

MEETING MINUTES: North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) Monthly Meeting May 9, 2022 – Zoom Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by President John Fehrenbach.

ACP Neighborhood Crime Report – Sgt. Tommy Ground

ACP Sgt. Tommy Ground texted that he was in a car accident and could not attend the meeting. Mr. Fehrenbach asked for NRCA members to keep him in their thoughts.

Approval of April 2022 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the 2022 April Meeting minutes, then seconded. Action was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Regular Business/Updates – John Fehrenbach

Brief discussion on meeting previews. Several speakers invited for June, including Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker. There was no speaker for the May meeting.

Financial Report – Tack Richardson, Treasurer

See addendum report. A \$500+ payment for the Adopt-a-Park program was reported, with special thanks to Ms. Mary Kent. Board Member Chuck Kent said that Mary Kent was turning her duties over to Ms. Libby Johnson.

Treasurer Tack Richardson said the annual budget was approved by the Executive Committee. He thanked all reviewers for their input and feedback. NRCA is introducing a new line of possible revenue around sponsorships for local businesses to help raise funding for various community events. He noted that NRCA provided Wheel Day funding again this year because of the strong financial position of the organization.

Comments by Board Member Jeanne Snapp. She noted that NRCA has not given out citizenship awards during past few years due to COVID and she would be revisiting this program. Ms. Snapp also mentioned doing a hard copy newsletter to the 2700+ residences in NRCA's catchment.

Board Member Sunny Yoder asked: Do the NRCA Bylaws allow for sponsorships? There was brief discussion where it was noted that the Bylaws do not prohibit this action. Mr. Fehrenbach mentioned the Bylaws do specifically mention dues as part of "membership," and being current on dues. Residents cannot serve as a member of the Board or the association without being a member in good standing (household dues paid).

Ms. Amy Krafft asked: Do you have National Night Out listed as part of the [NRCA] budget? She mentioned that a few years back, she was told that B&H Bank would be interested in sponsoring.

Planning & Zoning Update – Sunny Yoder

Ms. Yoder said there were no applications for Special Use Permits for the month of May.

Two topics on extended zoning for housing – both deferred by the Planning Commission. See Addendum report. Mr. Fehrenbach asked for volunteers to assist with P&Z issues due to the volume and complexity of recent proposals by the City. Mr. Bill Corin volunteered to assist.

Schools

Board Member Kay Stimson provided an update, thanking Ms. Crystall Merlino (GM parent/PTA volunteer) and Dr. Seazante Oliver (GME Principal) for providing notes and feedback by phone. She relayed the information that due to COVID-19 related delays, the community design meetings for the renovation of George Mason Elementary School were currently slated to begin in Fall 2023. Ms. Stimson was told that a community advisory group for this project would be formed for the design phase. She said that information provided to Ms. Merlino from ACPS reaffirmed that housing is not being considered for the GME site. Since the last update to NRCA, ACPS has acquired swing space at 1703 N. Beauregard, and funding for swing space needs for GME were included in the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. City Council was set to consider adoption of the CIP later in the month. Information on the George Mason modernization and swing space plans can be found on the Project webpage: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/511>.

Updates on the High School Project and ACHS Minnie Howard Campus are available at: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/hsproject>.

Transportation

Board Member Bruce Snapp gave an update on the W. Glebe Road bridge project. The bridge is presently closed due to structural issues, with detours in place. No updates on timeframe for completion.

Work on the Mount Vernon Bridge (one way each direction) will be coming in Fall/Winter 2023.

Mr. Snapp added that Arlington County is planning major changes at intersection of Arlington Ridge Road and S. Glebe Road, including adding a left turn lane and sequenced lights.

He noted that Shirlington Circle South Road will be closed entirely for renovations in the near future.

Membership

Mr. Fehrenbach updated the list of functions for NRCA. He said he would be talking to the first and second vice presidents to align duties. He asked for volunteers to help update household information on where North Ridge Lore books were dropped in the neighborhood. A brief discussion of the annual mailing to residents followed, with a call for volunteers.

Wheel Day 2022

Mr. Fehrenbach said that he sent several emails searching for volunteers to co-chair the annual neighborhood tradition, scheduled for Sunday, May 29th at 3:00 PM. There was a brief discussion to put out a call for volunteers on NRCA social media and other distribution channels.

Taylor Run

Mr. Fehrenbach read a summary update submitted by Board Member Russ Bailey, which noted that Taylor Run talks are stalled while the City contemplates whether to extend the contract for the facilitator. The next meeting was scheduled for May 16th.

New Business

Mr. Fehrenbach noted there were several new business items.

NRCA is planning to hold a get together for Board members on Sunday, May 15th. It is being graciously hosted by Board Member Meghan Rainey. The rain date is Monday, May 16th. Board members should have received invite information and can reach out to Mr. Fehrenbach with any questions.

Next, the City has released a tree canopy study report. Mr. Fehrenbach noted that it needs more review, but it is not a count of trees in Alexandria. It documents an increase of 22% in tree canopy cover within the City between 2014 and 2018, the time period of the study. Mr. Snapp said the canopy growth was documented in other places in the City, noting that NRCA appears to have stayed about the same. Mr. Fehrenbach urged residents to read the study. Ms. Yoder wondered if there would be another study for the period after 2018 to present day given the amount of growth and density added to the City during this time.

Another topic was a planned tour for City Manager Jim Parajon. Mr. Fehrenbach said that he was invited to come and visit the neighborhood. Mr. Fehrenbach suggested the same group that met with him at City Hall conduct the tour, since they have already been introduced. Mr. Fehrenbach added that Board members could also reach out to him if they wish to join/help. He is hoping to schedule in the next month or two.

Ms. Snapp briefly revisited the Citizen awards topic. She and Board Member John Hand will work together to revamp the program and bring recs back to the Board.

There was a brief discussion on prioritizing issues for North Ridge, focused on colocation, density and protection of zoning rights for single-family neighborhoods. Mr. Fehrenbach said there is interest in the formation of an informal working group of some sort, urging anyone interested in taking part to reach out.

Ms. Snapp had some follow up regarding a group of NRCA members who formed their own small task force after the last meeting. Their goal is to hold City Council accountable for climate change commitments adopted a few years ago. There was brief discussion of a letter advocating for the city's built environment to be accountable to climate change that is being drafted for NRCA consideration.

No other new business was introduced. Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Board Members in Attendance: John Fehrenbach, President; Tack Richardson, Treasurer; Kay Stimson, Scribe; Chuck Kent, Past President; Don Bobby; Bill Clayton; Jackie Coleburn; Kate Crawley; Diana Day; Chris Gay; John Hand; Lee Guerry; Lyn Gubser; Katherine Markowski; Rachel Newhouse; Meghan Rainey; Bruce Snapp; Jeanne Snapp; and Sunny Yoder.

Respectfully submitted by KS
May 31, 2022

**ADDENDUM: North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) Financial Report
Mr. Tack Richardson, Treasurer**

The North Ridge Citizens' Association Financial Report for April 2022 is as follows:

Balance:

- Burke and Herbert = \$20,605.53 (as of 04/11/22)
- PayPal = \$1,376.90 (as of 04/11/22)

Transactions:

- Revenues o \$0.00 – Membership Checks
 - o \$0.00 – Extra Donations from Membership Checks
 - o \$264.80 – PayPal (Electronic Membership Dues and Donations, Minus Fees)
- Expenses o \$1,000 – The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria

Other:

- None

**ADDENDUM: NRCA Planning and Zoning Land Use Report: May 9, 2022
Ms. Sunny Yoder, Committee Chair P&Z**

“ZONING FOR HOUSING”

Bonus Height

The Planning Commission deferred the new Bonus Height proposal, removing it from the May 3 docket. The proposal is to allow added heights of up to 25 feet in zones with height limits of 45 feet or more, in exchange for affordable housing. A second public meeting on the proposal has been announced by the City: Thursday, May 19, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Registration Link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_s4au3nXR_SkzUtK2bZG4g

Webinar ID: 939 0324 7787 Meeting Passcode: 215700 Dial in: 301-715-8592

Mayor Justin Wilson stated on the public radio Kojo Nnamdi show recently that it was the City's policy to use density to expand affordable housing “without a single taxpayer dollar” and that the City had won an award from the Urban Institute for its approach.

While he may be correct that the approach means no City funds are budgeted for affordable housing per se, the Mayor is ignoring for example the non-budgetary costs borne by residents such as those that were enumerated in the NRCA letter opposing mega-development in Arlandria-Chirilagua, e.g.:

1. Increased overcrowding of schools and other facilities
2. Increased traffic (including cut-through traffic) and congestion
3. Loss of parking for residents, shoppers, restaurant-goers, churchgoers, delivery trucks, among others, and a substantial increase of spill-over parking in surrounding neighborhoods
4. Increased building heights that would dwarf existing structures and radically alter streetscapes and neighborhoods
5. Loss of mature tree canopy, urban forests, and park lands.

Also, the award was made not by the Urban Institute, an urban policy think tank, but by the Urban Land Institute (<https://americas.uli.org/about-uli/>), an organization of real estate developers. The 2021 Larson Award for “exemplary state and local programs, policies, and practices that support the production, rehabilitation, or preservation of affordable and workforce housing” was made for the substantial density incentive— three to five market-rate units for every affordable unit—of Alexandria’s RMF zone. Here is the award announcement from ULI:

"Alexandria, Virginia, Office of Housing and Department of Planning and Zoning. In 2019, Alexandria amended its zoning ordinance as a result of a comprehensive and culturally inclusive community planning and engagement process. The residential multifamily (RMF) zone provides a substantial density incentive to induce landowners to preserve or produce affordable housing. The RMF zone was developed pursuant to the 2018 South Patrick Street Housing Affordability Strategy, a community planning process undertaken to identify potential tools, strategies, and resources for the preservation of 215 existing units of deeply affordable housing at risk of being lost to market pressures. The RMF zone allows substantial new density so the owner can develop three to five market-rate units to subsidize every deeply affordable unit provided. In addition, the zone requires assistance and protections for existing residents who are temporarily relocated—including a right to return when the new development is complete—so that redevelopment can occur."

Auxiliary Dwelling Units in Commercial Zones

The Planning Commission also deferred this item. This is a zoning text amendment about ‘living above the store’ and should not affect North Ridge.

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