Greetings Everyone! I’m Hal Lippman and I’ve been CBC President since early 2019 when, as vice-president, I succeeded our beloved Gary LaPorta after his sudden death. To say the least it wasn’t the usual happy transition in CBC’s leadership, but with the support of our ever-so-dedicated Executive Committee we persevered – even in the face of the COVID pandemic – in doing what we’ve done for more than 60 years: 1) providing information on, promoting involvement in, and galvanizing support for key issues facing our community; 2) fostering communication between citizens and their local government; and, 3) encouraging residents to vote, serve on City Boards and Commissions, and run for public office.

In reporting to the Membership, as stipulated in our By-laws, I offer the following brief summary of our activities and accomplishments since our last Annual Meeting:

* We conducted public forums for City Council and School Board candidates in 2019 and 2021 and for the special election in 2020 held to fill the seat of City Councilman and esteemed CBC member, Dan Sze. Along these lines, I’m especially pleased to note that for the first time ever, we were joined by the Falls Church City Public Schools PTAs in organizing and conducting last year’s forum for the School Board candidates. The experience was a good one and I anticipate more such collaboration with the PTAs in the future.

* We have helped inform, educate, and involve the community on a variety of important issues, including:
  + A well-received joint series last year with the Falls Church League of Women Voters, comprised of three public forums covering the past, present, and future of affordable housing in our City. The forums were covered in the FCNP, including a commentary summarizing the results. Our joint collaboration on this most important issue is ongoing, including most recently a letter to the City Council restating our key forum recommendations and urging priority attention on them at its annual strategic planning meeting.
  + Letters to and/or appearances before the City Council to urge strengthened efforts to meet the City’s climate change goals and final approval of the Library renovation/expansion project.
  + Joining with the Tinner Hill Foundation Social Justice Committee and Falls Church League of Women Voters in support of the City Council establishing a Race and Equity Commission.
  + Creating a periodic “Shout Out” award to recognize and celebrate outstanding accomplishments and contributions to the City by individuals and groups. So far three such awards have been given; all of which received prominent coverage in the FCNP.
* In what has clearly become our crown jewel, CBC has promoted leadership among our City’s youth through its Youth Representatives Initiative (YRI). Now in its eighth year of operation, the program has involved about 150 Meridian (George Mason) High School students in serving on dozens (as of now, 25) of City Boards and Commissions and with other local civic organizations, including: the: Falls Church Education Foundation, Environmental Sustainability Council, Economic Development Authority, Housing Commission, Human Services Advisory Council, Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation Social Justice Committee, Village Preservation and Improvement Society, Library Board, League of Women Voters, and Chamber of Commerce.

Perhaps the best way to provide a sense of what the program has accomplished is to share parts of letters written by two Youth Representative at the end their service:

“The CBC Youth Rep. program has been one of the most enriching, exciting, and fulfilling experiences of my high school career…. Attending monthly meetings and volunteering at or for the events that the [organization] put on has taught me about the workings of a nonprofit as well as the impact that community groups can have at a local level…Through [my involvement] I have been able to share my student perspective, one that is valuable in discussions that heavily influence where or how funds are given to the thing that concerns me and my peers most right now: school…. I think that this CBC Youth Rep program…teaches students invaluable skills and allows them to do it in a relevant community setting.”

“Over the course of my time on [this Board] I have truly learned and grown as a leader and as someone interested in government. Some of the "pros" that stood out from this opportunity included seeing how important local advisory committees/councils are in ensuring the values of their constituents. It was also extremely valuable to learn how to effectively communicate ideas and improve on public speaking. Above all, was the ability to observe first-hand a trend in which more members of the public coming to meetings translated to more productive and wholesome action plans. Seeing the effectiveness of democracy especially in a time that seems increasingly undemocratic was to me, an extraordinary source of hope and inspiration.”

In addition to what the Youth Reps said, leaders of the bodies on which they served have acknowledged their efforts and contributions. In one case, Chamber of Commerce members and leaders effusively praised the result of their Youth Reps’ efforts in response to being asked if they could provide some ideas on developing a live local social media plan. To their surprise, what they got was a full-blown, detailed power point slide presentation, which the Chamber has started to use. In another case, a Youth Rep had become so constructively engaged with the body on which he was serving, after he turned 18 he was invited to be a regular member.

* Last among our accomplishments and activities have been our continuous and typically arduous efforts to strengthen and improve our administrative and operational capabilities. These efforts have resulted in: the recruitment of a new, fully qualified Treasurer; the addition of a Recording Secretary, and making significant progress in being able to update and maintain our website. We’ve also conducted two membership recruitment and renewal campaigns, which resulted in a dramatic increase in paid members in 2020-2021, and had some notable success in bringing into CBC a younger demographic of City residents both as general members and members of the Executive Committee.

That concludes my report…thanks for your attention.