**SRCA NEWSLETTER, January 2021**

The SRCA Board met on 7 January. The minutes from this meeting are posted below. We were very pleased to have several residents join the meeting. A reminder that all Board meetings are open to SRCA members, the first Thursday of the month (a Zoom link will be provided 1-2 days before the meeting). First, we would like to highlight several particularly important points.

**COVID Vaccine Information**

As you may have already heard, the City of Alexandria now has available a form for eligible residents to complete as the COVID vaccine becomes available. This form is for citizens in groups 1a, 1b, and 1c for getting the Corona virus vaccine. The link first explains who qualifies for each of these groups and the registration form itself is at the end. Once you complete the form, the City will let you know when the vaccine is available for your group and how to get it. <https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=FHW4TYF8MP>

**Exterior Changes to Property Need to be Submitted to Board for Review/Approval**

We would like to remind all residents that any changes you plan to make to the exterior of your property – to include renovations (big or small), fences, etc. – need to be submitted to the SRCA Board for review and approval prior to beginning work. This is in accordance with Paragraph 3, Deed of Restrictions and Covenants for Seminary Ridge. The form to complete is in the SRCA Directory (as well as the Deed), the latest edition of which will be distributed very soon. If you are planning to make any changes and need the form before the new Directory is distributed, please email us at news4srca@gmail.com.

**Strawberry Run**

The time for public comment on Strawberry Run ends 31 January. Please let the City know how you feel about its plans to remove 89 mature trees, likely damage the habitat and ecology of Strawberry Run, use a design that has already failed once in this very area, and failed to respond to repeated requests by the Board for relevant documentation to support the City’s plans. The January Board minutes have more detail about these plans, as did previous months’ minutes. Comments may be sent to the City at: research.net/r/alexandriaVA-StrawberryRunStream. If anyone wishes to submit an editorial, the Alexandria Times is www.alextimes.com; the Alexandria Gazette is www.alexandriagazette.com.

**The Board’s Focus and Communication Initiatives**

As we begin the new year, the SRCA Board is thinking about what its priorities should be, and we would welcome your input.

Should the Board:

-focus on planning events for the SRCA community?

-keep residents apprised about developments in the city affecting our neighborhood

-play a greater advocacy role with the City and other civic associations by developing positions on these developments when appropriate

-other suggestions

Please indicate any or all that you support

We plan to continue communications with the community through newsletters. In addition, we are exploring additional ways to enhance information-sharing. These include: development of an SRCA website, use of Facebook, use of NextDoor.

Which, if any, of these options would you consider to be most useful?

**Please provide us your inputs by 1 February**, either by sending an email to news4srca@gmail.com or you may drop off any written comments and suggestions to Susan Clark-Sestak, chair of Communications Committee, 4005 Featherstone Place.

Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you!

The SRCA Board

**Seminary Ridge Civic Association (SRCA)**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**January 7, 2021 by Zoom Conference Call**

* **In Attendance:** Jeanne Jacob, President; Nick Giannotti, First Vice President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Liz McIntyre, Secretary; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS), CFO; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chairman Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; Mike Brookbank, Chairman SRCA History Committee; Laura Plati, Chairman SRCA Welcome Committee; Paul Judge, SHA Representative; and several SRCA neighbors including David Pritzker, Scott Sutherland new neighbors Howard and Krystyn Moon.
* **Call to Order -** Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

**President’s Report – Jacob**

* Jacob wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the SRCA Board meeting and explained that “Open Mic” had been moved to the beginning of our Board meetings so that the residents didn’t have to wait until the end of the meeting to ask their questions.
* Jacob reported that the sad news that former and long-time residents of SR, Dick and Judy Bednar had both died from the Corona virus, within two weeks of each other over the holidays. Jacob is in contact with their son John, and she has his contact information if you are interested.
* Jacob asked Clark-Sestak to discuss the City of Alexandria’s recent registration form for citizens age 65 or older or those with serious health concerns. The link below provides information on groups 1a, 1b, and 1c (who is in which group) for getting the Corona virus vaccine. The registration form is at the end: <https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=FHW4TYF8MP>
* Jacob announced that Bob Bossa and Liz McIntyre are in the process of selling their house and will be moving out of the area on January 20, 2021. Therefore, **SRCA is looking for a new Secretary.** Souza will research the Bylaws and determine how to proceed with filling the position. If you are interested in filling this position, please contact any of the Board members or send an email to news4SRCA@gmail.com.
* Jacob announced that neighbors Bill McInturff and Kathleen Ragan gave a sizable donation to SRCA because of the work that had been done to save the Bradford Pear trees in the neighborhood and thanked them for their support.
* Jacob requested residents to notify her of any sidewalks that are in need of repair. She will then place call to Alexandria’s 311 line and request the repairs.
* SRCA is part of the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations (AFCA). Giannotti attended the first meeting, and Jacob recently attended the second meeting. Discussions focused on Minnie Howard development proposals and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). AFCA plans to send a letter to the City asking for a delay in implementation because the City’s proposal no longer includes a requirement for the homeowner to live on the premises. ADUs can be built within 10’ of the property line and be 20’ tall if there are no windows on the side facing the property line. More discussion on these matters from Paul Judge and Joe Sestak below.
* Jacob asked Board members to think about the Board’s goals for 2021. For example, in addition to gathering information about issues relevant to the neighborhood, should the Board take positions on some of these issues, as is often done by other civic associations, such as Seminary Hill Association
* One homeowner complained about the delay in publishing the new directories. Another homeowner asked the Board to inquire as to the legality of the size of the sign publicizing Karig Estates since the City objected to the size of the #Justin’s Traffic Jam sign.

**Secretary’s Report** – **McIntyre**

* Minutes:
	+ Draft minutes of December 3, 2020 Board Meeting were circulated before the meeting and were approved by the Board.
* Directory status:
	+ ASAP Printer has completed the alphabetical and by street directory pages, the major part of the directory. McIntyre will provide revised listing of Block Captains and Committee Chairs to ASAP Printer this week. Jacob discussed the complexity of this effort since the directory will now include, in addition to a land-line telephone number, and if desired by residents, up to two cell phone numbers, up to two email addresses, and the names of children.

**Treasurer’s Report – Jacob for Browne**

* 179 residents of 237 households have paid dues for this year. The current balance is $24,078.39. This does not include the upcoming payment to ASAP Printer of several thousand dollars, nor the contribution to Alexandria ALIVE, Inc.!
* Browne asked for anyone with outstanding costs to submit the receipts to her for reimbursement.
* Jacob now has access to the bank account.
* Discussion about what to do with the surplus of funds due to the lack of events during COVID pandemic. The Board noted its contribution to First Responders in 2020 and upcoming donation to ALIVE!

**SSSAS Update – Chase**

* Students returned with on-line learning on Monday, 1/4/2021. All students, faculty and employees were tested for COVID on 1/6. All those with negative test results will return for in-person learning starting Monday 1/11/2021.
* The purchase of property from St. Andrews United Methodist Church went before the Planning Commission on 1/5/2021 and was approved. Site design of the property to include subdivision is moving forward.
* On 2/2/2021, SSSAS will meet with the Planning Commission regarding the renovation of the Upper School building to include a two-story dining hall. The renovation stays generally within the existing footprint and allows for future growth by increasing the enrollment cap to 520 students.

**SRCA Events – Hennigan**

* Provided her report after the meeting.
* SRCA presented the Carpenter Shelter with a check for $638.00 as a result of donations collected in the Halloween competitions
* Residents donated a total of three large boxes of groceries during December. Hennigan presented these to Grace Episcopal Food Pantry, which supports Carpenter’s Shelter, Meals on Wheels, and Brown Bag Lunch. There was also a gift card to a clothing store and SRCA commitment to send a $1,000 check to Alive. These efforts were undertaken as ways of helping the broader Alexandria community during the holiday season.
* The Board would welcome ideas for events during the rest of the year. One suggestion is a St. Patrick's day "Find the Pot Of Gold" hunt. Please contact Hennigan with any additional suggestions.

**Communications Committee – Clark-Sestak**

* Mailchimp is generally working well for sending out newsletters (and it's free), but it does not allow for attachments, which is a major drawback. Clark-Sestak proposed to continue to use Mailchimp for our communications in actively sending information out to residents, but would also like to propose that SRCA consider creating a website.
* For the Board's consideration, the approximate costs (based on inputs from two other associations) would be:
	+ about $2-3K to develop the website
	+ about $50/month for maintenance. Clark-Sestak would be willing to post things on the website myself, to avoid additional fees
	+ about $50/year for domain name.
	+ Requested the Board support such an expenditure, and there was discussion about the need to do so versus using NextDoor Neighbor. There appeared to be a preference for a website presence and several attendees stated that simple web pages now exist and are easy to maintain.
* It would also be useful to create a Facebook presence, and Erica Jones (one of the community members on the communications committee) has said she would do so.
* The three members of the communications committee are looking at other community websites and have some preliminary thoughts on structure. The Board approved motion (Giannotti made and Brookbank seconded) to have Clark-Sestak pursue and requested a report with greater detail at February meeting.
* Requested suggestions of any companies we might contact to get a bid on developing it.

**Historical Committee – Brookbank**

* Brookbank received documentation from Jacob.

**Welcome Committee – Plati**

* Provided a report on three new residents: 4004 Moss Place, 4004 Carson Place, and 3812 Fort Worth Ave.

**SHA - Judge**

* Provided a summary of ADU proposal and INOVA hospital project proposed for Landmark Mall property. SHA will send a letter to the City requesting a delay in voting on ADU rules. The Board agreed to the submission of this letter.
* INOVA hospital has brokered a deal to move to Landmark in 2027. This appears to be very beneficial for the City. The Seminary Road project will be rezoned as RA, which allows for single family homes and townhomes. However, if the property is sold to a developer, the developer may request to have the property rezoned to allow for higher density.

**City of Alexandria Liaison – Sestak**

Strawberry Run Stream Restoration

* Initial letter sent by Board few months ago requesting assessments required by

Chesapeake Bay’s Expert Panel if decide to use the Natural Channel Design (NCD) methodology and its associated BANCS model

* Sent three follow-ups as each time the City referred to the same documents we already had and did not ask for, rather than assessments we requested.

o Our concern is that the NCD methodology failed in 2010 in same stream.

* There were also either wrong or somewhat dismissive replies by the City: (e.g., the City stated Strawberry Run was not the site of an NCD project, so we had to send it a copy of its 2010 presentation.)
* As a result, we sent the Mayor and City Manager (Political and Administrative “heads” of the City) and the City Manager (Mr. Jinks) another letter asking for their intervention (it was the City Manager’s signature on Sept 28, 2018 legislative memo that wrongly said letters had been sent and a meeting had occurred with residents who live alongside Strawberry Run before a grant was requested from the State to do the work – but that did not occur until over a year later after the grant had already been approved.
* Our goal: a delay of a year to review why 2010 NCD effort failed and review if proper assessments were done for this 2021 effort so we do not have another failure, or if an alternative method of stream restoration should be done.
* Since the residents “lost” two years of time for public comment, this one year will ensure a proper project will be done. The State of Virginia that the deadline of the grant has been extended a year due to the pandemic, and City documents state the “pollution credits” are not needed to meet the City’s goals until 2028 – all permitting a year to get the stream done correctly.

**Transportation**

Duke Street Corridor

* Duke Street Committee formed, joining with Strawberry Run.
* Members: Rick Gould, Scott Sutherland, Dick Cheney.
* Issues: Ms. Orr, Deputy head of T&Es, said this January to June will be for a “public comment” period which the City will incorporate into the City’s design this summer.
* City’s present design is from the City’s Master Transportation Plan of 2008: one lane
* each way dedicated solely to buses; two lanes remain each way for traffic each way.
* This was confirmed in another 2012 study by the City.
* Phase I: 2021 – 2023, design completion and construction beginning 2023/4.
* Essentially, phase one makes dedicated bus lanes from Jordan Street to Landmark, and from Bishop Ireton to the Metro since a third lane is already there, but it now will be for busses only.
* Phase II: will be mid part of this decade and City will purchase private land and eliminate the access roads on Duke Street in order to construct a dedicated bus lane each way in the remaining segments of Duke Street that already do not have a third lane. The City is assessing how to purchase an additional total of an acre of land for bicycle lane use along the corridor.
* Other issues:
* $85 million grant was already approved last year for Phase I: thick document, using modeling, etc. for dedicated bus lanes...and stating Phase II will continue to complete these dedicated bus lanes in remaining segments.
* Question is: if public comment wants third lane for cars also, does city lose grant, and have to reapply.
* There is no Telegraph Road Exit improvement for rush hour being considered.
* Of interest, Virginia Department of Transportation did a study of a third lane each way on Duke Street due to the already high accident rates at S. Walker and Oasis Roads. If found that it had no impact on decreasing the accident rate.

Alexandria Mobility Plan – This is a City update to the 2008 Transportation Plan, and its last meeting is January 26. So far there has been no change from the 2008 plan and therefore no mention of improving, and lessening congestion by improvements to roads has been included.

**Development Issues**

Inova Hospital

* Howard Street: parking lot on the left as you head down the street is presently zoned R-20, to maintain low density residences by single family houses of 8000 sq feet. The Hospital area on the right side of the road is zoned R-8 for single family homes of 25,000sq feet.
* Hospital to sell land in 2024 to fund construction of new hospital about 2025 at Landmark and will actually move to Landmark in 2028.
* Inova Asking City for zoning change to code RA
* Presently, the zoning permits 162 single family homes.
* But Inova said by changing code to RA, townhouses would be permitted. Inova working with the City to approve this change since it will permit Inova to sell land to a developer at a higher price. However, RA code actually means “median density where apartments predominate” ... townhouses *could* be built but that is not the primary purpose of this code. Also, under new RA code, could build recreational facilities, nursing homes, etc. there. This is actually like the large apartment complexes beginning as one goes much further down on Howard Street.
* Said Inova’s 33 acres would accommodate 302 townhouses on both sides of Howard (did not discuss apartments).
* After purchasing land, a developer can then request even further zoning change to do other construction such as retail, affordable housing, etc. similar to what doing elsewhere in city.
* Permits to do construction begins 2026, with actual construction starting 2028
* Two more community meetings in March and April, then Planning Commission and City Council in June.

Landmark Mall

* 52 acres, 4 million sq ft.
* New Inova hospital and offices will occupy 1 million (the Sears service area next to I-395)
* 230 beds, seven story out-patient office building for 50 physicians, trauma center, new
* equipment, and cancer center, and parking.
* 3 million acres will be retail, entertainment, community areas, residential and affordable housing (60% of this area will be housing, of which 40% will be Townhouses and 60% multi-family, affordable housing and senior housing.
* 40% of non-Inova area will be retail
* Concept plan June 2021
* Permit permissions by 2026
* Construction 2027 (however, Inova said wanted to begin its hospital by 2024 so done by 2028; unsure how occurs)
* Funding:
* City will pay $130M for site preparation, infrastructure and the purchase of ~ 10 acres and parking facility to lease out. City bond to be repaid over 30 years by tax revenues from site which City estimates will be $780 million
* Parking 9 acres
* Inova 10 acres
* Green spaces 4 acres
* Streets and residential area 12 acres
* Developmental 17 acres (couldn’t fit school)

View of City Development Plans Overall

In addition to above development at Landmark and Inova campus:

* There are 18 city development areas – see one that is occurring at King and Seminary near the Mark Center which is similar to the one just finished at King and Beauregard, as well as all the housing built around Home Depot.
* Affordable Housing: there is a city requirement for 2000 units more units ... identified 1500, still must come up with 500.
* Minnie Howard up for approval this coming month ... other schools offered as possibilities
* Auxiliary Dwelling Units (ADUs) which are small homes build on any property with open land such as Seminary Ridge that is going before City Council to be approved
* There is the issue that they can be rented out as AirBnB units which is proposed to be approved by City Council: Seattle changed its regulations in 2017 as it has become a high AirBnB destination due to Amazon and Microsoft (college interns during summertime or tech company representatives coming for a month and prices skyrocketed for AirBnBs there. This hurt the inventory of affordable housing, especially long-term housing, as owners didn’t need to live on the property and so bought many and soon there was a “crowd out” of long-term properties for long term rentals or for purchase to live there – and City Council is presently being asked to approve that owners do not need to live on property. Board will write letter to oppose that owners do not need to live on properties.
* Karig Estates on Seminary Road that was sold and backs onto Colonel Ellis; single home there was sold and being replaced by several homes, like happened on Carson Place in Seminary Ridge.
* There are five large single-family properties from the Synagogue on Seminary Road to just before Immanuel on the Hill Church just before Quaker Lane. They are ideal for when they are sold to become multi-housing development of one sort or the other..... particularly where City Council will be deciding to change the zoning codes next month to make it much easier to do so.
* It was understandable why St. Stephens purchased the land from St Andrews United Methodist. It was prime for rezoning into multi-family units just like nearby areas ... and St. Stephens is facing its own growth issue as the high school has increased it student population from 400 students to 520 students the past decade, most of that the last few years. It will also have an issue as our City’s workforce and population grows.... particularly fueled by young tech professionals due to Amazon – a demographic that finds private schools attractive ... and may force St Stephens to further expand “out” onto this new property.
* The Issue about all these “ongoing developments”: Open space is mostly here in Seminary Hill area, and somewhat west of us.
* By 2030 population will increase by 15,000 and employment by 18,000 (– 15,000 of which will be commuters), and that study was before Amazon’s decision to have a 35,000 headquarters workforce here.
* Our Transportation system is driven by a 2008 Master Plan to eliminate “single occupancy vehicles” (SOVs), which means cars.
* **Decision**: These plans – developmental and transportation – stem from studies done long ago beginning in 2008.
* But in a 1992 Study by the City for Seminary Hill’s area of development, it stated the goal was to maintain its characteristics, including its single-family dwellings, and not permit rezoning for commercial or high-density residential enterprises. The first re-zoning change to do this is happening now with the property next to the Firehouse on Seminary Road being rezoned from single family to a 55-unit housing complex.
* Today, we need to assess the Board’s role in this ... and whether we are to:
* Just gather such information as above for the Board’s information
* Or if the Board is to just pass this information on to the Residents of Seminary Ridge
* Of if the Board is to form “positions” from Residents’ input in order to influence the character of this area we live in.

**Open Mic – Questions & Answers**

* Jacob received one complaint from a homeowner about an unsightly matter at another property. Jacob will call resident.

**Old Business –** None.

**New Business – Jacob**

* Next SRCA Board Meeting: Thursday, February 4 at 7:30pm.
* This and future Board meetings will be open to all Seminary Ridge residents to participate as observers and there will be a time for resident input/comments built into the agenda. Clark-Sestak will send an email to all residents with agenda and Zoom meeting invite on February 3 as well as notifying residents when the minutes are distributed.

**Adjourn Meeting –** Jacob adjourned meeting at 9:47 PM