

DRAFT

North Ridge Citizens' Association  
Minutes for November 9, 2020  
Virtual "Zoom" Meeting

NRCA President Chuck Kent called the meeting to order at 7:30. An attendance list is attached to these minutes.

Sgt. Thomas Ground, the Police Department's liaison to NRCA, gave a report that covered the period from October 12 to today. He said there had been a total of 29 cases during the period, five lower than last month. There were four larcenies, two burglaries of storage sheds (in the 300 block of West Glebe) and two simple assaults. There were no car thefts. In his view, this was "a very good month."

Mr. Kent asked that because the October meeting minutes were so lengthy and had come in just shortly before the meeting, that comments on those minutes be provided by the coming Thursday.

Katherine Carraway, Urban Planner, Transportation & Environmental Services and Erika Gulick, Director Capital Programs, Alexandria City Schools, addressed the meeting. Ms. Carraway stated that in 2017 the City Council had formed a joint task force of City and ACPS staff "to prioritize projects City-wide." The idea was to look at the use of facilities City-wide, "to get the City and the School Board out of their silos," and "build on and synthesize studies and plans the City and Schools already have." In the final phase the task force will "develop a road map" and "look at where there might be opportunities for joint planning." "At a high level is where we are."

Ms. Carraway said that the task force has met 34 times and has produced 16 recommendations. The schools master plan is one of the recommendations. The intent is to have two or three more community engagements and then wrap up in the February/March timeframe. The task force "is not making decisions about particular facilities on particular sites." Rather, it is "providing options."

Ms. Carraway noted that 319 respondents had provided approximately 1,200 comments. Key concerns were about the maintenance of adequate green space and the co-location of non-school facilities – particularly housing – on school sites.

Jennifer Dougherty asked if the City's priorities will be based on the survey results.

Ms. Carraway replied that "the overall needs have already been identified by the City through other outreaches." We have broken those out by "urgent, medium term and long term." "It's a thirty year plan." An assumption in the development of the facilities master plan is that there will be no net loss of open space. "That is a City policy."

Ms. Gulick said the Minnie Howard development "is not a project in the CIP." George Mason and Cora Kelly "are down the road." On November 17 there will be a joint meeting of the Council and the School Board. Co-location will be a topic at that meeting. "Minnie Howard will need a decision on co-location by January."

John Fehrenbach asked who owns the George Mason property.

Ms. Gulick replied that the property "is fully for School use so the School Board is responsible for it. The City technically owns the entire property."

Mr. Fehrenbach said "What I am hearing tonight is that the priorities are already locked in. What is the value of the reach out?"

Ms. Carraway replied "The City has lots of priorities. Lots of groups want different things. All the priorities on the list have been garnered from the community."

Mr. Fehrenbach responded "I sense that things are pre-wired. The inadvertent release of the George Mason plan heightened my concern/skepticism. There is a real concern about density increases."

Ms. Gulick said "We have determined needs on a high level. Open space, school seats, public housing."

Ms. Dougherty asked how many houses have been promised.

Ms. Carraway replied that 2,000 affordable units were placed in the master plan in 2013. That was a “jurisdictional agreement.” 2,200 units have since been added to the 2,000.

Meghan Rainey asked where we could find public information on the other feedback that had been used to help develop the recommended priorities.

Ms. Carraway replied that it had been received “in recent years by various departments.” It was “information solicited from the public.”

Jennifer Ware asked who is supporting having affordable housing on school sites as there appears to be a lot of opposition to that idea.

Ms. Carraway said that there are many views on this subject.

Mr. Fehrenbach said that he believes that most people oppose any housing on school sites and asked what the specific basis was for saying there is support.

Ms. Carraway replied that “We have 160,000 people we have to represent.” She said she was born and raised in Alexandria and her children went to ACPS.

Ms. Ware replied that she, too, was born and raised in Alexandria and she did not believe it was a good thing to have housing on a school site. She asked if the idea is being pushed by the City Manager and the people who work for him. She said that it appears that there are Council members and School Board member who oppose the idea, but that she had not heard the views of the City Manager.

Ms. Dougherty stated that housing dosing doesn’t belong on school property, no matter what kind it is. She said the City needs to consider the needs not just people coming in to the City, but those who are here now.

Abby Harrell said that there are different opinions. There is not a monolithic view on this.

Jessica Buchanan asked if there are examples of co-location being used in other places in the country. She asked how the co-location idea came about. She also asked about the status of the co-location idea at George Mason.

Ms. Gulick said the George Mason idea might pick back up next year.

Ms. Carraway said that the co-location idea is not new and that there are “lots of examples in the U.S.” She noted that housing had been placed about the fire station in Potomac Yard and that Alexandria Renew facilities are under City playing fields.

Ms. Gulick noted that the Superintendent will be proposing a CIP budget this Thursday and that that proposal will be worked on over the next two months.

Ms. Gulick and Ms. Carraway’s presentation ended at 8:25.

Deborah Hahn and Bill Young made a presentation about Monticello Park.

Ms. Hahn noted that the park had 140 species of plants and trees and that over the years 120 species of birds, including 30 varieties of warblers had been sighted there. “This is a green space that is important to our community health and well-being.”

Ms. Hahn noted that during the pandemic parks are getting increased use, including by birdwatchers; binocular sales are up 22 percent. She said that Monticello itself was getting more use and that there have been some unfortunate side effects of this popularity.

First, there has been increased erosion. Many park users have been walking off the trails and barren spots have increased. The erosion has been exacerbated by the fact that people are riding bikes in the park. Erosion of the stream banks has been significant as well. (Bill Young noted that some paths have become dangerous because of the erosion.)

Second, there has been much more trash in the park and it seems that people eating in the park sometime do not clean up after themselves.

Third, there has been increased tree loss and some trees and shrubs seem to have been cut to make forts.

John Fehrenbach suggested that North Ridge could have “an Earth Day type project” with a community trash pick up and education about how to care for the park.

Jeanne Snapp explained the City’s Adopt-a-Park program. She noted that North Ridge participates in this program at the Pit Park and said we should discuss bringing Monticello into the program.

Mr. Kent asked Ms. Hahn to coordinate with neighbors to develop ideas and to reach out to Ms. Snapp to work on developing a “Friends of Monticello” plan.

Mr. Kent reported that the Association has \$14,902 in our treasury after paying for the new website.

Mr. Kent said that Jay Friedman is working on the holiday tree sale. He said that the Association will need to change the way it sells trees this year, with more direct deliveries from the seller to buyer. He said he would follow up with Mr. Friedman and Bruce Johnson and report back to the Board with more specificity about the plans.

Bruce Snapp reported that an Alexandria Mobility Plan has been in the works since June 2019 and the City has been collecting information on peoples’ views and preferences on transit options. January 2021 is the target date for release of recommendations based on the collected information.

Mr. Snapp also reported that Route 1 going to be widened and Duke Street and Beauregard are also scheduled for work. He said that more details will be known in January.

Mr. Kent noted that Amy Burwell could not attend tonight's meeting but had sent a note saying that children with learning disabilities will be starting back to school in the second half of the year.

Ms. Rainey said that Kay Stimson had asked her to report that the George Mason Task Force had not heard anything new about the City's plan for the school.

Ms. Rainey also said that in the 1,200 comments on the City's overall zoning survey there were some key themes and she urged everyone to read those comments.

Russ Bailey gave an update on the City's plans to reconstruct a 1,900 foot stretch of Taylor Run. He reported that there had been a very open and, he believed, productive meeting between the City's stormwater staff and their environmental consultants and a group of representatives of the citizens who have raised questions about the proposed reconstruction. The City is looking at possible modifications of its plan and will be posting answers on its website to the comments and questions that have been submitted about the project. Once those answers are posted there is likely to be another opportunity to file comments as well as more small group meetings and at least one more public hearing.

Mr. Bailey said that the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality award grants to citizen groups that wish to conduct water quality monitoring of Virginia waterways. The deadline for filing applications for grants is November 15, the Thursday following this meeting. He has recommended to Mr. Kent that North Ridge apply for a grant (\$5,000) to monitor Taylor Run and has prepared an application. Mr. Bailey said that he believes that training and equipment can be obtained for no cost from various environment organizations and that – with DEQ approval - the full amount of the grant could be used for laboratory analysis of water samples. The grant would fund several months of monitoring.

Mr. Kent said he supported filing an application. Lyn Gubser moved that the Association file the application and Mr. Fehrenbach seconded the motion. The

motion passed unanimously. Mr. Kent, John Winstead and Meghan Rainey volunteered to participate in the monitoring.

On behalf of Jane Seward and Lyn Gas, who were unable to attend the meeting, Mr. Bailey gave an update on the Association's fall tree sale program. The Association had sold thirty-four trees. Those trees had been sourced from Merrifield Gardens and another tree retailer and were to be put in over the next four weeks.

Mr. Fehrenbach reported that the Association had submitted a letter commenting on the City's proposed Auxiliary Dwelling Unit policy. He noted that a poll had been used to determine the position North Ridge should take. The letter is posted on the Association's website.

Mr. Kent adjourned the meeting at 9:20.

Russell Bailey  
Scribe

Attendance: Oct. 12, 2020

Chuck Kent	Alicia Rutherford
John Fehrenbach	Fran Vogel
Amy Krafft	Debbie Hahn
Russ Bailey	Bill Young
Bill Clayton	Carter Flemming
Julie Porter	Jessica Buchanan
Jeanne Snapp	Jennifer Dougherty
Lyn Gubser	Katherine Carraway
Bruce and Libby Johnson	Erika Gulick
Meghan Rainey	Seazante Oliver
Bruce Snapp	Tack Richardson
Sgt. Thomas Ground	Glenn Thomas
Sunny Yoder	Abby Harrell
Kate Crawley	Jennifer Ware