

DRAFT

North Ridge Citizens' Association
Minutes for October 12, 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 September to today. He said the number of cases during that time was below average which was "pretty good." He reported that there had been nine tampering with automobile incidents, three larcenies from within vehicles, and one stolen vehicle. He said a resident had asked about police looking into vehicles. He said he was able to confirm that was indeed happening as a night unit of officers had been proactively looking to see if keys had been left in vehicles. He also said that only Alexandria police officers wear Alexandria police officer uniforms. Each uniform is carefully accounted for.

The minutes of the September 14 meeting were approved.

Mr. Kent reported that there is a balance of \$16, 895.34 in the Association's accounts.

Bruce Snapp reported that there was no new news on the Glebe Road and South Shirlington Road bridge projects. He also noted that Alexandria intends to revise its Mobility Plan.

Kay Stimson said that she had heard that the WAMATA may be looking at reducing bus service. Other civic associations are working with City Council to get more details from WAMATA. She also told Mr. Snapp that she would send him the review of the City's Mobility Plan that Bill Rossello, the citizen representative on the Alexandria Mobility Plan Committee, has prepared.

Amy Burwell reported that George Washington Middle School has taken advantage of the students being out of the school during the pandemic to renovate the water taps, sinks and other outlets to eliminate a lead problem. She also said that the School Board would be holding a virtual meeting on Thursday, October 15 at 4 pm. On the agenda will be a discussion of the School's plans for police in the schools. She noted that 4 pm is a bad time for a meeting as many parents are working.

Jane Frazer said that it appears that in the second half of the school year pre-K to second grade student may be returning to in-class learning but probably not other students. She also reported that Superintendent Hitchings had put one of his children in Bishop Ireton. In July he told parents that seeking alternative educational arrangements could cause a "run on the schools." He had 'almost scolded them."

Ms. Frazer characterized the joint ACPS-City committee on school development as "water torture." She believes ACPS has known for some time that the City is considering co-locating non-school facilities on school properties. She said that material produced in response to a Freedom of Information Act request indicates the superintendent knew back in November 2019 of the City's idea. Furthermore, notes from an ACPS January 6, 2020 meeting show that placing housing on the Minnie Howard property was being considered at that time. Ms. Frazer said she is trying to get more information on this topic.

Amy Burwell said that forty "stacked townhouses" were being considered for placement on Minnie Howard. She was not sure exactly what the phrase "stacked townhouses" means.

Ms. Stimson said that with respect to the earlier report that the City was considering putting homes on the George Mason project, Mayor Wilson has said that the draft building plan that showed the homes on the school property was prepared by an outside contractor without the City's knowledge.

Mr. Kent reported that North Ridge is about to establish a new website. The design will be similar to the current one, but will have better security features.

The site should be available in the next few weeks and everyone will need to reset their passwords. He asked for volunteers to assist on website maintenance.

Mr. Kent said that Kate Crawley and John Winstead have created a new membership form that should be ready for distribution shortly.

Jane Seward noted that 35 trees have been ordered as part of the fall tree sale. Ms. Seward and Lynn Gas will be going to Merrifield's garden center to examine the trees and hope that they will be put in by the end of the month.

John Fehrenbach reported that last year the Association had a "banner year" with 282 households as members that paid \$6,800 in dues and contributions. This year it has been a challenge to attract members because we have not had the types of public events that draw in potential members. This year we have 123 households that have paid \$2,700 so far. He said he hopes that we will hold a membership drive after the November 3 election.

Jay Friedman reported on the holiday tree sale. The sale will be the first weekend in December, though arrangements for the event have not yet been settled with Trinity United Methodist Church. Matt Gallery is working on the sale website. The idea will be for people to order the kind and size of tree that they want and the Gallerys will bring the trees to the church for pick up. Mr. Kent noted that the Association would like to get a percentage cut of every tree sale we generate through our website.

John Fehrenbach reported that the City's proposed ADU policy was posted on October 9 and that November 6 is the deadline for comments. He said that the Executive Committee had held a conference call with City staff that he believed was productive. The proposed policy matches up with many of the thoughts presented by the committee to the staff. He noted that there could only be one ADU on each property and the property owner had to live in the main dwelling or the ADU. Short-term rentals would be permitted, and no off-street parking would be required. Mr. Fehrenbach suggested that he and Sunny Yoder draft comments and circulate them to the Executive Board.

Ms. Yoder reviewed the zoning report that she had place on the Association's website. She noted that there is no plan yet for the open space at Oakdale Triangle. She said she believes there will be an opportunity for public comment on the design of that space.

Ms. Simpson asked Ms. Yoder if she had heard any discussion about a new zoning classification called Residential Multifamily (RMF). Ms. Yoder said she had not.

Mr. Kent moved to "new business." He noted that an email had been sent out suggesting that the Association might want to develop a sense of how it stands on certain issues that are likely to be presented by the City in the near future. He proposed "we do our homework on various topics then bring in a mediator to help our discussions."

Ms. Stimson observed that with respect to zoning issues the Association sent a letter to the City back in March setting out our principles. Ms. Simpson then read out those principles.

Mr. Fehrenbach said that he is skeptical about setting up a potentially complicated process that could slow down the Association's ability to respond quickly to City proposals.

Mr. Kent replied that the purpose of his proposal is to have the opposite effect.

Ms. Yoder noted that having a better sense of what North Ridge residents feel about issues would make her more comfortable.

Bruce Johnson noted that how to develop an adequate stock of affordable housing is one of the most important issues for the City. He sees a "donut hole" in the middle of the City where housing is very expensive. Opposing efforts to make inexpensive housing available is not what the City should do. The Lloyd Apartments are the only affordable housing in North Ridge. In his view, North Ridge needs to keep in mind the big picture in the City.

Mr. Fehrenbach asked why the Board cannot “just talk about issues as they come up.” He did not see why we need a separate process to do it.

Mr. Kent said that the idea is to use the current monthly meeting process to examine issues, not to create a bureaucracy or additional work, or to slow our deliberations down.

Jennifer Dougherty asked when the George Mason Task Force letter went out. She found some of Mr. Johnson’s comments “objectionable” and said that, in her view, placing affordable housing on school property is a problem. Alexandria, she observed, has more affordable housing per capita than any other jurisdiction and said that it is not necessary to meet the mayor’s target numbers. She said she did not want to have more meetings to discuss North Ridge policy positions.

Sean Gallagher asked Mr. Kent if there was anything he wanted to add to or subtract from the March letter.

Mr. Kent said the idea was to step back and try to keep the Association from being rushed into preparing responses to complex City proposals. It will be easier for the Executive Board to prepare quick turnarounds if we are more confident of the views of our neighbors. “I don’t want to always be saying no if that is not the sentiment of the neighborhood.”

Meghan Rainey said she agreed with Mr. Fehrenbach. “The way the proposal is laid out, it does seem like more bureaucracy.” She noted that the Association is “being backed into a corner” by the short time frames the City has set for responses to some of its proposals. She said that she does not want the City to think we are opposed to affordable housing. The issue is with school sites. School sites should not be used for other purposes. “Protecting finite school space is the concern.” Perhaps, she suggested, we can create a document that sets out our vision on specific issues such as housing, schools and the environment.

Mr. Kent replied that he liked the idea of creating a “visions document.” “It seems that would be a labor worth doing.”

Tack Richardson seconded Ms. Rainey's idea. He also asked when the Executive Committee can speak for the Board.

Mr. Fehrenbach said that he wanted the Association to push the City for longer response times on policy proposals.

Mr. Kent asked if there were others who like to participate on working up the "visions" idea. Mr. Richardson suggested that Mr. Kent send out an email on the subject as many Board members were not on the call.

Moira Buzby asked if only Board members would participate in the drafting. "Citizens' voices need to be heard." She said that the Council is "forcing issues on us" and that she wants the Board "to stand up for the residents."

Mr. Fehrenbach said that he believes the issue that North Ridge needs to address is whether there should be any housing at George Mason. "Do we want to keep the tree canopy and lower density?" He said he would like to hear more from the Association's George Mason Task Force.

Mr. Kent said that that he wished to see a "positive outcome" from the visions project. In reply to a question from Ms. Stimson asking what he meant by "positive outcome," he said the goal would be a document that reflects broad community support that will help guide the Board when we speak to the City. We would not be stepping away from addressing individual issues as they come up. He would like to have the Board address one issue a month, but not in a way to add time to the meetings. He said he would "sketch it out" and ask for comments.

Mr. Fehrenbach noted that North Ridge is not represented on the Council or on key City committees. He said he would like to see people from North Ridge run for Council.

Mr. Kent adjourned the meeting at 9:27.

Russ Bailey
Scribe

Attendance: Oct. 12, 2020

Chuck Kent

John Fehrenbach

Amy Burwell

Russ Bailey

Bill and Tedye Clayton

Kay Stimson

Jeanne Snapp

Lyn Gubser

Bruce and Libby Johnson

Meghan Rainey

Bruce Snapp

Sgt. Thomas Ground

Sunny Yoder

Tack Richardson

Jane Seward

Bob Miller

Julie Porter

Carmen Lodato

Jay Friedman

Alicia Rutherford

Tom Stimson

Jane Frazer

Ashley Burrang

Jessie McLeod

Sean Gallagher

Jennifer Dougherty

Moira Buzby

Darryl Nirenberg

Carter Flemming