, they are not referenced generally or specifically. Not even the Board members' requests that more information on rental facilities be placed on the website has been included as an action item.

The Center should not just be offering staff-developed programming, but serve as a venue and a catalyst for the members of the community to pursue culture, knowledge, affinity and community. The community's access to the Center should remain a vital part of the Center's operations, and so it should remain an explicit part of the mission, and so the mission statement should not be changed.

A couple of related items: **As to diversifying revenues** which this plan calls for, we question the need, the wisdom and the justice of this action. There is no need because the Center brings in millions of dollars annually in tax revenue. There is no wisdom because the wise choice would be to remain completely beholden to the people of the Greater McLean Community. He who pays the piper calls the tune. If the Center tries to diversify its revenue through corporate sponsorships or governmental grants, those entities might begin to have a say in what is programmed. Serving the people paying the bills should be the focus of Center staff-produced programming.

And there is no justice. The local business community already contributes hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to the Center's operations. Any additional funds retained by these businesses for marketing and community support should remain focused on local and regional non-profit organization serving the community who rely on voluntary corporate support. The Center should not compete with, and thereby harm, local organizations by competing for funding when the Center's mission includes assisting local organizations.

As to significant increases in staffing, to which this plan refers euphemistically, we question the necessity. The Center's professional staff does such a great job that we find it difficult to understand how there could be a justification for significant new positions. More practically, we wonder where new staff members will, literally, work. On the roof? In a trailer? The only way to add numerous new positions would be to cannibalize existing public-use space. Does the Center propose to close Maffitt to public use? The computer lab at the Old Firehouse? The DuVal Studio? Surely, doing any of these would hurt the fulfillment of the mission much more than the new positions would help in doing so.



So, to recap: we adamantly oppose a change to the mission statement. We oppose efforts to substantially diversify revenues away from tax, interest, and earned revenue, in a way that could do harm to the community. And we question the justification for multiple new staff positions.

As one of the numerous community organizations that worked with the McLean Citizens Association to make the Center a reality, we appreciate the opportunity to have our views heard as you consider the future direction of the Center. We hope and expect that they, and those of other organizations and individuals, will be strongly considered as you continue your work to develop a good strategic plan. Thank you for your time, and for your service to the greater McLean community and its civic and cultural center. We appreciate the opportunity to have our views heard. We hope those will be strongly considered as you move forward.

6. Barbara Katz:

I'm new to this. I received the survey a few weeks ago and looked it over. I have not come to a meeting before in McLean. I wanted to find out what the community was thinking. 1. I'm very impressed with the comments made so far. I want to emphasize Mr. Porter's remarks – the programming and outreach of MCC should be unifying. 2. I'm very concerned about Sabrina's comment about the staff concerns and this juxtaposition of the staff with the board and what appears to be a substantial amount of tension. It should not be that way. It appears that there are some clear rules and regulations and I hope those will be followed so that the center works well for everyone. We've enjoyed the many programs that MCC has had over the years: "Legally Blond"; great young kids tap dancing amazingly (it was very vibrant); hip hop and all kinds of great stuff. 3. This is a comment – I'm not sure about it. I totally support the goal of sustainability and environment concerns but I am concerned about the proposal for EV charging stations: I support the idea but who will it serve? We should serve the whole community. I don't see that many Tesla's in McLean. For many people, that kind of automobile is out of range. 4. Lastly, I am a retired attorney and I found the strategic plan to be word salad – and hard to understand what exactly is being proposed. It seems vague in terms of restatement of the mission statement. Why was that restated? It didn't make sense to me. A lot was gobbledygook. A lot of money was spent and I couldn't understand at all some of the sections (even reading it two or three times). Those are my comments. I applaud everyone who is working on this. I hope MCC continues to be a vibrant center of McLean – we have been here over 20 years and we'd like to see that continue.

7. David Goode:

I'm an old soldier; when I see a five-year plan, I get suspicious. Is anyone here from Supervisor Foust's office? He is the guy who agrees with the tax rate. How many residents do we have in Small District 1A-Dranesville? 700 respondents doesn't sound like a notable percentage. Breadth of reach – AMS said "it's important to get everyone in the neighborhood. The postcard arrived yesterday and I don't have a Mac, I don't have a computer: to participate you must be online. I called and asked for hard copy. I was informed there was a meeting tonight. So much for breadth of reach. I wrote my comments on your plan. I would like to know the financial underpinning of MCC because it is unclear in the plan. I wrote some of these plans after I got out of the Army. As Ms. Mallard said, the wording is unclear to me. It's nice for writing a resume but not a strategic plan – it should be more specific. I was disappointed that the man from Greater McLean Chamber of Commerce



could not finish his remarks. You get the Executive Director and staff to go out to people. Secondly you sponsor organizations (I'm a member of Wakefield Chorale). If you are out of the district, it will cost more. I've been to Lewinsville and sang over there – but we received no support from MCC. That is not mentioned. I'm sorry I rained on your parade.

8. Unnamed individual (but he did verify his residency in Small District 1A-Dranesville)

I've been a resident of McLean now retired from the Navy. Full disclosure: I am white, Christian, heterosexual, taxpayer. I'm just gob smacked some months ago (a lady in my community) that sent me information about the Drag Queen business. I'm O.K. with everything; being in the Navy, I've seen it and done it all. The fact is though, we really need to let the community at-large know when we're taking bold steps as social justice warriors. Not all of us are social justice warriors. The thing I worry about is that I've raised my three children here in McLean at Churchill Road and up through Langley H.S. and in that time, those formative years, I literally lost control over their understanding of things and then their appreciation of things and what I thought was the right thing to instill in them. And here we are, some citizen sent me this thing about Drag Queen. O.K. – Drag Queens are O.K. so long as they are not around to institute that normal arrangement for the universe. The normal arrangement for the universe is normal. If we are going to do something outside the norm, MCC should at least alert the community that we are proposing (or not doing) – let the public decide whether that is appropriate to be funded by our tax dollars. *(applause)*

9. Merrily Pierce: If you are following county process, the county permits ten minutes for organizations and three minutes for individuals. Therefore since Paul Kohlenberger is the only organization represented tonight, to let him finish his remarks. [Paul Kohlenberger was then able to continue his remarks which are reflected in entirety above.]

10. Lori Carbonneau (MPA):

I'm a member of McLean Chamber of Commerce and Executive Director of MPA. We cherish, value and enjoy our partnership with MCC board and staff. Daniel, I want to thank you for making sure that we are represented. I would love to invite the opportunity to understand the second and third level of the strategic plan. With a corporate background in strategic planning, I find it's hard to capture. Two points: 1. clarifying relationships with partners – understand the objectives and to understand that MPA, too, has governance relationships that include MCC but go beyond. In clarifying those, bring all those parties to the table. 2. Regarding revenue mix – MPA is a point of deep interest but organizationally it has become challenging when McLean Day or fall sponsorships are being solicited by MCC at the same time as when MPA is seeking support. We want to partner in our outreach collectively, but we don't want to be competitive – and be respectful of our sources of revenue. As a taxpayer, what kind of benefits are being conferred to that? It would be helpful to know what are the terms of the sponsorship that you all [MCC] are seeking?

Public comments from local civic organizations and individuals submitted in writing:

1. Reston Community Center – remarks by Leila Gordon, Executive Director of RCC

From: Gordon, Leila <Leila.Gordon@fairfaxcounty.gov>

Sent: Friday, June 10, 2022 1:12 PM



To: Singh, Daniel <Daniel.Singh@fairfaxcounty.gov>; Novak, Holly R <Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov>; Anwah, Sabrina <Sabrina.Anwah@fairfaxcounty.gov>

Hello Friends,

Overall, it's a very comprehensive and impressive document. Some general feedback:

1. It looks like you have the “plan” components presented in three different formats; I'd reduce that to at least just two if not making a more generalized set of statements about the plan focus areas in the executive summary and saving the details of the plan for the subsequent pages. I didn't do a close edit for grammar, spelling etc., but someone should – I caught a few things, but didn't highlight or note all of them.
2. I have no clue what that “matrix” thing is so consider fleshing out what you mean by that term.
3. Absolutely be sure to “brand” this document with the MCC logo! (As opposed to the AMS logo, eh?)

To what extent did you want to treat or handle the challenges of governance when considered in the context of partner relationships? Seems to me that is a very tricky arena for MCC that ought to be at least acknowledged.

Congratulations on undertaking this arduous task and being vulnerable while doing so. It's never easy and there is a LOT of great stuff that's packed into this plan.

With love,

Leila

2. Friends of McLean Community Center – remarks by Cecilia Duran Closs

Feedback to June 2022 McLean Community Center Strategic Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to review the “Strategic Plan,” and provide input. For context, my family has lived in McLean for over 30 years. I attended McLean High School, and I was one of the first students to enjoy the Old Firehouse Teen Center when it first opened. I am well acquainted with many of the programs offered by the McLean Community Center, and from 2020-2022, I served as President of the Friends of the McLean Community Center. So yes, I am an “active” community member. I am also an attorney, though these days my profession takes a back seat (and sometimes is relegated to the trunk), as I raise my own school-age children. This is the first time I have reviewed the Community Center's Strategic Plan, and I thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Were there different consulting companies used in the past? I can tell you that a large number of community members who have resided in McLean for as long as I have, or longer, read this Strategic Plan with a degree of skepticism, and I can see where they are coming from. No one I have met was happy to see our community center become a focus of controversy over the past year. The apparent need to use a consulting company to lead input sessions and issue this plan –professional though they may be—highlights a continued disconnect between the current community center leadership and the residents whose interests they are meant to serve. I see it as a gulf in their mutual understanding, and the consulting company, rather than facilitating a dialogue to share perspectives and foster cooperation, appears to serve as a wedge that keeps them apart. For my part, I am desperate to move on from June 2021 and its fallout. None of that, however, will dissuade me from taking part in any community center program that interests me or my family. After all, I paid for it.

VALUES

Equity.

Response: Six years after the 2016 Presidential election, most working professionals over the age of 40 regard this word as little more than manipulative marketing strategy. The original definition of equity means impartiality, but impartiality requires setting judgement aside. Exercising judgment – good judgment—is critical to selecting programming when the funds for such programming come directly from the relatively small community so served. A better strategy would be to recognize McLean's common values and build on them.

Innovation.

Response: As described in the Strategic Plan, innovation means “embracing the discovery of the new, the bold, the unexpected.” The sound of it gets my heart pumping already... and that is the problem. McLean families generally look to their community center as a place where they can feel safe. McLean parents are *already* involved in innovation in their professional lives. Retirees have likewise “been there” already. This is partly why “shocking” and “innovative” programming can be ill received. See my comments below on “Joy.”

Joy.

Response: Well, who can argue against *joy*? I can: joy is an emotion—a fleeting state with just as many benefits and disadvantages as anger or sadness. Don’t take it from me: this is the consensus of mental health (not marketing) professionals. Do you know what is more transformative than joy? Peace. If you think it doesn’t sell, try billing it like this: *relaxation*.

GOALS

1. BE VISIBLE: Make our buildings, programming and activities visible and accessible to people of diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds.

Response: This goal sounds meaningless because you’ve lumped the buildings in with programming and activities as though they are equally important. The buzzwords of “people of diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds” fall flat and empty here because they are synonymous with *McLean*, and “our community.” Perhaps you want to improve outreach throughout the community and increase participation? That is a goal the community will support. As for strategies, I advise more focus on direct connection with residents over relying on social media.

2. WELCOME ALL OF MCLEAN AND ITS GLOBAL COMMUNITY: Cultivate a warm, inclusive environment for all, becoming the flagship location for McLean’s residents who wish to learn, play, relax and connect.

Response: The term “global community” is an oxymoron in this context: a mission to serve a community conflicts directly with an intent to serve the whole world. McLean residents may come from all over the world, but the world does not fund the community center. Even if the community center wants to enhance its international programming, it can do so by recognizing and celebrating the many nations from which our residents herald, and even more who are connected internationally by birth, profession, or passion. I applaud the notion that the center should continue to be a place for residents who wish to learn, play, relax and connect. Those strategies, as written, seem aligned with the community’s needs.

3. INVITE DISCOVERY: Provide opportunities to learn for people of all ages, interests, abilities, and backgrounds.

Response: This should be your primary goal. You even recognized that it was a major theme in your first input session. The community is in favor of learning opportunities, preferably with the least amount of controversy. This is also the feedback I have heard across the community. I have to point out, again, that our community is *synonymous* with “people of all ages, interests...” etc. The strategies provided here seem aligned with the community. The first objective, however, raises my suspicion because it appears to invite political activism from outside our community. Is that the intent of inviting non-residents to the community center for “engagement with contemporary activities and issues?” This sentence, and its meaning, seem out of place. The McLean community is made up of professionals—many current or former public servants— that are already actively engaged in “contemporary activities and issues,” likely more so than any of the other communities AMS surveyed. The do not—nor should they— come to the Community Center for a chance to wind up in the newspaper.

4. SHOWCASE EXCELLENCE: Deliver excellent programming in an operationally innovative fashion.

Response: The objectives seem sound, but your strategies need to complement them. If the community center aligns programming to “documented needs” within the community, it will not fail. The delivery of the programming can be innovative, but the reality is that our community – even with its extraordinary residents— shares the history of human experience; that’s not innovative at all.

5. MODEL SUSTAINABILITY: Represent the utmost integrity in our use of financial, physical, environmental, human, leadership, and other resources.

Response: The goal seems to confuse “resilience” with “preservation.” Equally puzzling is the addition of “human resources.” Setting that aside, the idea of modeling sustainability could serve several identified goals. Even so, the strategies call for integration with the “One Fairfax” initiatives, and even this desired integration will raise objections from the community for the simple fact that that the McLean Community Center is first and foremost beholden to its district, and not Fairfax as a



whole. The community center can take note of Fairfax County's various initiatives but it must be judicious in aligning such initiatives with the interest and character of the community it serves.

Thank you again for the opportunity to opine on the Strategic Plan. I remain committed to my community and if you believe I can be of any assistance in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Truly yours,

Cecilia Duran Closs

(703) 843-3267 Closs.cecilia@gmail.com

3. Merrily Pierce

From: M Pierce <pierce111@verizon.net>

Sent: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 1:22 PM

To: Singh, Daniel <Daniel.Singh@fairfaxcounty.gov>

Subject: Public Hearing

Hello Daniel:

Some questions about tonight's public hearing on the Draft Strategic Plan. I have the following questions.

1. The July 5, Draft Plan Public meeting was not well publicized. How many people attended?
2. When will the DRAFT Strategic Plan be officially approved by the MCC Board?
3. I was just told by MCC Staff that written comments are due no later than Friday, July 8. It is understood the deadline is being driven by Budget considerations. Please clarify what this means?
4. Given that the week of July 4th is traditional vacation time for many McLean families, an extension for submission of written comments to the Plan should be considered.

Many thanks for your response.

Merrily Pierce

The following written remarks were submitted by Merrily Pierce:

McLean Community Center Comments on the Draft Strategic Plan (Available May version) July 7, 2022

Outreach: This is a complex plan that was difficult to follow with much language that cannot be implemented. The outreach process was defined as "robust." Comments must be interpreted thru the lens of covid limitations on opportunities for the public to more fully discuss the plan in person that could have ironed out some of the concerns. The first public focus group was well attended in the Community Hall by residents who were notified by postcard. The second focus group on the Draft plan was a Zoom meeting, attended by only two people - former MCC Board members who pay attention to the Board meeting schedule. The third "public focus group" meeting was supposed to be held on McLean Day. The announced plan was to give residents an opportunity to comment on the final version of the plan during the Fair. This never came to fruition and was not a workable idea since many residents most likely would not have read the Plan beforehand. It is unclear when the final focus meeting was held. There have been opportunities for public comment online. Staff and the MCC Board must be careful to distinguish the number of responses to the very general Online Survey and comments that were received on the Draft Plan itself. To state that the MCC has received over 800 comments is disingenuous unless this differentiation is made. Under ten people spoke at the final public hearing on July 6, and most of those comments were not directed at the contents of the Strategic Plan. The public was limited to 3 minutes of testimony when the county policy always allows 10 minutes for organizations. Several speakers were cut off in the middle of their testimony. Unless there was an overwhelming number of written comments on the

Plan specifics, NOT the online survey, one can conclude that the final Draft Strategic Plan was not reviewed by most of the residents of Small Tax District 1. It was not made clear when the Draft Strategic Plan will be approved by the MCC Board but it is assumed it will be at the next Board meeting on Wednesday, July 13.

P. 13: Historical Context The document states “Board and staff collectively embraced the opportunity to reflect on the center’s place in McLean’s rich civic history and cultural context . . .” but it does not appear this was actually done. The “Historical Context” section of the document omits the original goals of the McLean Community from its inception in 2014 to build a community center as a gathering place for McLean organizations and for community functions. As McLean began maturing as a community, new organizations branched out with the support of existing organizations. Planning began in earnest once the financial resources had been accumulated to finally envision a community center building in the 1950’s. It would take another 25 years and the efforts of McLean’s combined organizations led by the McLean Citizens Association before the McLean Community Center was dedicated in 1972. One of the most important aspects of the history was the establishment of a special tax district (Small Tax District 1) that has been essential in providing the revenues necessary to maintain the building and fund its activities. Since its establishment, the Center has realized one of it’s major goals - to provide a home and meeting place for the community’s organizations. This history should be emphasized in the Strategic Document and is conspicuously missing.

Plan Goals: Goal 1: Be Visible This has been a longstanding challenge for the center and previous Boards have been challenged to improve visibility. Many suggestions have been made over the years to increase visibility. The suggestions included are just the latest among many in the past.

Goal 2: Welcome all of McLean and its global community While this is an enviable goal under any circumstances, the planners fail to recognize that the McLean Community Center historically has welcomed all of McLean and its global community. This section should be reworded to state “Continue to welcome all of McLean and its global community.”

Goal 3: Invite discovery The MCC has always had an excellent selection of classes that come and go according to community interests and attendance.

Goal 4: Showcase excellence Again, programs and classes are almost always excellent. Please amend to read “Continue to showcase excellence.”

Goal 5: Model Sustainability RE: P 23.” Internally, beginning with human resources, the Plan focuses on improved governance as well as clarity of roles and responsibilities for the Board and staff . . .Both the Governing Board and the staff indicated that roles and responsibilities require clarification. ”Embrace the July 6 testimony given by McLean Center Senior Administrative Staff that the MCC Board adhere to the language of the MOU. This testimony was alarming that all is not well at the Center.

There is an **existing policy document** that lays out many of these issues that should be read and understood by the current Board. **The election process for Board members is flawed and needs revision.** In person voting will always be necessary to ensure a fair election. The Board must be representative of the residents of Small Tax District 1. Online voting would be a mistake, even though technology has invaded many aspects of daily living. There must be strong rules against outside interference in the selection of Board members, and rules for campaigning must be strictly defined and above all enforced.

Financial sustainability. - The MCC draws from a stable revenue source. it is important for the MCC to charge an appropriate amount for residents of Small Tax District 1 and a higher amount for outside district residents. It is not fair for tax district residents to subsidize those who do not live in the district when they already pay an annual tax to support the facility. The Budget process needs to be transparent with no meetings closed to the public.

Page 25. Reserve funds should be used only for emergencies related to building maintenance and not for subsidizing General Fund expenditures. The so called “standard” of reserves equaling 3 months of operating expenses should be a minimum standard. One year of Reserves should be the minimum for the MCC.

P. 36: 2a under Embrace contemporary and innovative operative practice 2a: Clarify and document MCC’s relationships. with partner organizations. **This section needs to be further explained and defined before this document is finalized.** For instance, during focus sessions it was noted that the relationship with the McLean Project of the Arts could be renegotiated. The MCC relationship with longstanding partners such as the McLean Citizens Association, the founding benefactor of the Center, should be clarified before this document is final. 3. Integrate One Fairfax Initiatives



and principles etc. This is required under county policy. There is a cost. The cost of implementing One Fairfax Initiatives should be reflected in the MCC Draft Budget.

Exemplar Learnings - Best practices While it is always useful to look at best practices in other facilities, it is also important to recognize that each facility and each community is unique. The Reston Community serves a very different demographic - a planned community with definitive borders - and has two separate facilities which guarantee increased visibility and participation. One of those centers has recreational facilities that the MCC will never have. The Rosen Jewish Community Center relies on partnerships - much as the MCC has done historically. The example of the Sunnyvale Community Center has some interesting programs that could be replicated at the MCC but the focus is on their Arts Center. The McLean community already has a separate arts organization, The McLean Project for the Arts, and a planned soon to be built center. The MCC originally held art classes but that function was adopted by the MPA in the 1990's. While the facility currently shares part of the MCC Building, it is a separate and partner organization. The comparison of the Sunnyvale Community Center with respect to an arts center is not applicable to the MCC.

Purpose, Vision, Mission, and Values The proposed mission statement for the McLean Community Center **should be deleted** as not being reflective of the original and continuing purpose of the McLean Community Center. Strongly urge that the MCC Board **retain the original mission statement** that has served the community center for 50 years and was intended to serve it for the future. The proposed mission statement eliminates the historic goal and purpose of the community center - to furnish facilities for civic, cultural, educational, recreational, and social activities. The MCC Board never notified the residents of Small District 1A that the Mission Statement was being changed in the Plan and did not publish the language of the original Mission Statement which could be a legal concern, as was the effort to amend the MOU. Please Retain the following language: ***McLean Community Center provides a sense of community for residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville by offering programs, assisting community organizations and furnishing facilities for civic, cultural, educational, recreational and social activities.***

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies PI 30. 1. Expand MCC's community footprint, including its digital presence. To expand the community footprint is to go outside the historic dedicated boundaries of Small Tax District 1. **More explanation of this point is needed.** People who live in the tax district will likely not want to subsidize financially residents who do not live within the boundaries. Programs should be available to all but residents and non-residents should be charged on a progressive scale.

In Summary: One always must express appreciation for all of those people involved in drafting a plan and marshalling it through many process steps. This plan, however, was overly complex, lacked historical context, was difficult to interpret, and the specifics were not widely reviewed or understood by the residents of Small Tax District 1A. It is known that the intention of the Executive Director and the MCC Board is the proposed creation of a regional art center. If this is in fact the case, it would have been wise for such a proposal to have been presented to the residents of Small Tax District 1, and the Board of the McLean Project of the Arts, for comment on its merits before a Strategic Plan process was initiated. Instead, a consultant who apparently has a previous relationship with the Executive Director was hired with County, not Small Tax District 1 funding, to craft a Plan that provides an opaque smokescreen to achieve that goal. If this Plan is approved as currently written, it could fundamentally undermine the original function of the Community Center without the full understanding of the residents of Small Tax District 1 who fund it. The MCC Board and Executive Director need to be truthful with the Community and fully explain their intentions for a regional art center - not through a poorly understood Strategic Plan and process. Thank you.

4. Catherine Trauernicht

From: Cathy Trauernicht <cwtrau@verizon.net>

Sent: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 10:34 PM

To: Singh, Daniel <Daniel.Singh@fairfaxcounty.gov>; Novak, Holly R <Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov>

Subject: Questions for tonight's MCC Strategic Planning meeting

Hello, Daniel and Holly. Because I was not allowed enough time to ask all of my questions during tonight's public hearing on the strategic plan, I am submitting my questions and comments below and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Answers to my questions should be readily available and without necessitating a FOIA request or charge.

Thank you,
Cathy

- 1) **Was the search for a strategic planning consultant a competitive bidding process? If so, how many other bidders were considered and who were they?**
- 2) **Do any members of the MCC Board and/or staff have a personal or business relationship with AMS and its employees?**

Is there a signed contract with AMS?

For how long does the consultancy operate?

How much is AMS being paid for their work?

- 3) **Is the May 2022 Draft Strategic Plan considered out of date or is it still under consideration?**
- 4) The **June 2022 Draft Executive Summary** refers to *“robust community participation”* in the strategic planning process. It noted that there were 786 respondents to a community survey and that 78% of these respondents were from Small District 1A.

Were opinions of the 22% of people NOT living in Small District 1A taken into consideration?

The stated purpose of the McLean Community Center *“is to provide a sense of community for residents of Small District 1A.”*

- 5) AMS considered 4 community centers (including MCC) when determining how such centers serve their constituencies. **Is it actually relevant to the residents of McLean’s Small District 1A to be compared with people living in Orange County, FL; Santa Clara County, CA; and Dallas County, TX?**

Are or were the community centers in these FL, CA and TX counties also clients of AMS?

- 6) **Page 8, Goal 4, to Showcase Excellence:** Strategy #5 is to *“Encourage bold risk taking with permission to fail.”* Can you give me an example of what this means?
- 7) **Page 9, Goal 5, to Model Sustainability:** Strategies 5 and 6 call for *“One Fairfax initiatives and principles ... and the Fairfax County Sustainability Vision” to be integrated throughout MCC operations.*

But what if some of those County initiatives, principles and vision don’t align with what Small District 1A residents want? After all, Fairfax County is a big, DIVERSE county.

- 8) In the **May 2022 Draft, on page 23**, a survey of both the MCC Governing Board and staff indicated that their roles and responsibilities **require clarification**. It seems to me that, in order to have a well-functioning organization, you need to clearly define Board and staff roles and responsibilities before programming – let alone strategic planning – can be undertaken.

What is being done to define your roles and responsibilities?

- 9) On page 24 the May 2022 Draft states: *“The Board’s role is to reflect the priorities of Fairfax County in governing the Community Center.”* **Such a statement cannot be found in the Memorandum of Understanding that governs the MCC.**

The MOU Statement of Function is very clear: *“The Governing Board of the McLean Community Center is established to **set policy** and provide supervision for the McLean Community Center. The **members of the Governing Board are charged with the responsibility of providing oversight and policy guidance to the Executive Director of the McLean Community Center.**”*

The MOU further states (Section V, Powers and Responsibilities): *“The Governing Board is responsible for the **development of policies and long-range plans for the Center’s operation, programming, personnel and financial management.** Such policies and plans shall be in compliance with **established policies and procedures of Fairfax County.**”*

This is different from “priorities,” which can be ever-changing.

- 10) On page 30 of the May 2022 Draft, Goal 3 Strategies & Tactics states: *“Develop philanthropic behavior: Explore innovative programming techniques that encourage philanthropy in our community. Consider adopting (for example) the **‘Practicing Philanthropy in a Context of Resilience’** framework and aligned offerings.”* **What does this mean?**

5. McLean Citizens Association (letter received via e-mail on 7/7/22)



P.O. Box 270
McLean, Virginia 22101

July 7, 2022

McLean Community Center Governing Board
1234 Ingleside Avenue
McLean, Virginia 22101

Dear Governing Board Members,

I write on behalf of the McLean Citizens Association (“MCA”) regarding the Governing Board’s current draft of a Strategic Plan dated June, 2022 (“Plan”) prepared for the July 6, 2022 Public Hearing. The MCA is overall supportive of the preparation of a new strategic plan for the McLean Community Center (“MCC”) (and inclusion of items such as sustainability). Here are our suggestions:

1. Purpose, Vision, Mission and History

The original and current Mission Statement provides:

“McLean Community Center provides a sense of community for residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville by offering programs, **assisting community organizations** and furnishing facilities for

civic, cultural, educational, recreational and social activities.”
(Emphasis added)

The mission of the Community Center has been changed in the current draft of the Plan to the following:

“The mission of the McLean Community Center is to provide access to inspirational arts and cultural experiences, learning, civic, recreational, and social activities in an inviting and equitable manner for all Small District 1A-Dranesville residents.”

MCA strongly supports the retention of the existing mission statement. The original Mission Statement is comprehensive and encompasses the purpose, values, and vision expressed in the Plan.

Of utmost importance, a key purpose of the community center is to assist, support and provide facilities and meeting spaces for the Small District 1A-Dranesville community and civic organizations. This should not only include the MCA, but other community and civic organizations such as the Rotary Club of McLean, neighborhood homeowner and citizens associations and other citizens groups within Small District 1-A Dranesville; The Plan needs to avoid taking or unintendedly taking “community” out of the McLean Community Center.

The Plan should emphasize that MCC is more than the community center itself providing programming, its a place for community organizations in Small District 1-A Dranesville to create their own programs and offer them to the Small District 1A-Dranesville community. This is an important avenue in diversifying the programming offered to our residents.

2. Goals, Attainment, and Metrics

The Plan should reaffirm that MCC’s longstanding priority goal is on providing programs and events for Small /District 1-A Dranesville residents whose property surtaxes fund the MCC’s budget.

The Plan should also be more specific in its language and describe in detail how the goals will be achieved.

- The Plan should define the intention of the goals and are written so they can be measured.
- Include more details on the staffing plan to attain the stated goals as well as funding avenues. For example, the use of social media to achieve goal of “Be Visible” is detailed and specific tactic to help achieve the goal. We recommend taking the same approach for other goals that are more vaguely stated in how they will be achieved.
- No baseline assessment metrics that were performed are provided. (See pp. 10 of the Plan) Such analysis (especially financial analysis), would be helpful to provide as an addendum to help assess the qualitative goals and objectives of the Plan.
- Goal 5: “Model sustainability. Represent the utmost integrity in our use of financial, physical, environmental, human, and other resources.” A more detailed objective, strategy and tactics in how MCC will be able to financially support the Plan is needed. This section needs to be more explicit in how MCC will steward financial resources.
- We recommend the inclusion of data that illustrates the current programming amount to projected programming amount (how many performances, how many classes/courses, etc.; staffing; financing); and how the various activities might be expected to evolve in the future in response to identified goals.

3. Fiscal Transparency and Responsibility

The Plan should have as a principal goal enhanced financial transparency. The community needs to be informed of the fiscal budget with detailed information of line items. The budget should be clearly aligned with delivery of programming and services for Small District 1-A Dranesville residents.

The Plan does not appear to address whether the current fund beginning balance is adequate beyond some broad comparisons related to practices/assumptions made by other community centers. Does the MCC have data to confirm whether funding requirements are comparable with such other community centers (for example, do all have to fund their capital needs from tax revenue or do they have a different funding sources?)?

If the fund balance needs to be increased to meet current and future infrastructure capital and equipment maintenance and expansion needs, then the goals and objectives should include strategies to accomplish that. MCA is concerned about the potential use of reserves for any general fund expenditures and general fund subsidies for out-of-taxing-district residents.

The Plan should also reaffirm MCC's long standing practice of focusing programming and providing discounts on programming to Small District 1-A Dranesville residents. To this end, the Plan should provide data during the past several years regarding attendance and participation in MCC programs and events by residents outside Small District 1-A Dranesville.

4. Expanded Footprint

The Plan's "Be Visible" Goal identifies objectives to expand MCC's community footprint, including digital presence, and become more embedded within our community. (see pp, 6 of the Plan). This is too vague and could lead to misinterpretation. Assuming the wording is intended to convey expanding the digital footprint and community awareness, we recommend refining the statement to communicate its intended meaning to avoid misinterpretation. It should be clearly stated that it doesn't mean expanding the boundaries beyond Small District 1-A Dranesville.

5. Partner Organizations

Throughout the Plan, but particularly under the fifth strategy for MCC's Model Sustainability Goal (Clarify and document MCC's relationships with partner organizations.), "partner organizations" are referenced. The Plan needs to better identify who such partner organizations are (or could be) and the purposes intended with respect to such partner organizations, but such partner organizations should be organizations that are primarily organized by, and serve, Small District 1-A Dranesville residents. What does it mean to be a partner organization? For instance, the MCA is a founding benefactor of the MCC and the Plan should affirm MCA is a partner organization of the MCC. Who chooses the partner organizations? This should also be identified in the Plan. In general, this concept of partner organizations could be misconstrued to mean many things unintended by MCC and thus we recommend it be clarified in advance of finalization of the Plan.

6. Showcase Excellence

The Plan's "Showcase Excellence" Goal identifies several objectives and strategies (Objectives • Provide innovative program offerings, responding to documented needs in our community. • Expand delivery methods for program offerings. • Refine and consolidate our evaluation processes. • Create a shared definition of "excellence." Strategies 1. Craft a definition of "excellence" that aligns with the MCC's purpose, vision and mission. 2. Reimagine evaluation practices to increase transparency and evaluate performance around programming. 3. Research new ways to deliver programs. 4. Align staff capacity with desired programmatic outcomes. 5. Encourage bold risk taking with permission to fail). (See pp. 8 of the Plan) Most of these objectives and strategies do not entail or result in a measurable goal.



Employees are a large dollar budget line item, and “capacity” usually means additional personnel, not shuffling head count. This strategy should be stated clearly with the intention to understand what the expected outcome should be.

The fifth strategy is concerning (Encourage bold risk taking with permission to fail.) The MCC has spent time/money to prepare a strategic plan that reflects the community’s (Small District 1-A Dranesville) interests. A roadmap should reflect fiscal responsibility while being innovative.

7. Model Sustainability

The Plan’s goal to explore ways to diversify the revenue mix should not entail de-emphasizing Small District 1-A Dranesville–centric programming or events.

Thank you.
Scott Spitzer
President - McLean Citizens Association

ADJOURNMENT

Closing remarks by Michele Walter: I want to thank everyone for participating tonight.

Chair Zamora-Appel thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – Holly Novak, Executive Assistant