



# Arlington County Civic Federation

## The Civic Voice

The Newsletter of the Arlington County Civic Federation  
January 2026 | Volume 110 | Number 6

### President's Message

I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and wish you health and happiness for 2026. We will have lots of issues to tackle in the new year and working together we can achieve the best possible outcome for Arlington.

**December Meeting.** We had a good discussion with County Manager Mark Schwartz, who talked about some of the issues the County is facing. It will be a challenging budget year, both for the operating budget and the capital improvement plan. Maintaining the social safety net as Federal programs shrink will continue to consume time and resources. On the regulatory front, work continues on the comprehensive plan update, master transportation plan, and lot coverage calculations. There will also be activity on adaptive reuse projects as the County works with developers to reduce the oversupply of commercial office space.

**Form of Government (FoG).** One of the last items the County Board considered in 2025 was whether or not to establish a task force to examine our form of government, something CivFed has supported through the work of its Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER). The decision was to postpone establishing a task force until July 2026 but to put in place a preliminary analysis framework. **See Dave Schutz's article** in this newsletter with more details.

**January Meeting.** One of the people who played a key role in the decision to move forward with an analysis and eventual July decision on a task force was **County Board member Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr.** Since our membership has followed this issue closely and done a lot of the initial groundwork through TiGER, we thought it would be good to sit down with JD and talk about how he sees the process playing out during 2026. JD will also take general questions from the members.

**Police Chief Andy Penn** will also join the meeting for one of his regular updates. I've asked the Chief to give us an update on how the holiday season went and what kind of trends he is seeing across the County and region.

**Arlington Neighborhood News Exchange (ANNE).** One of the best CivFed products, in addition to serving as a non-partisan safe space for discussions, is the exchange of information across the County. Many of our member organizations publish newsletters in various formats, and we want to support the sharing of articles among them. CivFed hosts a resource that allows neighborhood newsletter editors and webmasters to share and swap articles. With the ease of cut-and-paste, you can enrich your newsletter or web page with timely updates or a variety of interesting stories. To subscribe, please contact Randy Swart at [randy@civfed.org](mailto:randy@civfed.org).

**Dues and Recertification.** It's that time again, please be sure you have done the needful. And with many new officers taking office in January, please update your contact list so they can receive our messages. Questions, write to [secretary@civfed.org](mailto:secretary@civfed.org). Thanks!

Regards,

Nick Giacobbe  
President, Arlington County Civic Federation

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## January General Membership Meeting Agenda

- 7:00 - 7:10 Open and Welcome, Approval of December [minutes](#)
- 7:10 - 8:25 Arlington County Board Member Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr.
- 8:30 - 8:45 Police Chief Andy Penn
- 8:45 - 8:55 Vote on Awards Committee
- 8:55 - 9:00 Other business from the floor and adjournment

**Location:** Hazel Auditorium, Virginia Hospital Center

**Date:** Tuesday, January 13, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

**Invitation:** Delegates, Alternate Delegates, others associated with member organizations, and the public are invited to attend this meeting.

**Delegates:** All requests for delegate swaps with alternates must be submitted to the [secretary@civfed.org](mailto:secretary@civfed.org) by **Sunday January 11th** at 12 noon. No exceptions.

### Options for attending the meeting:

1. **In-Person** (Delegates, Other Guests): No registration is needed to attend in-person. See parking instructions below in this newsletter.
  2. **Facebook Live (Other Guests): No registration is needed to watch the live stream which can be found on the [ArlCivFed Facebook page](#).**
  3. **Zoom** (Delegates): Registration is required ([link](#)) by Monday, January 12th at 12 noon. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The Zoom passcode is 123456, but if you use the links provided after you register you will not have to enter it.
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**Hon. Julius D. 'JD' Spain, Sr.  
Member, Arlington County Board**

Hon. Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr. was elected to the Arlington County Board in November 2024, marking the first general election in Arlington conducted using ranked choice voting. A retired United States Marine Corps veteran, Spain served 26 years, including combat deployment to Iraq, a diplomatic assignment in Brussels, and senior advisory roles on Capitol Hill. He retired as Master Gunnery Sergeant E9 and received the Legion of Merit for exceptional leadership and service.

In the private sector, Spain served as a senior business leader at a management consulting firm, leading initiatives across government, academia, and industry. He is an active member of George Mason University's President's Innovation Council and Inclusive Excellence Council.

Spain's civic engagement includes service on Arlington's Civil Service Commission, two terms as President of the NAACP Arlington Branch, tenure as Regional Vice President for Virginia, and delegate to Arlington County Civic Federation. Under his leadership, the NAACP Arlington Branch received the FBI Washington Field Office Community Leadership Award, the James B. Hunter Human Rights Award, and the National Thalheimer Award. Spain is also a Thirty Third Degree Scottish Rite Freemason, an honorary distinction recognizing extraordinary service and leadership within Freemasonry. He has served as a former elected Grand Lodge Officer of Prince Hall Freemasons in Virginia, including on the Grand Lodge Board of Directors, and as leader of Arlington Lodge #58. He is also a Shriner.

Spain holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Maryland, advanced legislative credentials from Georgetown University, and is a graduate of George Mason University's Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer Executive Development Program. A longtime Arlington resident, Spain and his wife of 33 years have lived in the historic Butler- Holmes subdivision of the Penrose community since 2009. They are the proud parents of three adult children, all graduates of Arlington Public Schools, and devoted grandparents to their granddaughter. Their family's deep roots in community affairs continue to inspire Spain's dedication to serve Arlington with integrity, fairness, and vision.

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**It's Been a Big Month for Form of Government (FoG)**

*Submitted by Dave Schutz, chair*

In the December County Board meeting, Board member Maureen Coffey noted that she had heard complaints that the Board had too many five to zero votes on issues which were contentious and noted that FoG was providing the contention complainants were seeking. We are doing our best!

**In the November 15 Regular County Board Meeting**, members Spain and de Ferranti introduced a motion for a draft charter for a FoG advisory panel.

The panel's purpose was described as: to evaluate whether the existing at-large election system, with five board members serving staggered terms, remains effective amid Arlington's evolution.

Key areas of inquiry for the advisory panel were to include:

- whether to expand the board's size
- to shift to district-based or hybrid representation
- to separately elect the board chair
- adjust election cycles
- and/or further formalize ranked-choice voting.

Public testimony was both pro and con, as was discussion by the Board.

Matt de Ferranti and Julius "JD" Spain Sr., advocated for advancing the process, emphasizing the need for "due diligence" and viewing it as an opportunity to empower Arlingtonians through structured dialogue. De Ferranti argued against delaying, stating, "We could get to December and decide to defer, but deciding now... is not where I am." Takis Karantonis was moderately favorable, and Susan Cunningham and Maureen Coffey expressed reservations, worried about the cost, called for clearer problem definitions and warned that ambiguous goals could lead to ineffective outcomes. The meeting concluded with a 3-0 vote (Coffey and Cunningham abstaining) to extend discussions to December, soliciting community feedback via an online form by December 1 noon. Takis Karantonis supported exploration but cautioned on specifics like districts, which he feared could foster "balkanization." During the following month, the Board received a large number of comments both pro- and anti- panel initiation. The interested reader can go to the four supporting documents at [County Board Carry Over Meeting - 12/17/2025 6:00:00 PM - OnBase Agenda Online](#). Number two and three contain the public comments, all four are worth your interest.

**December 17 discussion:** de Ferranti highlighted challenges like affordable housing and equity, rejecting the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mindset; Spain stressed historical exclusion of minorities baked into the system and the value of hybrid models; Karantonis emphasized efficiency amid inequalities. Coffey and Cunningham urged prioritizing core issues like budgets during economic uncertainty, with Cunningham noting unequal public engagement opportunities for vulnerable groups. There was a very impressive turnout of former electeds – many of whom had submitted testimony in which they voiced skepticism on timing and necessity ([Former elected officials raise concerns about moving too fast on Arlington governance changes | ARLnow.com](#)). Most of the public commenters largely favored proceeding, with organizations like the NAACP and Arlington Civic Federation advocating for equity-focused panels, transparency, and inclusive reforms like multi-seat ranked-choice voting. League of Women Voters in November expressed support for the idea of examining our FoG and wanted the charge improved to make a better outcome more likely.

**The December 17 outcome** was a compromise motion by Spain, seconded by Cunningham, to initiate preparatory efforts immediately but to defer the decision on whether to empanel the advisory group until summer. Preparatory work from the County Attorney will include legal reviews of Virginia laws controlling FoG in Arlington and peer jurisdictions, partnering with non-partisan researchers for historical analysis, engaging the School and Electoral Boards, identifying funding by March, and reporting findings in July 2026. Spain and Cunningham were designated as liaisons, which your author hopes will engender support (or at least acquiescence) for going forward this summer.

This study, if the County does embark on it, is probably our best chance in the last nine decades to adjust our FoG for better representation and responsiveness. Residents are encouraged to stay involved as the process unfolds, ensuring the final recommendations reflect the community's diverse needs.

The County has setup a web page devoted to this issue: [Examination of Arlington's County Board Structure and Performance – Official Website of Arlington County Virginia Government](#)

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## **Volunteers Needed to Review Grant Proposals**

*Submitted by Nick Giacobbe, ACCF President*

The County has put out a call for focus group participants to review proposals submitted by local non-profits for the current Opportunities Grant cycle that closes on January 13. The County expects to award approximately \$1.25m to support nonprofits in implementing programs or projects which will create opportunities for Arlington residents to thrive, while reducing, eliminating, or preventing inequities in direct response to demonstrate community or human services needs. For more info on the grants, visit [link](#).

Focus group participants will review executive summaries of each proposal and prioritize the proposals based on the most urgent community needs and largest impact. Participants will join two focus group meetings of about 2-3 hours each. The grants will then be approved by the County Board, expected at the April meeting.

If interested, click this [link](#) and apply by Monday, January 19.

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## **FY2027 Budget Guidance**

*Submitted by Suzanne Sundberg, Revenues and Expenditures POC*

The Arlington County Board issued [budget guidance](#) to the County Manager in December, ahead of preparations for the fiscal year (FY) 2027 budget. The Board directed the Manager to provide budget options for the Board's consideration that include, but are not limited to:

- Reductions and Efficiencies;
- Revenue Increases;
- Restructuring social safety net programs;
- Recommendations for the fiscally sustainable use of one-time funding in the stabilization fund and other contingency funds over a multi-year period;
- Funding WMATA at levels consistent with potential solutions included in the Council of Government/DMVMoves adopted resolution; and
- Preparing analysis that will lead to adoption of Memoranda of Understanding between the County Board and other Arlington Constitutional Officials.

Read the Board's complete budget guidance [here](#).

Arlington had one of its smallest-ever budget surpluses (just \$1.8 million) at the end of FY2025.

In November, the County Manager presented information on the closeout of FY2025, which ended on June 30, 2025, and provided the County Board with an update on FY2026 (the current fiscal year) as well as conditions related to the planning of FY2027:

<https://meetings.arlingtonva.us/CountyBoard/Documents/DownloadFileBytes/ 3 - Item Attachment - STAFF PRESENTATION - 30202640.pdf?documentType=1&meetingId=2646&itemId=56601&publishId=80208&isSection=False&isAttachment=True>.

The VA General Assembly Emergency Committee on the Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions issued a report in September that discusses how changes at the federal level are and will affect Virginia's economy and upcoming budgets: <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2025/RD506/PDF>.

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## Annual Dues and Recertification

*by Richard McNamara, ACCF Secretary*

Yes it is that time of year again for each member organization to recertify it has an active membership of at least 20 members and pay annual ACCF membership dues. Also if there are any changes to ACCF Voting delegates it is a good time to notify the ACCF.

### ANNUAL MEMBER PROCESSES

Per our bylaws, all member organizations must complete an annual recertification and pay member dues by **20 November** each year.

**MEMBER RECERTIFICATION** [Annual Member Organization Update and Recertification, FY2026](#) [1 Jul 2025 – 30 Jun 2026; Google Forms] – Recertification the Association has 20 active members.

### MEMBER DUES

Annual dues are for **FY2026 remain at \$65.00** per member organization.

### DONATIONS

Donations in any amount in addition to member dues are greatly appreciated.

#### Pay with Zelle:

Pay **with Zelle** right from your bank app or bank website. Please add \$1.30 to your payment to cover the **Zelle** surcharge.

Send your **Zelle** payment to ***treasurer@civfed.org***.

#### Pay with PayPal:

Pay with PayPal (\$2.85 surcharge covers the **PayPal** processing fee)

#### Pay by Check:

Mail your check to:

**Arlington County Civic Federation**

**Attn: Treasurer**

**PO Box 42091**

**Arlington, Virginia 22204-9091**

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## CivFed Membership Committee – Join us

*Submitted by Jackie Snelling, Chair*

The Membership Committee has a broad charge (see below) that is critical to meeting the ACCF mission to promote the general welfare of Arlington. Our ACCF strategy strives to bring together civic groups with diverse perspectives and backgrounds to discuss issues and to seek collaborative solutions to issues.

**Join us to update our strategy and actions to** recruit new members that support the ACCF mission and to focus on ACCF actions to include and support existing members. In the new year, I'm planning to work with members to expand the recruitment strategy and to renew and update the strategy and actions for member support that were developed a few years ago based on member surveys. If you are interested in joining our committee for the new year to help set our direction, please email me at [membership@civfed.org](mailto:membership@civfed.org)



## Membership Committee Charge

It shall be the duty of the Membership Committee to develop and implement strategies to recruit new members that support the ACCF mission and to support and retain existing members.

- **New Members.** Activities will include outreach, recruitment, review of applications, and recommendations to the Board for new members. This will include a focus on improving diversity as referenced by DEBI. (resolution: Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion (<https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2021-09/2021-09 ACCF DEBI Resolution APPROVED.pdf> )
- **Member Services.** The committee will recommend and support methods for continuous inclusion and engagement of new and current members in the ACCF mission. Support for engagement may include recommendations for communications to members, programs for members, engagement of members in meetings, committees and ACCF leadership. Member services will include requests from Civic Associations for boundary changes.
- **Member Feedback.** The committee will use multiple methods to collect feedback from members to assess their satisfaction with the member role and to seek their recommendations for improvement.
- **Support Secretary for Member Management.** The Committee will support the Secretary as requested to maintain an up-to-date list of members and with membership renewals.

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## Vote on Awards Committee Membership

*Submitted by John Ford, Chair, Awards Committee; bod.member3@civfed.org*

At our upcoming January meeting we will take a vote on the membership of the Awards Committee, who will be charged with preparing awards for our banquet on April 24. The proposed members of the committee are the following:

- John Ford, Chair
- David Smith
- Jean Henceroth
- Kathleen Trainor
- Alex Sakes

If you know of a person or organization who you would recommend for an award, please let me know.

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## ACCF Housing Committee Meeting Jan 15th at 6:30pm “Challenges of Creating Affordable Senior Housing”

*Submitted by Housing Co-Chairs Anne Bodine and Matt Hall*

The Third Thursday in January falls on January 15, and we will meet virtually for an hour starting at 6:30 pm with True Ground Director of Real Estate Development Curtis Adams who will present on: “Challenges of Creating Affordable Senior Housing”

Mr. Adams will give a brief overview of the landscape on affordable housing finance in Arlington and specific challenges with senior housing.

Please join us and register for the zoom meeting at: Registration

link: [https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/3h\\_veejOR--S1sb1xdAsHQ](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/3h_veejOR--S1sb1xdAsHQ)

For any questions, contact the CivFed Housing co-chairs at [housing.chair@civfed.org](mailto:housing.chair@civfed.org)

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# ARLINGTON COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION (ACCF) PROCEDURE FOR MEETING MATERIALS AT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

- Only materials generated by ACCF or pre-approved outside materials in support of an ACCF General Membership meeting may be distributed within/during an ACCF General membership meeting.
- Member organizations or guest speakers may leave materials at the meeting sign in table. However, the ACCF Board of Directors reserves the right to reject and remove materials for any reason.

**APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE OF THE ACCF BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS AT A REGULAR BOARD MEETING, SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2025.**

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## **Virginia Hospital Center Hazel Auditorium Parking and Access Instructions for General Membership Meetings**

Reminder: Parking passes will be provided. Meetings are held in the 'Conference Center' depicted on the map below.

The VHC Director of Security has advised CivFed that we should begin to park in Parking Garage C (map below). You can then walk across to the Oncology entrance and gain admittance until 8 p.m. **After the meeting, you MUST EXIT via the Women's and Infant lobby.**

**ENTER (until 8 p.m.):** Zone C Ground floor Oncology entrance (only open until 8 pm, Monday-Friday)

- Sign into the visitor kiosks (**need driver's license each time**)
- Get visitor sticker and wear at all times when inside the hospital
- Take a right at the double doors by the visitor kiosks
- Take a right at the single door
- Go to elevators and take to lobby floor
- Exit elevators and go left to hall directly behind welcome desk in lobby
- Take a left at the single door and continue down the hall toward a set of double doors
- Go through double doors and go right
- Conference center auditorium is directly ahead

**ENTER or EXIT (24/7):** Zone C first floor Women's and Infant lobby entrance (please use this entrance to exit after 8 pm, open 24/7):

- Sign into the visitor kiosks (**need driver's license each time**)
- Get visitor sticker and wear at all times when inside the hospital
- Walk to hall directly behind the welcome desk in the lobby
- Take a left at the single door and continue down the hall toward a set of double doors
- Go through double doors and go right
- Conference center auditorium is directly ahead





## 2025-2026 Board of Directors

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 Director at Large, [John Ford](#)  
 Director at Large, [Michael McMenamin](#)  
 Director at Large, [John Snyder](#)  
 Director at Large, [Matt Gloudeman](#)  
 Director at Large, [Ron Haddox](#)

## ACCF PUBLIC INTEREST COMMITTEES

- Arts and Culture - if interested contact [bod.orgdev@civfed.org](mailto:bod.orgdev@civfed.org)
- Diversity – Chair TBD - if interested contact [bod.orgdev@civfed.org](mailto:bod.orgdev@civfed.org)
- Environmental Affairs – Chair Mary Glass
- Housing – Co-Chairs Anne Bodine and Matt Hall
- Legislation – Acting Chair, Dave Schutz
- Parks and Recreation – Chair TBD
- Planning and Zoning – Chair Brian Harner
- Public Services – Chair John Ford
- Revenues and Expenditures – POC Suzanne Sundburg
- Schools – Chair Todd Truitt
- Transportation – Chair Nicole Merlene Toulouse

Any delegate, alternate delegate, or member of a member organization may participate on any public interest or support committee. Please contact the applicable committee chair,

point-of-contact, or President Nick Giacobbe if you are interested in participating on ACCF committees.

[Link to Committee Website](#)

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## Interested in being an Arlington County Civic Federation Delegate?

The Arlington County Civic Federation was founded in 1916. Today, it has 80+ member organizations dedicated to advocacy and community involvement. The Federation membership reflects the broad array of interests and talents found in the County and is open and welcoming to all groups within Arlington, firmly believing that a broader range of groups creates better problem-solving outcomes for Arlington and its residents. Our purpose continues to be promoting the general welfare of Arlington County and its vicinity in a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-sectional, and non-political manner.

Arlington County Civic Federation delegates enjoy the full benefits of participation, voting, and serving in Civic Federation leadership positions. If your organization is a member of the Civic Federation, ask if it has open slots for delegates. If it is not a member organization of the Civic Federation, encourage it to join. Here is a link to our website for more details.

[joinus@Civfed.org](mailto:joinus@Civfed.org)

[The Civic Federation's Website](#)

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## CivFed Calendar FY2026

### Looking Ahead:

- 01/13/26 - General Meeting
  - 01/15/26 - Housing Committee Meeting
  - 04/24/26 - CivFed Banquet
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