



## Flooding in February?

*Stefanie Pryor*

The Arlington County Civic Federation returns to our usual meeting location in the Virginia Hospital Center auditorium for our February 7 meeting. Our main topic will be Floodplains and Stormwater, as presented by Arlington County staff. Additional information and links available via article in this edition of Civic Voice and on our [Public Services Committee](#) webpage.

The efforts for affordable housing and housing ownership continue to progress in the county. The Real Estate Tax Relief Workgroup Chair, Paul Holland, will present an overview of the recent changes and answer questions.

We thank the Arlington County Board for hosting us in their space at Courthouse Plaza for our January meeting. As a few of the members stated, we provided some difficult questions. In the spirit of getting to questions from the floor, unfortunately, a few questions were not explored to depth, but we did cover breadth of variety of topics. Recently elected chairman, Jay Fisette, reminded the group that even as the footprint and impervious surfaces might expand of new development, the stormwater and permeability also improves with the increased requirements and technology improvements. The concerns for increasing density, impervious surfaces, and green-space will continue to be explored in at our February meeting.

At the very end of the evening, the revised [Medical Marijuana resolution](#) passed by vote of 50-1-4. WJLA [Channel 7](#) picked up the vote later that evening. [Sun Gazette](#) provided additional coverage with a more in-depth and humorous twist.

Thank you to ArlingtonTV and Rob Farr for hosting our students for the official livestreaming on live cable TV. Our students Christian Porter, Rudy Henriquez, Alex Pageotte, Flor Cáceres Godoy received a unique experience they can add to their growing list of accomplishments! Our January video is pending.

## GENERAL MEETING NOTICE

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

7:00 p.m.

Hazel Auditorium  
Virginia Hospital Center  
1701 N George Mason Drive  
Arlington VA 22205

## Agenda

- 7:00 Meeting called to order
- 7:10 Flood Plains & Stormwater
- 8:10 Real Estate Tax Relief
- 8:40 P&Z Updates
- 8:50 Unfinished Business and Announcements
- 8:55 New Business
- 9:00 Adjourn

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## Executive Committee

*Jesse Boeding*

The Executive Committee met on Sunday, January 8, 2017 via conference call to plan the agenda for February 7, 2017 general meeting and discuss future meetings. Signs were posted at the fire station by mid-afternoon due to the weather conditions and small group.

The Executive Committee will meet on Sunday, February 12, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. at 4805 Wilson Blvd, Arlington VA 22203 (Fire Station 2).

The deadline for newsletter articles is Thursday, February 23, 2016 due to the meeting date of Tuesday, March 7. Newsletters are published approximately 1 week before the meeting.

## In Search of: Legal Advice

*Stef Pryor*

During the Executive Committee meeting, we discussed merits of incorporation, similar to Waverly Hills Civic Association and other groups. Incorporation provides some benefits and protections. Fees would be up to a few hundred dollars per year. Per the IRS, a [social welfare organization](#) is: A community association that works to improve public services, housing and residential parking; publishes a free community newspaper; sponsors...meetings; and contracts with a private security service to patrol the community; or a community association devoted to preserving the community's traditions, architecture and appearance by representing it before the local legislature and administrative agencies in zoning, traffic and parking matters. 501(c)3 may not be an [action organization](#), *i.e.*, it may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities.

In consideration of complex issues, we are in search of pro bono advice for incorporating the Civic Federation from a licensed lawyer who was a Virginia Bar member and works for a law firm. Please contact [president@civfed.org](mailto:president@civfed.org) if interested.

## ARLINGTON COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION

PO Box 42091  
Arlington, VA 22204  
[www.civfed.org](http://www.civfed.org)

Now Accepting PayPal!

<http://www.civfed.org/pay-dues/>

## Awards Committee

*Sarah Shortall*

Each year the Arlington County Civic Federation honors the exceptional contributions of ACCF delegates, alternates, committees and member organizations at the Federation's annual banquet. To ensure the Awards Committee knows about those persons and organizations that you believe are deserving of special recognition for their service and leadership, the Committee requests your recommendations. In addition, the Committee requests that include a few words about why the person or organization should receive an award at the 2017 Federation Banquet Friday, April 7. Please send your recommendations by Feb. 12 to Sarah Shortall at [sarah@civfed.org](mailto:sarah@civfed.org) or [sjshortall@verizon.net](mailto:sjshortall@verizon.net). Thank you so much for your help and see you at the annual banquet!

### 2017 Awards Committee

Michael Beer

Connie Ericson

Mileva Hartman

Martha Moore

Sarah Shortall

As a reminder, ACCF follows the Arlington Public Schools (APS) [alert announcements](#). They review for both day and evening events. We do not want our audience members and speakers to risk life, limb or bumper to make it to our meeting. Speakers would be rescheduled for future time.

Click here for [Arlington County's new Snow Page](#).

## Real Estate Tax Relief

*Paul Holland*

### Program Background:

Virginia localities are authorized to provide [Real Estate Tax Relief \(RETR\)](#) to homeowners aged 65 or over, as well as to permanently disabled homeowners. The current Arlington County RETR Program provides an exemption and/or deferral of real estate taxes for qualified Arlington homeowners whose annual household income is below \$99,472, and whose household assets (excluding the value of their Arlington home) are below \$340,000. Arlington households may receive a full, 50 percent, or 25 percent exemption, depending on their income and household size. Homeowners within the income guidelines who have assets over \$340,000 but below \$540,000 may defer payment of their real estate taxes until their property changes ownership; no interest or penalties are charged. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has overseen the RETR Program since 1991. In 2015, it approved 940 households for RETR, resulting in \$4,218,957 in uncollected revenue.

### Origins of the Working Group

The Arlington County Board adopted the County's first Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) in September 2015. In conducting research for the AHMP, the County found that many low-income senior households on fixed incomes face financial stress related to increasing condominium fee and real estate tax burdens. The AHMP's accompanying Implementation Framework included a recommendation to review the goals and guidelines of the RETR Program, and to consider redefinition of income levels, asset levels, and criteria for exemptions and deferrals.

As such, the County Manager presented several options for altering the program during the FY 2017 budget process. Instead of enacting specific changes at the time of the FY 2017 budget adoption, the County Board provided \$50,000 in one-time funding and requested the formation of a working group to study the County's current RETR Program and develop

recommendations for consideration during the FY 2018 budget process. The workgroup's final charge, which includes a list of members, can be found on the Working Group [website](#).

### Engagement with County Board

County Board members Christian Dorsey and John Vihstadt serve as liaisons to the working group. Since August 2016, the Working Group has met regularly to develop and refine recommendations. In December 2016, the Working Group Chair and DHS staff provide an update to the County Board members.

### Major Work Product

The RETR Working Group will produce a program recommendations report highlighting the group's key findings. The report will include a summary of best practices, survey / focus group results, and recommendations on the structure and administration of the RETR Program. More specifically, the report will:

- Identify innovative real estate tax relief programs and promising strategies from other jurisdictions.
- Incorporate the consultant's review and analysis of the survey and / or focus group results. This portion of the report will inform the overall analysis of the current program.
- Propose recommendations related to the eligibility criteria / application process / program alternatives related to the existing RETR Program.

### Timeline

Following ten meetings of the RETR Working Group, the group developed final draft recommendations for initial community consideration in late January. Next steps include meeting with key civic organizations and relevant commissions in February, and a public meeting scheduled for March 6. Feedback received at these meetings will be integrated into the Working Group's recommendations and a final report will be developed and presented to the County Board.

The program will be presented at the ACCF February 7 meeting. See the [Working Group](#) site for listing of members and additional information.

## Floodplains and Stormwater

Suzanne Sundburg

### Calculating Arlington's Cumulative Flood Risk

The Potomac River forms a natural border of Arlington County. Our county is riddled with many seeps, springs, and streams (both above and below ground) that form part of the Potomac's watershed. Catastrophic flooding occurred in 1970s. See picture of the Walter Reed bridge below. A severe storm in June 2006 overwhelmed the county's stormwater drainage and sewer infrastructure, causing significant flood damage.[1] In 2011, the remnants of Tropical Storm Lee caused [flash flooding](#) along [Four Mile Run](#).

According to the 2010 Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (adopted in 2012), flooding is the single most costly hazard for Arlington County, with FEMA's HAZUS<sup>MH</sup> estimating the *loss due to flooding alone as more than \$3.5 million* on an annualized basis.[2]

The 2017 update to the NoVa Hazard Mitigation Plan (now in process) states, "Arlington's high population density and its location along the banks of the Potomac River, increase the county's vulnerability to a variety of hazards, most notably flooding." [3]

Four Mile Run, Arlington's largest internal watershed, is particularly vulnerable to flooding. In addition to National Airport, a 2012 Northern Virginia Regional Commission Report identifies Arlington's water pollution control plant as being low in elevation and subject to the impact of the Potomac's tidal flows such it is subject to at least "some inundation." [4] In staff's answers to recent questions regarding the plant's vulnerability to flooding, staff simply replied that the plant doesn't lie within the 100-year or 500-year FEMA floodplain.

Though Arlington focuses almost exclusively on federally identified floodplains to determine flood risk, floodwaters do not confine themselves to those areas alone. Roughly one out of every four U.S. properties subject to flood determination for a loan origination are at risk for flooding even though they lie outside established FEMA floodplains.[5] Note: Federal flood insurance **DOES NOT COVER BASEMENTS**. Check with your insurance agent for more details.

### How Can You Calculate Your Flood Risk?

An online tool called Map My Risk at [www.FloodTools.com](http://www.FloodTools.com) is not "guaranteed," but it provides a reasonable estimate based on a site's elevation and other factors. The map on page 6 shows the flood risk for properties in the Four Mile Run water-

shed in red, orange and yellow.

### Is Our Flood Risk Growing?

The county has a plan to increase storm sewer capacity, but it has been only partially implemented. Stormwater management retrofits are designed to improve water quality but are not designed as flood-control mechanisms.[6]

Flood risk results from a combination of many factors, including land-use and zoning changes via development, changes in weather patterns and climate, rising sea levels and higher tides and topography.[7]

Weather data increasingly documents that heavy rain events are now more frequent and more intense.[8] But even discounting the impact of climate change and sea-level rise, many cities are still at great risk of flooding.[9]

As urbanization increases man-made "impervious cover" and reduces the tree canopy and "green space", the amount of stormwater runoff increases. These conditions can also decrease stormwater transit time and increase peak flow, which exacerbates flooding.[10]

Tree canopy loss and impervious cover increases frequently occur on public parkland and in or near Chesapeake Bay resource, also called riparian or resource protection areas (RPAs). The county takes advantage of very large loopholes available in the state code to encroach on these sensitive areas and degrade them. An example is the removal of trees and addition of 130 sq ft of impervious surfaces (a concrete ramp and stairway) in the RPA near N. Montague Street adjacent to Ashlawn Elementary School.[11]

APS cut down approximately 100 trees at Ashlawn Elementary School — a number far higher that allowed under the original use permit.[12] The subsequent leveling/regrading of this area resulted in ongoing flooding and runoff from the site that continues to the present, even after repeated installations of landscaping and stormwater management infrastructure.

Between 2007 and 2016, Arlington's percentage of impervious cover grew from 40% to 42%. [13] This increase occurred in spite of lot-coverage restrictions for single-family properties. [Note: There is no corresponding lot coverage restriction for multifamily properties.]

Arlington's ongoing tree canopy loss is well documented. The 2004 Urban Forestry Master Plan contains satellite data revealing the increasing loss of

canopy in images from 1973, 1985 and 1997.[14] More recent assessments show similar ongoing canopy loss. Over the three-year period from 2008 to 2011, Alcova Heights lost 9% of its tree canopy; Cherry Valley Nature Area lost 10%.[15] Looking at the same data by watershed for the same period, Pimmit Run Tributary lost 15% of its tree canopy and Virginia Highlands lost 11%.[16]

Even though protection of Arlington's remaining mature tree canopy and minimizing or reducing impervious cover in Arlington's parks represent some of the most cost-effective ways to prevent an increase in stormwater runoff, most park planning projects include the removal of mature trees, an increase impervious cover and drainage of sensitive lands with or near seeps, springs and streams. Recent examples include park projects for Benjamin Banneker Park, Jennie Dean Park, Bluemont Park, and Gunston Park.[17]

In December, the County Board voted to strip the height restrictions and setback requirements for school buildings constructed in S-3A zoning districts (the zoning category for most park and school properties), and county staff signaled its intent to remove these restrictions for all structures built in public parks.[18]

The underlying and unanswered question is how much more tree canopy loss and how much more impervious-cover increase we can sustain — essentially stripping the land's natural ability to absorb and retain storm waters — before we reach the tipping point and trigger flooding in areas that have a long history of being vulnerable to floods?

### Join Us To Learn More

To learn more about what the county is doing to calculate and mitigate Arlington's flood risk, the ACCF has invited Arlington County staff from the DES Office of Sustainability and Environmental Management. They will present information about FEMA floodplains, Chesapeake Bay Protection Act resource protection areas, stormwater management and flood risk management at its February 7, 2017 meeting:

- Elizabeth L. Thurber, P.E., Stormwater Infrastructure, FEMA Floodplains
- Christin Jolicoeur, Watershed Planner, Resource Protection Areas
- Aileen Winqvist, Watershed Outreach Program Manager, Stormwater Management

### End Notes

[1] [11/27/07 County Board Report](#)

[2] [12/27/11 County Board Report](#), Table 7.8, p. 310 of the at-

tached mitigation plan

[3] [2017 Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan Update](#) (out for comment) p. 3-3

[4] [2012 Sustainable Shorelines Community Management in Northern Virginia](#), pp. 12–14

[5] ["Do We Need Flood Insurance for FEMA's 'Low Risk' Areas?"](#)

[6] [Stormwater Master Plan Public Comments Summary](#), p. 6,

[7] ["Secret is Out! Urbanization and Runoff Explain Increased Urban Flood Risk in Southern Ontario"](#) and ["Floods: The Consequences of Urbanization"](#) and ["Rising Tides, Sinking Coastlines"](#)

[8] See ["Outdated FEMA Flood Maps Don't Account For Climate Change"](#)

[9] [Science Daily press release](#)

[10] Learn NC <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/mudcreek/6394> and ["Give Me the Numbers: How trees and urban forest systems really affect stormwater runoff"](#)

[11] [9/8/15 Ashlawn Pedestrian Improvements – Montague St. Ramp/Stair presentation](#)

[12] [APS Wants Nearly 100 Trees Removed For Ashlawn Addition](#) (2014)

[13] 2/27/07 Stormwater Management Work Session presentation slides, slide 5 (not publicly accessible online) and [Arlington County "Stormwater & Watersheds" web page](#), accessed 1/27/17,

[14] [2004 Urban Forestry Master Plan](#), pp. 9–11 (see also Appendix I for canopy statistics on p. 26), file downloaded at

[15] ["Arlington County TREE CANOPY Coverage by Civic Association" \(2008–2011\)](#)

[16] [Stormwater Master Plan](#) (adopted 2014), p. 51,

[17] [Benjamin Banneker Park: 11/14/16 Benjamin Banneker Park Project Meeting presentation](#), slides 22, 25–35,

[Jennie Dean Park: "Analysis of Potential Arlington County Site Options for Neighborhood Elementary Schools"](#) (2015), p. 11, and ["Four Mile Run Valley Parks Master Plan: Scenarios"](#) (2016) .

[Bluemont Park: FEMA Flood Map Service Center](#) (you must click the "View Map" button and then click the "Zoom In" button to enlarge the map to see the floodplain, Zone X and RPA boundaries) ; [baseball diamond renovation plans](#) and trail improvements at ; parking lot and tennis court replacement/ expansion — although staff denied that other projects were being planned for this section of Bluemont Park at the 10/5/16 public meeting, a 10/11/16 e-mail from Asst. County Manager Bryna Helfer describes additional plans for "maintenance" projects: "Additional Bluemont Projects on the Horizon..... The Maintenance Capital project is for design only for replacement of the tennis courts, parking lot, court and parking lot lighting, restroom/ storage, picnic shelter, adjoining section of Four Mile Run trail, site circulation, site furnishings, drainage/storm water, and landscaping."

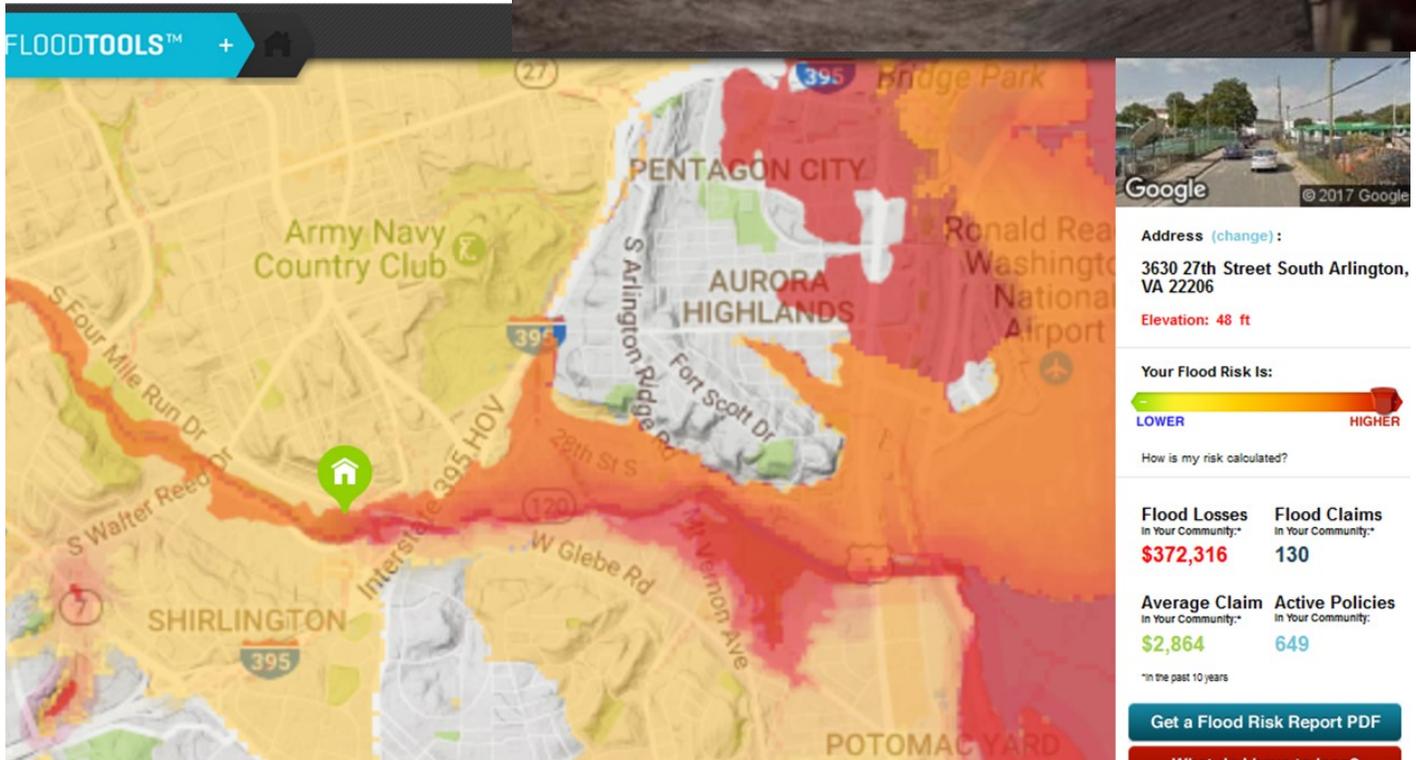
[Gunston Park: "Analysis of Potential Arlington County Site Options for Neighborhood Elementary Schools"](#) (2015), p. 8, [11/9/16 "Gunston Park Diamond Field Renovation" presentation](#)

[18] [12/2/16 County Board Report](#) and [10/27/16 County Board Request to Advertise Report](#), pp. 7–9, and "Peter's Take: [Is Arlington Ready for a Major Flood?](#)"



Walter Reed bridge destroyed by flooding in 1972

Shirlington 2011 (ArlNow.com)



Jeannie Dean Park site near Four Mile Run: Higher Risk for Flooding per [Map My Risk](#). Note Crystal City, Pentagon City, Aurora Highlands, and Arlington County Wastewater treatment plant locations red and orange denoting higher and highest risk for flooding.

## Budget Season for APS

The FY 2018 Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the Arlington Public Schools will be presented by Dr Patrick Murphy on Thursday, February 23, 2017, in the Board Room, Education Center, at 5:00 p.m. Following his presentation, he will be available to discuss the proposal and answer any questions about the key elements. Later that evening at 7:30 p.m., he will present formally to the School Board. That meeting will be broadcast on Arlington Comcast Cable channel 70 and FiOS channel 41 and also webcast on the APS website. The School Board will meet for the first of a series of budget work sessions later that night.

Budget work sessions are all open to the public, but no testimony is taken from members of the public during these meetings. Public comments may be made during the School Board's meetings on March 23 and April 20. Please check the APS website for the exact times and locations for all of these meetings.

The School Board will present and answer questions during our March 7 Arlington County Civic Federation meeting. Please contact our Schools Committee chair, [Michael Beer](#), if you would like to participate or have suggestions for questions.

## Budget Season for County

Arlington County FY2018 Budget Season is in full swing. Please refer to the [Arlington County website](#) for additional materials, meeting dates, and submission links.

The County Manager will present the FY2018 budget to the County Board Saturday, February 25. Public hearings for budget and tax rates will be held Tuesday 7pm, March 28 and Thursday 7pm, March 30. The online links are open at all hours.

The County Board scheduled to vote on budget adoption Saturday, April 22.

Contact our Vice President and member of the Revenues & Expenditures Committee, [Duke Banks](#), if you would like to participate in ACCF budget efforts.

## ART Bus Pronunciation Adjustments Still Pending

Per request from different ACCF members and Arlington County residents, the request to correct the pronunciation of "Orme" street on the ART buses will be a long term project. Steve Yaffee, the Transit Services Manager, on January 12 responded:

"The current (and somewhat antiquated) technology used for the bus announcements requires that this correction be made by..

Uploading and replacing the bus stop recording file on each bus individually. We have 63 ART buses in active service currently....

The process is surprisingly labor-intensive and some immediate technology needs are taking precedence at this time. We hope to replace the technology in Fiscal Year 2018 with a computer voice, after coaching it how to pronounce unique street names like Orme, Veitch, Uhle and Glebe. We need this new technology anyway, as the vendor is out of business and the current technology won't be supported after 2018....."

## A Celebration of Historic African American Churches in Arlington

After the Civil War, Arlington's vibrant African-American community emerged first in Nauck and at Hall's Hill. Arlington Historical Society celebrates the establishment in 1866 of the three early churches with a panel discussion by church members who will discuss their shared and unique experiences and the historical impact on Arlington County.

Lecture on Thursday 7pm, February 9.

Marymount University Main Campus, Library Auditorium, 2807 North Glebe Road.

The program is free and open to the public. For additional AHS information, contact 703-892-4204 or [info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org)

## Civic Federation Meetings Schedule and Programs for 2016 - 2017

Meetings are the 1st Tuesday of each month at the NEW TIME of 7 p.m.

**February 7:** Storm water, resource management, and flood maps; Real Estate Tax Relief (tentative); Planning & Zoning Accessory Dwellings

**March 7:** School Board; Arlington Tech;

**Friday, April 7:** Banquet Speakers: Mr. Emeka Monome, Deputy Executive Director of the Federal City Council, and "Dr. Gridlock" Mr. Robert Thomson

**April 4:** Nominating Committee Election

**May 2:** Virginia Commonwealth Legislative Panel (tentative)

**June 6:** ACCF Elections

**June 30/July 1:** Fiscal Year Closeout and Officer transition

## Arlington County Civic Federation Mission

The ACCF is dedicated to advocacy and community involvement. Its purpose continues to be promoting the general welfare of Arlington County and vicinity in a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-sectional, and non-political manner.

## Committees of the Civic Federation

The committees provide the basis for most actions of the Federation. We strongly encourage every delegate and alternate to serve on at least one committee. If you have an interest in any topic please contact the chair. If a chair is not listed, contact our President Stefanie Pryor at [stefanie@civfed.org](mailto:stefanie@civfed.org)

Committee	Chair(s)	Email Address
Executive	Jesse Boeding	<a href="mailto:jesse@civfed.org">jesse@civfed.org</a>
Awards	Elected at Dec 2016 Membership Mtg	Postponed to January
Audit	Jay Wind	<a href="mailto:Jay@civfed.org">Jay@civfed.org</a>
Bylaws	Sarah Shortall	<a href="mailto:sarah@civfed.org">sarah@civfed.org</a>
Community Relations	Duke Banks	<a href="mailto:duke.banks@gmail.com">duke.banks@gmail.com</a>
Cultural Affairs	Chair(s) needed	TBD
Emergency	Jackie Snelling	<a href="mailto:jackie@civfed.org">jackie@civfed.org</a>
Environmental Affairs	John Seymour	<a href="mailto:john@civfed.org">john@civfed.org</a>
Housing	Chair(s) needed	TBD
Legislation	Ron Haddox	<a href="mailto:ron@civfed.org">ron@civfed.org</a>
Membership	Chair needed	<a href="mailto:membership@civfed.org">membership@civfed.org</a>
911 Scholarships	Chair(s) needed	TBD
Nominating	Elected at April 2017 Membership Mtg	
Parks and Recreation	Michael Thomas	<a href="mailto:michaelthomas@civfed.org">michaelthomas@civfed.org</a>
Planning and Zoning	Martha Moore	<a href="mailto:martha@civfed.org">martha@civfed.org</a>
Public Services	Jackie Snelling	<a href="mailto:jackie@civfed.org">jackie@civfed.org</a>
Revenues and Expenditures	Chair(s) needed	TBD
Schools	Michael Beer	<a href="mailto:michaelbeer@civfed.org">michaelbeer@civfed.org</a>
Special Events	Joe Pelton	<a href="mailto:joepelton@civfed.org">joepelton@civfed.org</a>
Transportation	Jerry Auten	<a href="mailto:jerry@civfed.org">jerry@civfed.org</a>