

STALEMATE AT RESTON ASSOCIATION?

By William Nicoson

The results of last month's election of directors for three seats on the Reston Association board may move RA closer to stalemate on a range of critical issues due for resolution this year.

Before the election, the voting record of 6 board members generally supported principles of the Alliance for a Better Community (ABC), favoring initiatives designed to improve the quality and accessibility of RA assets (such as winterizing the Nature House, closing missing pathway links and protecting streams and lakes from erosion). The record of 2 others, Vera Hannigan and Glen Downing, supported the "V" principle ("V" for Vera Victorious), opposing anything that costs money, even when RA members aren't paying. One director, Donn Dears, has been a swing vote.

Of the two winners of at-large seats, the V faction campaigned for Robert Poppe (3,855 votes) while Bertha Hoskins (3,723 votes) was endorsed by ABC. For the South Lakes seat, ABC endorsed no one, while the V faction supported Joe Leighton (940 votes) who upset Best-of-Reston laureate Michael Guthrie (820 votes) and swamped John Stanard (457 votes) and Sam Mall (410 votes).

Thus the V's have picked up 2 seats from the ABC's, creating a 4-4 bind in board members' predispositions, assuming Donn Dears remains a swing vote. The new RA board is thus as close to deadlock as an RA board can get.

Yet the issues facing the board this year are daunting in complexity and impact on Reston's future. As development has proceeded in Reston, the proliferation of impervious surfaces has vastly increased erosion of stream banks and silting of lakes. A remedial plan is in preparation, but costs will be high. The imperative of long-term planning also requires reconsideration of the cap on assessments instituted in 1984, to determine whether adjustments are appropriate by reason of subsequent decisions inflating assessments (abolishing user fees and excluding Town Center residents from RA membership).

Joe Leighton's electoral statement of goals gives prominence to "Keeping natural areas natural". Other board members, led by Bob Simon, argue that natural wonders are best appreciated when opened to observation by sensitive trimming of surrounding natural clutter. The status-quo view of the Nature Center suits the interests of neighboring residents who seek a tranquil public reserve as an extension of their own properties. Improving the Nature Center as an amenity for the entire community will surely attract more visitors to share the beauties of nature, but possibly at some sacrifice to the private reserve neighbors have come to regard as their own.

This debate reflects the philosophical opposition between the V's and the ABC's in considering Reston's future. The V's like Reston as it is. The ABC's envision a dynamic Reston,

incorporating valuable lessons from other communities in constant dedication to improving the life-style of Restonians. Both groups are great boosters for Reston and have given enormous time in service to the community. This year no-change advocates have won a sweeping electoral victory. I'm not cheering, but I admire their political skill and hard work.

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