

**Greater Wilton Woods Citizens' Association Meeting--Minutes
May 16, 2006**

The meeting began at 7:30 p.m.

The minutes of the last meeting are now on the website.

Jane Landis gave her quarterly Treasurer's Report. The current GWWCA balance is \$6,607.20. There are currently 265 members; 159 have paid their dues. Please pay if you haven't already.

A gift basket raffle was held to raise money for the family of Detective Armel, the county detective who was killed recently.

Mort Dukehart, the headmaster of Browne Academy, is leaving for a new job out west. The GWWCA membership presented him with a \$500 check for the school as a show of appreciation for the use of the property for GWWCA meetings. He and the school were given certificates of appreciation for their hospitality and community service. Mort was very touched and thanked everyone. He also informed the group that the stone house at the entrance of the school has been acquired by Browne. Mort assured the group that the house will be accessed from the school driveway and not Telegraph Road. In addition, there are no plans to increase the student population.

The Sorensen development group came to the meeting at the request of Melissa Lakey and Monica Rodgers, to provide a very brief update of their plans for developing the large property at Sharon Chapel and Telegraph Roads. Mike and Les Sorensen attended, as did their assistant, Lori Greenlief. Their planners and architects have removed plans for all but one retaining wall, and the new homes will all be behind the existing one, farther up the hill. The road to be built will now be private instead of public, so it will be a bit smaller. Instead of building twelve new homes, they have decreased the number to eleven. (The current zoning allows for seven additional homes.) Overall, the drawings show a more attractive landscape when it is complete.

Monica Rodgers and Melissa Lakey have met and worked with Sorensen to negotiate the proffers that will go with this development.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerry Connelly was the next guest speaker. He spent a moment speaking about the two officers who had been shot the previous week, and praised their service to the county.

Chairman Connelly spoke about crime statistics in the county. They are generally lower than in past years. However, gangs have become more and more of a concern. One new offering in the county will be after school programs five days a week in all middle schools throughout the county. The hope is that this will give at-risk kids more to do after school, deterring gang involvement.

Cox Communications recently gave \$3 million to the county to fund six Boys and Girls Clubs in key areas of the county.

Chairman Connelly brought some other key players in the county's efforts against gangs. Bob Birmingham coordinates the suppression, intervention and prevention of gangs in Fairfax County. He commended Mr. Connelly for being willing to speak publicly about gangs, since it is not a politically popular topic.

Gang prevention starts with well-funded schools, ESOL programs, recreation centers, after school programs, substance abuse programs, mental health programs, and more. The county is always working to improve all of these services to residents.

Ken Bresson from the Police County Gang Unit spoke. He connects county agencies with the police department on a more formal basis—he is the first point of contact. The gang unit has twelve detectives. Two officers are on the Northern Virginia Task Force on gangs. Since his arrival in 1988, he has seen a lot of progress in the department in dealing with gangs.

A GWWCA member asked how many gangs exist in the county. Currently, there are ten highly active gangs in the county.

Officer Greg Bender spoke next. He is a master police officer at Mount Vernon. He speaks to school officials and administrations to educate them on gangs and what to look for. He speaks to all schools—elementary, middle, and high schools. Doing this has increased the trust between the schools and the police department. He sometimes gets phone calls from school officials with concerns about gangs, asking for his help.

All gang activity is now a felony, so gangs are much more discreet in volunteering their membership these days.

In response to a GWWCA member's question, some of the local "hot spots" for gangs were identified as Lockheed Blvd., and Huntington Ave. Efforts to provide more county services in the Lockheed area have resulted in a 30-40% decrease in gang activity.

Virginia has one of the stiffest gang legislation packages in the country. For example, legislation has been introduced to make brandishing a machete a crime.

The gang unit is working to prevent the establishment of a link between drug dealing and gangs in the county. Currently it is not an issue.

There were more questions from the membership:

-Do gangs use guns? Yes, and police look for them. However, the majority of violent crime involves knives and fists.

-What are SRO's? It stands for School Resource Officer. Seven to eight years ago, each middle and high school in the county obtained a full-time police officer.

-Are gang members all male? No, nationally, gangs are 10% female, locally, they are 8%.

-Some other questions to Chairman Connelly pertained to multi-family housing and real estate taxes.

Mark Sickles attended the meeting and spoke very briefly about working in Richmond to get a dedicated, regular general source of funding for transportation.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35.