

# Rec Center Scrutinized

Reston residents question the proposed recreational center.

BY CHRISTIAN EUBANK  
 THE CONNECTION

**R**eston resident William Smith spoke for the opposition to the proposed indoor recreation center as he questioned the democracy of the planning process.

"When is 'no' not enough?" he asked July 7 a packed room of more than 100 of his fellow citizens at the Jo Ann Rose Gallery.

The meeting, organized by the Alliance of Reston Clusters and Homeowners (ARCH) and the Working Alliance of the Town Center Homeowners (WATCH), included presentations in favor of the new recreational center and two rounds of questions. Robert Goudie, the ARCH Issues Committee Chair and WATCH president, moderated the event and presented questions to Reston Association (RA) and Reston Community Center (RCC) leadership.

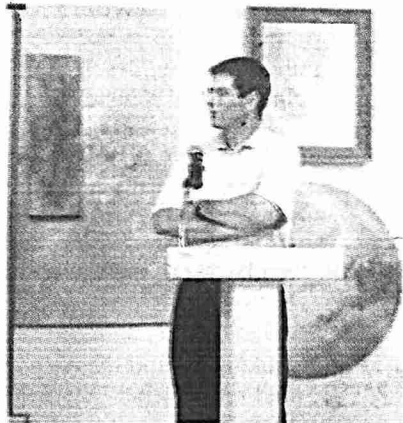
"We do not have all the space to accommodate all the people in the community," said Carol Ann Bradley, chair of the RCC Board of Governors. She cited growing waitlists for athletic programs in her defense of the new facility. Bradley stated that Reston's greatest athletic needs include tennis and aquatics facilities.

**RA PRESIDENT** Robin Smyers said that the RA and the RCC are still not committed to a particular plan and are archiving all e-mails and community survey results for consideration during the decision process.

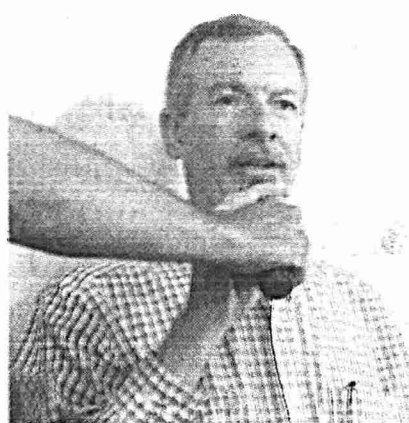
The most ambitious facility, which would include an Olympic-sized pool, up to eight tennis courts, a gymnasium and workout rooms, would cover 170,000 square feet. The construction cost is projected to be \$49 million, according to the RCC, but Goudie said that the project would reach up to \$100 million after financing.

In response to a proposal to cover pools and tennis courts instead of building a new center, Bradley said that a previous study stated that the cost to cover four courts at Lake Newport was \$1.4 million. Although

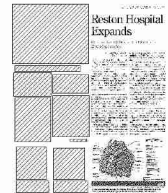
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**ARCH Issues Committee Chair Robert Goudie fields questions for Reston Association and Reston Community Center board members.**



**Mike Rierson, president of the Newport Shores Cluster Association, defends Lake Fairfax Park as an alternative to the Brown's Chapel site.**



multiple small-scale projects are a possible alternative, Bradley said this approach “would leave other needs unmet. [These projects] may cost more than people believe.”

RA and **RCC** have spent \$92,000 on studies to gauge interest and possible scenarios for a new facility. According to a study by the planning and program management firm Brailsford & Dunlavey, up to 70 percent of community center users would come from outside of Small Tax District 5, which includes all of Reston.

However, **RCC** Executive Director Leila Gordon said that patrons outside of Reston would pay higher user fees. She also promised that the boards would not try to raise taxes to fund the center.

“Nobody on either board is addicted to the footprints seen in the B & D plan,” said Gordon, in response to criticism of the proposed Brown’s Chapel site. She added that Baron Cameron Park, Lake Fairfax Park and Lake Newport Complex are also under consideration but declined to rank them ac-

ording to preference. Gordon admitted that the **RCC** was “very interested” in the Brown’s Chapel location because the land is owned by the RA and could be purchased for a low price. Bradley said that without land from the RA, the project probably would not be able to proceed.

The facility’s annual operating deficit is projected to be \$1 million and would require \$5 million in new annual revenues available for roughly 20 years, Gordon said. She said that Reston will be able to cover these extra costs based on projections that **RCC** revenues will double with the growth brought by the Metro Silver Line.

**AUDIENCE MEMBERS** questioned members of the boards about Reston’s responsibility to build a new recreation center instead of requesting county aid. Although growth in Reston from the Metro line would secure local funds for the center, this added revenue would also increase funds for the project on a county level.

Goudie reminded the board of **ARCH**’s promise to uphold the Reston Master Plan’s protection of

open spaces. “The amenities are worth the cost of open space,” Gordon said, claiming that the center will only result in a loss of about 8 acres. She also said the Reston Master Plan has a commitment to provide the community with indoor recreation opportunities.

Reston resident George Kain urged the board members to reconsider the Lake Fairfax Park location by negotiating pricing with the county. Kain said the relative loss of land in the park would be less than the proposed plan in Brown’s Chapel. “Master plans can be changed,” said Newport Shores Cluster President Mike Rierson, countering the claim that such negotiations would be difficult due to an existing park plan.

The Center for Survey Research of the University of Virginia will conduct a telephone survey to determine public support for the new center. Reston citizens would also have an opportunity to vote in a bond referendum, possibly as early as June 2011. “[We] are not obligated by a successful bond referendum to proceed with the project,” Gordon said.

# NEWS



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**Reston Association President Robin Smyers presents the history of proposed recreational facilities.**