

PRA MINUTES  
March 2007

PRA president, Kira Lueders, gave an opening statement welcoming everyone to the meeting and then introduced our guest speaker, Director of The Office of Community Liaison at NIH, Dennis Coleman, who had been invited to talk to us regarding how the move from Walter Reed (WR) to Navy Hospital (Navy) will impact our neighborhood.

Dennis Coleman is a member of the NIH Community Liaison Council, which consists of representatives of about 15 homeowner organizations that surround NIH who meet once a month to discuss, follow, topics such as traffic, noise, security, etc.

Below is a summary of Mr. Coleman's presentation:

The Department of Navy filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Federal Register on November 21, 2006. This is when they announced their real facts and figures behind the relocation of Walter Reed.

Approximately ten (10) years ago, Congress voted to consolidate military bases - thus the Base Realignment and Closure Commission was created and sent their recommendations to Congress. One of these being the relocation of the tertiary care facilities from WR to Navy. Tertiary care means the most complex. The primary and secondary care units would move to Fort Belvoir.

Some current stats are: NIH consists of 18,000 employees and 310 acres. Navy consists of 7,000 employees and 243 acres.

Once the NOI was made public, the true numbers were realized: 1.75 million square feet of facilities; 1.03 million of parking; 2500 new staff and 535,000 additional patients and visitors equating to approximately 2,200 outpatient visitors a day.

The Navy is bound by NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) disclosure law. Therefore, we have the ability to find out their plans, ask questions and make real recommendations. Mr. Coleman stressed that we do not need to give up hope and think they will do whatever they want.

Last December/January Navy presented at one of their public meetings a plan they are considering: (Mr. Coleman had a copy of their "diagram/presentation") stating: "site potentially available for development" - it is a lot of their green space. The only impact the Navy is considering was on the inside of their borders.

The latest actual traffic counts on the roads surrounding NIH are from 2005. Route 355 has 63,500 cars a day. This number is a total of all lanes - both sides. This number drops to 31,000 less than a mile away. So engineers use this data in their traffic studies. There are six congested intersections in the vicinity of NIH and the Navy site. Four of those areas are in the top ten list of the worst intersections in the entire Montgomery County and that's out of more than 100. Wisconsin and Cedar Lane - a famous and well talked about intersection identified by our County Council. Mr. Coleman went on to explain that that is what local governments do - they identify problem situations but do not have any money to fix it. It would cost \$31 million dollars just to build what is called a grade separation there. What does that mean - well its not like a clover leaf where you change highways without stopping. In a grade separation roads go over or under one another, i.e. Rt. 355 goes under Cedar or Cedar goes under Rt. 355. Two of the locations are currently under consideration Rt. 355 and the beltway and 355 and Jones Bridge Road. These two were the cheapest to fix. The Consolidated Transportation Plan (CRP) for 2006-2007 from the State of Maryland describes the actual construction projects that are designed and planned. The four remaining trouble intersections did not make the cut.

Navy will be coming out with a draft Environmental Impact Statement on June 6th giving an analysis of all feedback they have received so far along with the studies and when they are planning on going forward. This process of discovery will probably run till the middle of July.

Traffic concerns were the major topic discussed during the question and answer session that followed Mr. Coleman's presentation. BRAC will be further discussed at the June meeting once the Navy issues an Environmental Impact Statement.

Paula Flicker presented the proposed budget for the coming year, and a vote was taken to accept the budget, which included a donation of \$100 to CABE (Citizens Against Beltway Expansion) and \$250 to the Walter Johnson High School.

Kira presented results of the municipality survey, which indicated that there appears to be no interest at all in pursuing this subject among the residents who voted.

Kira also reported that there were no new developments to report on the issues of traffic calming or tree trimming.

Liz Brennan gave a brief report on CKC.

Kitty Stone was unable to attend, so Paula presented a membership report.

Claire Murphy, beautification chairman, gave a report on the maintenance of the Saul Road island.

Kira notified PRA that some residents who live across the street from Kensington-Parkwood School on Saul Rd had requested the support of PRA in applying for residential parking permits.

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