



Press Release – August 14, 2014

Subject: Great Falls Civic Organizations Recommend Changes to Fairfax County Resident Curatorship Program

In early August, the Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) and Great Falls Historical Society (GFHS) provided Fairfax County with joint recommendations to improve the proposed resident curatorship (RC) program. The RC program, a preliminary draft of which was released in June, would enable historic county-owned properties to be leased to private investors, businesses or non-profit groups in return for substantial financial investment and restoration. The objective is the preservation of historic structures that are owned by the county Parks Authority, which has insufficient funds to maintain them.

GFCA has supported the RC Program concept for many years, but the details of a final plan are very important. **GFCA and GFHS believe the draft RC program can be improved significantly.** The organizations formed a joint working group in July to review the draft study, and submitted detailed recommendations to the county on August 6. Key recommendations were:

- Adopt a stronger set of criteria for selecting historic properties for Resident Curatorship. Among these should be (1) assessing the consequences of rehabilitation delay and (2) considering the prominence of a structure in the county's history.
- Select the historic Turner Farmhouse in Great Falls as an early pilot project for the county to demonstrate how the RC program will work. Its prominence on Georgetown Pike would provide visibility for and promote public interest in the program. The Farmhouse has been allowed to fall into disrepair under the County's ownership, and action to restore this historic property cannot come soon enough.
- Hold a public hearing so community groups around the county can comment on the RC Plan. Currently the county has not scheduled a public meeting on the proposal and GFCA & GFHS noted "public support and input is vital to launching and sustaining the program."

Bill Canis, GFCA VP and Chair of the Working Group, said "While the draft plan was solid in many areas, its criteria for the prioritization of historic properties needs significant improvement". Other recommendations include the need for strong commitment by the Board of Supervisors to the new program, administration options, composition of the program team, standards for curator selection, and specific elements of the leasing agreements. The full set of recommendations is available on request, and at gfca.org.

MEDIA INQUIRIES: Contact

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The Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) is a 501(c)4 civic organization that acts as the quasi-official town council of Great Falls, VA. Great Falls is unincorporated and, lacking a town government, the GFCA serves to work on issues and advocate the interests of town residents with county, state, and national governments. GFCA works on zoning, development, transportation, parks and environmental issues as well as any other matter concerning the town. No other organization is more respected by government authorities to speak on matters relating to Great Falls, or more sought out by government authorities for involvement in Great Falls issues, than GFCA.