

New Year's Day Speech 2013
Mary Hynes, Board Member

Once again, let me say thanks to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to serve our community as Chair this past year. I am pleased to hand the gavel to Walter today. I know that he will ably serve this Board and all of Arlington in the year ahead and that Jay will once again fill the vice-chair seat with ease.

I'm excited that Walter has included continuing to work at improving our community collaboration – *for all of Arlington* – as part of his 2013 agenda. That's one of the biggest takeaways for me from 2012's PLACE – Participation, Leadership and Civic Engagement – initiative. The wide variety of interactions we had last year confirmed what we already knew – that our community's strong belief that good ideas can come from anywhere is unusual; that collaboration between Arlingtonians and their County government typically leads to better results, and that strategic decisions better stand the test of time when developed together. It's a legacy we need to tend – and I look forward to working with Walter to launch the town hall meetings he proposes. I believe they will add a new dimension to how government, residents and businesses work together to make Arlington better.

I'm pleased to say that Open Door Mondays will continue beginning in February. This year, we plan to hold them at four libraries throughout the County – Westover, Central, Columbia Pike and Shirlington. The drop-in format and the 7-9 p.m. time will remain the same. Given our experience last year with attendance,

we'll take a break from regular Open Door Mondays in August and December. In addition, over the next year, I will be working with staff and citizens to build out the enhanced infrastructure we need to achieve the three key PLACE objectives:

- Expanding participation in county decision making
- Building leadership capacity through training interested residents, business and non-profit leaders, and staff
- Refining our civic engagement processes

Three items top the initial list of 2013 activities:

First, we will be establishing a standing PLACE steering committee, with citizen and staff members. Meeting once a month, this group will help guide the next phases of the work.

Second, The Board has asked for community feedback on the PLACE *Framework for Civic Relationships* document presented in December. This document will be distributed widely over the next few weeks. Any civic organization may request a PLACE framework presentation at one of its meetings in January or February and it will be available on the web with a comments section as well. The Board will use all this feedback to finalize the document for adoption at its March meeting.

Third, we are looking for volunteer faculty members to develop and teach an expanded set of offerings in Arlington's Neighborhood College. We plan to build on existing work – orientations previously developed by residents and staff – and are very interested in new ideas that folks may have.

Again, if you have an idea or want to participate in any of these activities don't hesitate to give my office a call – 703-228-3130

Looking ahead to the many challenges we will face in 2013 and beyond, continuing to refresh how we work together – building PLACE principles systematically into the Arlington Way – is essential if we are to take full advantage of our collective talents.

This is an unsettled and challenging time for local government.

As we wait for the fallout from the federal government's procrastination and as another likely kick-the-can-down-the-road session of the General Assembly begins, making sure that our residents, businesses, and non-profits understand the challenges Arlington faces and that we seize the opportunities our community has to build lasting solutions will be critical.

At the same time, it's essential that we work efficiently and effectively – that we build on decisions already made by this Board and the community, rather than revisit issues that have been well-vetted and incorporated into the County's long range plans. Understanding when to have the right conversation – and then moving on - is indeed a crucial component of successful civic engagement for it settles an issue so that the community can count on the results of the decision.

In 2013, I hope to take the PLACE lessons into several key activities:

1. I will be the Board's liaison to the Board-commissioned Housing Study. I am excited to help guide this work. As each of us said repeatedly last

year, there is no greater challenge before us than finding ways to provide housing in Arlington for people at all ages and stages and incomes.

2. At Metro, the Board will be finalizing its new Strategic Plan – developing strategies, goals and targets that we hope will lead to a renewed regional financial commitment to the system. As Arlington’s representative, I promise to bring Arlington’s values and lessons learned to the regional conversation, including our experience with the importance of effectively layering multi-modal options.
3. At the Council of Governments, I will be leading the Region Forward Coalition – a collaborative public-private coalition committed to improving transit and roads, housing, energy efficiency and other policies and practices to assure our region’s vitality and sustainability. It will be a terrific opportunity to share with and learn from others in our region.
4. Finally, as a member of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, I will continue to press for long-term, statewide, sustainable funding for roads and transit. The need is great – at least \$1 billion statewide per year to maintain what already exists with an additional one-two billion in funding desperately needed to support increased transit capacity in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads. It was my privilege to be part of a bi-partisan group of mayors and chairs this year, assisted by local chambers of commerce, which highlighted this critical issue for General Assembly members and the Governor. As this year’s Richmond session progresses, I and others will be working

with Virginians and Virginia businesses across the Commonwealth to ensure the General Assembly gets the message that appropriate support for transit and roads is not optional. In fact, it's essential for the Commonwealth's success in the long run.

In the end, all of this work comes down to ensuring Arlington's sustainability. As a small, dense, diverse county – with many jobs and four bridges that lead from Virginia to the District of Columbia – we cannot sit idly by and let others in the region make decisions without us. Our voice, our needs, and our creativity have been and will continue to be essential to the long-term success of our region and of the Commonwealth. I'm looking forward to these challenges and to the many rewarding conversations and solutions that will be the result of working together as we continue to create our collective destiny.

We have a lot of work ahead. But we know that we serve the best community in the Commonwealth. Without your support and encouragement, Arlington would not be the place it is today. So thank you.

I hope you enjoy this first day of the New Year and that you'll roll up your sleeves to help us with all that comes Arlington's way in 2013!