

URGENT! URGENT! URGENT!

Charlestown

CHARLESTOWN OWNERS ASSOCIATION

March 25, 2011

Dear Neighbors,

As you know from reading the Chronicle and perhaps from visiting our website (www.charlestowncoa.org) the Fire Marshal has issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) and accompanying maps which prescribe Fire Lanes for Charlestown. Both the NOV and our letter of appeal can be found on our website. We encourage you to read these. Or you may go by the office (9-1 Mon-Fri) to review the documents. NOTE: Fairfax County Board of Building Code Appeals will hear our appeal on Wednesday April 13, 2011. See our website for the latest.

As explained in the Chronicle we made Lakinhurst and Willow Forge one-way streets and restricted parking to only one side of each of the Charlestown Streets, traffic circles and parking lots. This provided the required 18' wide fire lane and the 18' fire lane found on secondary streets in most if not all Fairfax County neighborhoods (e.g., Cardinal Forest, Kings Park, Orange Hunt, Burke, Davenport etc). The Fire Marshal however insists that if our interior streets are not one-way they can't have parking on either side.

The Fire Marshal's fire lanes:

1. Eliminate all curb parking on all Charlestown owned streets, (except our two one-way streets) traffic circles and in all parking lots. NOTE: Queenston and one block each of Seabright and Wickham are wider VDOT streets and not impacted.
2. Take away all nearby parking except for two assigned slots for at least 124 homes.
3. Leave three homes on Garfield Court circle with no parking spaces at all (they now have assigned spaces on the circle).

This means:

1. There will be no nearby parking for guests, residents' additional vehicles, service or utility vehicles and those residents with mobility issues would not be able to use convenient curb parking in front of their homes.
2. The COA would be unfairly burdened with the cost of creating new parking spaces for the three Garfield homes, on what is now landscaped common ground.
3. Property values will be diminished – due to the lack of parking. Until now Charlestown has had an unusual amount of parking for a town home community.

Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity has been very supportive on our behalf and has written a strong letter of support to the Board of Appeals. Chairman Sharon Bulova also supports our appeal. We believe it would be helpful if residents would write letters to the Appeals Board and email copies to Chairman Bulova, Supervisor Herrity. Also email a copy to me. Addresses are listed at the end of this note.

If you decide to write a letter – please do so as soon as possible. It would be good if you could describe any specific problems that the Fire Marshal’s requirements will have on you or others you know. Please feel free to use any of the points in the appeal letter or outlined below. It is also possible that a petition may be circulated by some residents that would possibly use these or similar points.

1. Charlestown was built over 40 years ago to standards and requirements existing at that time.
2. There is no record of emergency vehicles having a problem gaining necessary access within Charlestown.
3. The actions taken by Charlestown satisfy any possible safety and access concern that the Fire Marshal may have. In fact when Supervisor Herrity took the Fire Chief for a drive through Charlestown – the Fire Chief acknowledged that his equipment could get into all areas of Charlestown.
4. The Fire Marshal is imposing restrictions on Charlestown which are far in excess of those imposed in nearby neighborhoods (e.g., Orange Hunt, Kings Park, Burke, Cardinal Forest) which is unfair.
5. Charlestown property values will be diminished by these unwarranted restrictions.
6. The Fire Marshal’s requirements eliminate all curb parking for at least 124 homes (eight buildings). This means that those residents will have no access to parking beyond their two assigned spaces and will have no nearby parking for: visitors and guests, additional family vehicles; service and utility vehicles; and, no curb parking in front of their home for those with mobility issues and handicaps. In addition, three residents whose assigned parking is on the Garfield Court circle would lose even their assigned spaces.
7. The Fire Marshal’s requirements extend even into parking lots – which are not streets and shouldn’t be considered under the fire code.

Thank you for your time and effort in this important matter.

Regards,

Duane Ingalsbe, President, Board of Directors

Addresses for your letters:

Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Building Code Appeals
Attention: Secretary to the Board
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 444
Fairfax, VA 22035-5504

Chairman Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Sharon Bulova. Chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov

Springfield Supervisor, Pat Herrity. Springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov

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