

**Arden Advisory Retreat**  
**What Does Arden Look Like in 20 Years?**  
**February 4, 2023**

**Attendance:** Jeffrey Politis, Skip Bailey, Elizabeth Varley, Simon Hamermesh, Larry Walker, Carol Larson, Bev Clendening, Steve Benigni, Betty O'Regan, Deborah Ricard, Jennifer Borders, Helen Ohlson, Lisa Mullinax, Toby Ridings, Cecilia Vore, David Gerbec, Sachin Puranik, Pam Politis, Barbara Macklem, John Scheflen

**Facilitator:** Tricia Arndt, AICP

Office of State Planning, Planner for New Castle County. Her main role is to assist governments in their planning needs and to serve as a liaison between the state and the municipalities.

**Goal of the day:** To begin to map out a path for the future for the Town on each of four topics discussed and gain insight into our collective goals.

Topic 1 Community involvement/increasing Volunteerism & Social Engagement.

Topic 2 Environmental Stewardship and Climate Impact Management

Topic 3 Aging in Place – Accommodating an Aging Population

Topic 4 Historical preservation/awareness/how to assure Arden's heritage in passed down.

**Congratulations on a job well done!**

Jennifer Borders, Community Planning Chair, expressed heartfelt appreciation for the hard work and the many who dedicated their time in putting together today's retreat.

Thanks to Community Planning Committee: Pam Politis, David Gerbec, Ron Meick, John Scheflen, Sachin Puranik and Jennifer Borders.

Also, a special thanks to the researchers and presenters: Jeffrey Politis, Bev Clendening, Carol Larson, Lisa Mullinax, Barbara Macklem, Pam Politis.

Thanks to Terri Hansen, caterer

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**Topic 1 Community involvement/increasing Volunteerism & Social Engagement.**

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**Presenter: Jeffrey Politis**

Questions to consider:

- How have the residents of Arden been able to create or maintain the connectivity over the years?
- And if this is a unique feature of the Village, the next question should be how do we maintain it going forward?
- Do we need to set an expectation to be involved in the community in some way?
- What are some of the ways you interact with the community? Does it have to be an organized event or by simply walking the neighborhood?
- What is our responsibility to create opportunities for connectivity both as individuals and within our roles in the community?
- What else can we do to foster volunteerism and create community connectivity?

One key aspect to community engagement is the opportunity to be involved/invested through volunteerism. Investing time for the good of the community creates connectivity, especially when multiple people volunteer together. There are many avenues for volunteering in the Ardens, including participation in Village government, activities at the Club or Buzz, ACRA events, etc. There are also opportunities to volunteer on a less obvious nature, such as simply looking out for a neighbor, going to the grocery store, or providing a ride. To maintain the level of engagement that we currently enjoy, we must continue to encourage volunteering and provide opportunities for volunteers.

One challenge with volunteerism is that people have to be aware of the opportunity to help – often they have to be persuaded or asked. A simple call for volunteers is less

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effective than a personal ask. As a result, getting volunteers takes time and energy for the person or group to contact each potential volunteer and to organize the group. People may not know how to reach those who are willing to volunteer or may be intimidated by asking others to help. We can call individuals, email a group of friends and neighbors, or post the need for help on social media. Unfortunately, everyone isn't on Facebook or comfortable using email, so these methods don't work for everyone. Is there a better way?

Without volunteers, what are the alternatives? Is it easier to just do the work ourselves without asking others to help? Is it easier to hire the work out? What serves the community better – getting the work done fast by doing it ourselves or by hiring it out OR getting the work done slower but getting the help of the community? Beyond volunteering, another avenue of creating community connectivity is through participation in social or governmental events. Dinners, coffee house, ACRA holiday parties, or even town meeting provides opportunities for us to meet, speak, and interact with our neighbors. Other events like woods clean-up, memorial garden clean-up, or installing a slide create moments of face-to-face interactions while working toward a common goal.

**Discussion/Comments** Topic 1 Community involvement/increasing Volunteerism & Social Engagement.

The way you form a community has changed. Today the community is less physical because it has extended via the internet.

Does the experiment still work? For the most part, it does We started out as an experiment and we are still here after 120 yrs., which is what an experiment does and we need to go forward with that in mind.

**Big Ideas**

- Standing committee for social Engagement
- Agenda details for meetings so folks know what to discuss
- Incentives/rewards for services
  - Co-op arrangement (i.e., credit against land rent and tie it to affordable housing, ADU's, by offering a lower rent, or create new housing: tiny houses or tract it as a contest).
- Perks for certain improvements to leaseholds to encourage improvements. The Trust would have to get involved. For example, you install permeable paving, you or the trust purchases some plants for your leasehold. Something

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tangible that would link to the Co-op incentive. This is for the leaseholders not just the volunteers.

- Appreciation recognition
- Volunteer opportunities  
List all volunteer opportunities in one place i.e., Village website. Detail what the committees needs and match with the skills.
- Resurrect the Merry-Go-Rounders group, a social club.
- More Charismatic leadership collaborative.
- Volunteer coordinator or trainer  
Volunteer cultivation to figuring out how to get people involved and keep them involved. Train a coordinator on how to get volunteers or make it a paid position because a volunteer coordinator is a skill in itself.
- Data base skills/people  
The government can create a central data base where people can go to look to see where some help is needed. Recognizes the different skills people have.
- Public Relations/Marketing  
Remind people of the importance of volunteering, of community and how Arden functions.
- Town Assembly for teens.  
Hold a Town Assembly just for young people (under 18) to be held at the same time as the regular town assembly.
- Babysitting offered during times of meetings to encourage young families to come out and participate.
- Committees working together and be more connected.
- Plan more events outside of committees.  
'Meet the Candidate's (and learn about the committees and how you can get involved) is an existing annual event but suggest make it a bigger event, like an evening with cocktails. This should be held in the month of January prior to the March town elections of officers and Committees. Another suggestion is to hold a Volunteer's Fair Day with cocktails of course. Recommend creating a new committee to address volunteer involvement even though the Registration Committee has stepped up over the years with various ways to reach out to new comers. They have created and hand delivered 'Welcome Hither' Packets and offered to help them integrate into the community in so many ways.

**Challenges:**

- Avoid territorial disputes between the town and the club.

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- Family Dynamics - Consider the time of meetings and events
- Engaging non-elected candidates.
- Help new comers understand their role in the community by transition from the consumer of community benefits to producer. You moved here because you love it, but you need to be a part of it.
- Establish a Village mentorship program or a liaison program for new residents and for residents who have been here for a while but who have not participated/engaged in activity.
- Welcome new people
- Embrace technology in terms of how you recruited your volunteers. Create a data base of skills and interest that can be aligned. A calendar that has a prompt about an upcoming event and asks if you would be interested in volunteering for that event
- Generational preferences. No one wants a phone call.
- Co- schedule activities for teens and child care. The whole family can be involved.
- Same volunteers do the majority.  
This is nothing new: it morphs into different ways. In 1920 had to track people down because not all were year round. Now is how to get hold of them.
- Instill sense of ownership/responsibility
- Understand direct Democracy and the importance of it.  
People comment that they have no say but they do by participating in the meetings and voting on issues.

## **Topic 2 Environmental Stewardship and Climate Impact Management**

**For Complete Power Point Presentation:** <https://arden.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Environmental-Stewardship-and-Climate-Impact-Management2151.pptx>

**Presenters: Carol Larson, Bev Clendening**

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

#### **A. Health of the Forests**

- Example project assuming unlimited funding: Create a model of forest restoration as a show piece – clearing invasive species, managing regrowth of

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native species, taking into consideration global climate change, professional evaluation of the health of the forest; repairing, and protecting the riparian buffer to control erosion.

**B. Health of Arden Public Spaces**

- Example project assuming unlimited funding: create a model for community green spaces by evaluating the health of aging trees in the common spaces, planting and protecting replacement trees where needed, burying the power lines, adding additional pollinator gardens, and reducing turf.

**C. Storm Water and Erosion Management**

- Example project assuming unlimited funding: implement all Storm Water Management BMPs involving public land and create a fund to assist residents in implementing Storm Water BMPs on individual leaseholds.

**D. Arden's Contribution to Global Environmental Stewardship**

- Example projects assuming unlimited funding: add solar panels to public buildings, maintain a community compost area, and encourage use of wildlife-friendly lighting.

**Vision Big Picture** what do you want Arden to look like in 20 years in terms of environmental stewardship and climate change?

**Large community capital projects vs individual actions**

**Two categories**

**1. Capital Projects** (i.e., changing all the roads to permeable paving, powerlines, implementing the Storm Water Management Project)

**2. Things that the individual leaseholders could do that would have an impact for the greater community.**

Hoping with unlimited funds and maybe individual leaseholders could be incentivized (reduce their lawn, install permeable paving driveways, reduce their footprint of roof, certified wild habitat that is a collective of individual leaseholders which results in more than the sum of its parts by impacting the whole community.

**Ideas**

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- Treat entire community as a whole  
A more holistic approach to manage the leaseholds, forests, common ground, paths, rights-of-way. etc.
- Connection to broader community.  
For example, there are upstream impacts of Naaman's Creek and air quality impacts that are beyond the Arden borders.
- Integrated involvement  
Integrate involvement with your neighbors and the county.
- Role model for Delaware communities.
- Knowledge transfer  
If you are a role model, how do you teach others. Need to let others know what the community is doing by educating. A way that the Forest Committee disseminated information about the creek is they publish a newsletter called Living on the Edge of the Arden Forest that they mailed to all those who lived on the edge of the creek.
- Emergency Preparedness for climate impact.  
Are we prepared for power outages by having generators in public spaces. cooling/warming places when there are extreme weather conditions and for floods that encroach close to or on the leaseholder's property.
- Buy native trees for residents.  
In terms of the community as a whole and encouraging people to plant the native trees and maintain them not just on the common area but on the individual leasehold by establishing a program where the Village purchases the plants/trees for the leaseholder. Provide some kind of consultation where they can help determine what is growing on individual leaseholds property.
- Lighting conducive to wildlife/light pollution.  
Encourage the use of motion detectors and yellow lights by offering to purchase and to help to install them.
- Stormwater plan funding education.  
This is a big project and the question is how to fund it and how do you go about that. Does Arden want to pay for the whole project? There is a lot of grant money available especially for water issues. There is DNREC funds but the Village needs to plan for the 50% matching funds. If you can fund the whole stormwater plan, and encourage leaseholders by having a fund to help them take care of problems on their leaseholds. Before that can be done, there has to be some kind of program to make people aware of the problem. Many residents are not aware of what is in the Storm Water Management Plan and therefore the larger community does not get it and understand why it is important.

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- Composting bins for community.  
The idea here is to not have things scattered all over the place but to help individual leaseholders by guiding them in the composting process. To assist in that process, offer the use of town owned mulchers to leaseholders.  
Opportunity for town mulch. Select location for a community compost.
- Document the erosion on Naaman's Creek catch basin  
Document the erosion on Naaman's Creek and Perkins Run and have it for political purposes to go outside for the neighborhood of the upstream. DNRC monitors water quality at the Marsh Rd and Naaman's Creek but we have no data on the observation of the erosion. If water coming down from upstream is a problem, then maybe create a catch basin to regulate the flow at the first part of Arden's land (Marsh Rd and Naaman's Creek) in order to preserve downstream.
- Micro grid/solar field.  
Build a micro grid which would include a solar field. Get off the grid and be more self-sufficient.
- Permeable paving
- Water wheels  
Do we want a water wheel in the creek to control water and/or provide free power to the Ardens?
- Ord vs non-native remove invasives  
Going with the whole holistic idea by treating the community and leasehold's lands as one, by creating an ordinance against planting non-natives.

### **Challenges**

- Balance forest access with beauty and preservation  
Preservation of the natural beauty of the land that we already have.
- Doggie Bags  
Install doggie bag stations near the trash bins.
- Large items recycling day
- Community wide contract for tree maintenance
- Oversight of tree /forest health tree council  
Instead of everyone taking care of their trees individually maybe organize to provide tree service for the group which should reduce the cost per leasehold.  
Create a Tree council consisting of the Trustees, Forest Committee and the Civic Committee who could provide oversight and schedule group services.
- Water collection devices i.e., rain barrels
- Sound Pollution



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- An ordinance against gas leaf blowers. Why not all leaf blowers?
- Incentive for natural lawns
  - Rain garden, plants paid for by trustees
  - Bury power lines

### **Topic 3 Summary**

#### **Aging in Place-- Accommodating an Aging Population**

**For complete Power Point Presentation:** <https://arden.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Environmental-Stewardship-and-Climate-Impact-Management2151.pptx>

For this topic, we will discuss whether Arden should adopt a policy of being an "Age-Friendly Community" (aging in place), and what that might look like to us.

#### **Questions to consider:**

- Does Arden want to support aging in place?
- What impact does being an age-friendly community have on our village (pros and cons)?
- Support for residents can make a significant difference in their ability to stay in their communities and homes as they age.

#### **The presentation will include:**

- National and regional programs to help build age-friendly communities
- Examples and characteristics of age-friendly communities
- How do we measure our residents' abilities to age in place; what metrics can we look at?
- Age demographics in New Castle County

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- Ivy Gables' role for aging in Arden and as a community resource
- The role of finances and economic issues for an aging in place strategy

### **Aging in Place**

#### **Vision**

- Possible to remain in home in Arden  
Is it thinking about helping people who want to stay in their homes or is it thinking about providing a home they want to move into? It's Both. Aging in place and living in your home means living in the community.

#### **Big ideas**

- Good neighbor groups check on the elderly residents
- Have referral lists available  
Help the elderly know what services are available and help them accessing them.
- Coordinated grocery runs
- Collaborate with Claymont community center & Ivy Gables (home visits). They have a wealth of knowledge about social services. Maybe ask them to do a program detailing what services they offer.
- ADUs, small house clusters
- Support communal housing. Maybe a better partnership with Ivy Gables who has housing.
- CSA delivery
- Small markets  
It's county zoning but if Arden supported having a small grocery store, they could work with NCC to make that happen.

#### **Challenges**

- Basic services and elder care (toe nails clipped, house cleaned, bathing, small repairs like change bulbs)
- Transportation for non-drivers
- More housing = More Traffic and residents' objections.
- Process for sub dividing large lots for smaller houses considering Trust
- Establish requirements to ensure smaller house goals
- Ensure Arden amenities are accessible
- How to finance community classes (Need to find a way to fund activities because it is a service). For 5 years Cecilia managed the S & M class for seniors.

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It was well attended and connectivity was strong. We need to continue to offer free community activities like this one.

**Topic 4 Summary**

**Historical preservation/awareness/how to assure Arden's heritage is passed down**

**For complete Power Point Presentation: <https://arden.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Environmental-Stewardship-and-Climate-Impact-Management2151.pptx>**

The Arden Craftshop Museum is a non-profit (501c3) corporation. All residents of the three Ardens are voting eligible members and they have an elected board. They are responsible for the physical plan (the building, renting apartments and that income provides for repairs and maintenance for the building. The income does not go towards the running of the museum beyond heat, light and fire alarm.

The board members are responsible for the collection. Bringing in new items and maintaining them, categorizing them and displaying them.

They receive contributions from all three Ardens and Trustees along with the museum annual campaign and donations they get along the way. This has allowed them to pay for a museum curator who is paid for 8 hours a week but works much more. They have this wonderful mechanism for preserving history; potentially for sharing it and assuring that this history will pass down and people will be invited into the culture of Arden.

**Challenges:**

- Loss of our spirit of community.
- Failing to continue the vision of the founders and all the others who have preceded us.
- Failure to protect and preserve the Collection and the Museum.

**Opportunities:**

What can the Town do?

- Value the past, learn from it.

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- Re-establish a “Vision for the Future.”
- Idea: “Arden 101” educational programs for new and existing residents. May include an introductory talk and a walking tour.
- Enjoy our uniqueness and glory in it! We are different from the cities and suburbs and we should be proud of that heritage. How can we sustain it?

What could we do with unlimited funding?

- Expand the Museum, increase (paid) staffing, enlarge parking, add programming.
- Increase regular social gatherings.
- How can we expand the knowledge-base of the residents about our shared history?
- Increase protection of the existing collection and physical plant and add to it.
- How can we involve as many as possible in maintaining and continuing to build the community we have inherited?
- Because of our size, the actions of each person matter. Our self-government will only last as long as we actively participate.
- How do we encourage running for office, attending Town Assembly, or even something as simple as voting?
- Arden will only continue to be a special place to live as long as we take care of it. It is important to remember that *"Tomorrow is a New Day"* and that day is our responsibility.

**Big Idea**

- Kids version of Arden 101
- Arden 101.  
Cultivating those that are already in town as well as the new comers. It is not only the Arden History 101 but Arden’s government, it’s social structure, volunteers. Updating the WHY? video that is posted to the Arden Archives website was very informative and interesting.
- QR codes at locations of interest
- S.O.P. for procedures/Notes/mtgs (using AI for archiving/searching documents).
- Meeting summaries for town assembly’s
- Coffee shop/other reasons to visit/gather at museum
- Exhibitions to attract visitors
- Extend hours

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- Add arts to museum
- Gift houses as part of estate planning
- Free labor from UD/colleges with relevant majors
- Connect teens with doing oral Histories. This is an opportunity for ACRA to invite the museum to “present an idea”.
- Signage for interesting/historical sites.

**Challenges**

- Preserving institutional knowledge
- Not enough parking
- Succession Planning
- Preserving Oral Histories

**Going Forward**

Community Planning Committee will present their findings on each topic in their report to the March Town Assembly. This is a beginning of conversations about each of these topics. They will take each topic, collate it, pushing it forward and then within the Community Planning Committee they will prioritize and try to move forward on each of the topics. It’s not just Community Planning, they will be reaching out to all committees involved. The direction for each of the topics is being set today.

As Community Planning is evaluating, collating, prioritizing and reporting on results of the retreat, individuals and Committees volunteered to start the process now of going forward by volunteering to do the following:

Community Involvement

- Advisory Committee, Sachin Puranik– In January host a Meet the Candidate event
- Registration Committee, Cecilia Vore - revise Welcome Packet
- Deborah Ricard -Meet the Candidate March 11, 2023
- Archives, Lisa Mullinax – create Arden 101 program
- BWVC, Betty O’Regan - Host a newcomer’s event.
- Village Chair, Jeff Politis -Preferred contact method (data base)

Environment

- Registration – Cecilia Vore will include in the revised Welcome Packet that advice is available from Forest Committee on how Leaseholders can landscape their property.

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- Village Chair, Jeffrey Politis will continue with Preparedness in an emergency situation in terms of adding generators, BWVC kitchen readiness, text emergency notices, etc.

Aging in Place

- Pam Politis - Build coalition
- 

History Preservation

- Jeff Politis - Use AI to absorb our history
- Archives – Oral Histories Week. Cookie will be the interviewer.

They will keep Community Planning informed of their status as they go forward.

Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Resko, Village Secretary