

**MINUTES**

**SRCA BOARD MEETING**

**June 3, 2021 – 7:30 PM by Zoom Conference Call**

**In Attendance:**

Jeanne Jacob, President; Nick Giannotti, First Vice President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Don Frahler, Immediate Past President; Mike Brookbank, SRCA Historian; Paul Judge, SHA Representative; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS) Liaison; Jeremy Flachs, BEHC Liaison; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chair Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; Dave Cheney, Transportation Committee; Rick Gould, Transportation Committee; Officer Natalie Vasylenko representing the ACPD Liaison; and SR residents David Pritzker, Harriet McCune, and Aaron Geduldig.

1. **Welcome and President’s Report – Jacob**
   1. **Welcome to Committee Members and SR Residents Joining Meeting**

Jacob welcomed everyone to the June SRCA Board meeting and noted that Officer Vasylenko from the Alexandria Police Department would report for Sgt. Tony Moore who is out of town. Sgt. Lemuel Houston from the Sheriff’s office was unable to attend to provide his report because he could not access Zoom as his electricity was out due to the storm.

Jacob welcomed Duke Street Corridor Committee Members Dave Cheney and Rick Gould. Scott Sutherland and Fran Vogel could not attend. Gould will update us later in the meeting on their recent activities.

* 1. **Questions/Concerns from SR Residents – “Open Mic”**

Jacob welcomed the neighbors who joined and explained the two opportunities for “open Mic.” The first was right after her report and the second at the end of the meeting. As Seminary Ridge residents join us, she said she would welcome them.

Also, Jeremy Flachs, the Liaison with Temple Beth El asked if he could report first as he had another Zoom meeting to attend. So, the agenda was a bit out of order. She then asked Flachs to begin the meeting with his report (see 4.1) followed by the report from the ACPD Liaison, Natalie Vasylenko.

* 1. **Reports from SRCA’s ACPD Liaison/Alexandria’s Sherriff’s Liaison**

Officer Vasylenko thanked the board for inviting ACPD’s participation. She said that she didn’t have anything specific to report, and she was there to take notes on any issues that we wanted looked into. It was mentioned that there has been an uptick in auto break-ins and SR residents should keep their autos locked and remove any valuables in their cars, including not leaving garage door openers in their cars.

Judge commented that SHA receives updates on traffic stops for major roads in the SHA area and, since this data is already being pulled for SHA, he asked if SRCA could be provided such information for SRCA streets, namely Fort Williams Parkway, St. Stephen’s Road, and Seminary Road. Officer Vasylenko said she would pass along this request to be provided at future SRCA Board meetings.

* 1. **Report on Work Done in Seminary Ridge**
     1. **Call in Damages for Curbs and Sidewalks**

Jacob said she called in the damaged curb at the end of Fort Williams Parkway and the one on Fort Worth. The contractor who laid the new water pipes returned to repair the curb, yet did not fix the curb area over the storm drain. The curb on Fort Worth remains unfixed.

* + 1. **Requested Mowing and Leaf Removal on FWP Medians & Parks**

Also, she called to request that the weeds be mowed on the Fort Williams medians and in the areas next to the sidewalks along the FWP parks. Plus, she asked the City to rake the matted leaves in the medians so grass could grow and to remove the debris from the gutters along the medians. She reported that the City had their street sweeping equipment out to remove the gutter debris, but no one had raked the leaves or cut the weeds.

* + 1. **Tree Trimming Being Done**

Some tree trimming had been done as requested by residents, but no mass tree removal will be done. There is one tree marked for removal on Fort Worth near the curve going up to St. Stephen’s Road because half of it is gone. Giannotti reported that he had cut limbs from the tree in front of his yard, not asking the City to do so, as he was concerned about the potential of falling limbs. Also, Chase later reported that the two large trees at the front entrance of SSSAS will need to be removed as the arborist informed them that the trees are in such bad shape and dying off that they will become a hazard. The tree removal will take place next week. The school plans on replanting trees when the weather permits. She was concerned that this may cause neighborhood concerns, so she said to direct neighbors to her if they want to discuss it.

* 1. **May Activities Report**

Jacob reported that SRCA had a very busy May: holding the annual Community Yard Sale about which Hennigan would report and hosting 4 candidate Forums, about which Joe Sestak would report. In addition, the Duke Street Corridor Committee met with City officials and Gould would report on this. Finally, an update on Strawberry Run meetings would be given by Sestak.

* + 1. **SRCA Candidate Forums**

Jacob thanked Sestak for contacting all 17 candidates and organizing their participation in the first-ever Forums held by SRCA. She also thanked Mike Souza who was not at the board meeting, but was the “star” of the Forums as the Moderator, and Richie Weiblinger, another SR resident, who served as the timekeeper for the Forums.

* + 1. **Duke Street Transportation Corridor**

The Committee report would be made later by Gould.

* 1. **June Activities Report**
     1. **FEMA Zoom Meeting on New Flood Plains – June 7**

Jacob encouraged all SR residents whose property bordered Strawberry Run to attend the FEMA meeting on June 7 and be aware of the changing/new FEMA flood plain maps.

* + 1. **Second SRCA Yard Sale Requested**

Some residents have expressed interest in another yard sale; it will be addressed in Hennigan’s report.

1. **Secretary’s Report – Jacob**
   1. **Approval of May 6, 2021 Minutes**

Jacob noted that she and Clark-Sestak were taking minutes as a Secretary was still needed. She asked for those reporting to send their reports to both of them. Then, she asked if there were any changes to the May 6, 2021 Board meeting, which had been distributed with the agenda. There were none, so she asked for a motion to approve the Minutes.

**Hennigan made the motion to approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2021 SRCA Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Sestak. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

1. **Treasurer’s Report – Browne**

Browne was not present, so there was no Treasurer’s report given. It will be given at the July meeting.

1. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports – Committee Chairs**

**4.1 BEHC Liaison – Jeremy Flachs**

Flachs reported that the fence and sign have been removed on the Karig Estates property, but he cannot get an answer about when construction will begin. Also, he is attempting to learn more about the ecological issues on the property behind Beth El.

Beth El will be an in-person voting location for the June 8 Democrat primary. Frahler alerted people to the fact that they may be required to wear masks as he had to when voting early at the Royal Street voting place.

**4.2 SSSAS – Beth Chase**

Chase reported that SSSAS will be ending the school year with class celebrations over the next few weeks. On the upper school campus, the eighth grade will have a celebration on June 10th in the morning and the Class of 2021 will celebrate their graduation ceremony on the morning of June 12th. The school will also have a celebration for the class of 2020 the afternoon of June 12th. Summertime programs will begin the week of June 14th.

* 1. **Seminary Hill Association Liaison – Paul Judge**

Judge noted that, because SHA holds its monthly meeting a week after SRCA’s, available information is a bit out of date, but he will provide the June SHA minutes for future inclusion.

At the June SHA meeting, there will be a vote on the various approaches being considered to offer more affordable housing in Alexandria. The City is expanding its ways of doing so, and keeping track of all the initiatives is increasingly challenging. One new development is the City’s decision to reduce the requirements for the number of parking spaces per residence. Also, Alexandria has signed up to a set of regionally developed metrics, which the City will now be required to meet. Judge provided two documents on affordable housing, which have been posted on seminaryridge.net on the “issues of interest” page.

* 1. **Welcome Committee for New Residents – Laura Plati**

Plati reported that there were no new sales this past month, but she did meet with the new owners of two properties which had sold previously (4116 N. Garland and 3939 Fort Worth Ave).

She mentioned that both families were very pleased to receive the $10 gift card welcome, and Jacob suggested that the Board consider raising the value of these cards to $20, to be discussed at the July Board meeting.

* 1. **Events -- Hennigan**
     1. **Report on May 8 Community Yard Sale / Second Sale Requested**

Because of the success of the May yard sale, some residents have expressed interest in holding a second yard sale this summer. Hennigan offered to put any interested residents in touch with one another, but this follow-on event would not be an SRCA-organized one.

* + 1. **Update on “Screen on the Green.”** Hennigan plans to connect with Chase and SSSAS and will provide an update at the July meeting. Because of the cicadas, this event would logically occur later in the summer.
    2. **Update on Home Sales in Seminary Ridge**. Sales in the neighborhood, as well as throughout the region, continue to remain strong. In the past month, two properties closed in SRCA, and another will be coming on the market June 4th.
  1. **Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**
     1. **Zoom Account Update**

Clark-Sestak reported that there had been two upgrades to the Zoom account for the month of May to accommodate the 4 candidate forums. Only one – to host webinars – actually was needed, following inputs from organizers of the West End candidate forums.

* + 1. **SRCA Website and General Communications Update**

Clark-Sestak continues to update the website routinely and still encourages residents to send pictures of the neighborhood to [news4srca@gmail.com](mailto:news4srca@gmail.com).

There was a discussion about the frequency of communications, and general agreement that two newsletters per month is appropriate, unless there are special events (such as the candidate forums, for which a number of reminders were sent). Clark-Sestak confirmed that all significant communications are posted on the website, including the YouTube videos of the candidate forums.

* 1. **SRCA Historian – Mike Brookbank**

Brookbank had no report.

* 1. **City of Alexandria Liaison – Joe Sestak**
     1. **May Candidate Forums – 18, 20, 24, 27** – **Sestak/Weiblinger**Because Souza was not able to attend the Board meeting, Sestak reported that SRCA conducted four candidate forums: three 90-minute City Council forums on May 18, 20 and 24, and one mayoral 60-minute forum on May 27. The fifteen council candidates were divided into forums of five each, including one Independent and one Republican candidate. The mayoral forum included the two Democrat candidates with the Republican candidate deferring forums until the general election.

Each candidate made an opening statement of five minutes and then a series of questions were asked. Each candidate had one minute to respond.

The moderator was Mike Souza and Richie Weiblinger was the timekeeper. Questions to be asked were elicited from the community beforehand. Zoom webinar format was used and all candidates remained on the screen throughout along with the moderator and timekeeper. 50-60 residents “zoomed-in” for each of the forums, and the forum recordings are posted on the SRCA website.

Weiblinger provided additional written feedback, which Jacob read to the board meeting attendees:

* “Given the level of participation, it was a very worthwhile initiative for the residents of Seminary Ridge to have an opportunity to hear the candidates discuss a range of issues, including those broadly impacting the city and those issues specific to Seminary Ridge.
* SRCA continues to make a name for itself as a very active Citizens Association.  Given that we had all City Council and two of the Mayoral candidates participate, I think Seminary Ridge will certainly be on our elected officials' radar going forward.
* There have been no indications of any negative outcomes or feedback, so overall it was an excellent opportunity for SRCA.”

Weiblinger concluded by suggesting that the Board consider how to maintain SRCA’s momentum as an actively/politically engaged Civic Association.  While this might not be necessary, he believes SRCA could capitalize on all the great work the team did.

* + 1. **Duke Street Transportation Corridor** – **Gould**

Gould provided following update from SRCA’s Duke Street Corridor Committee:  The Committee sent the City the recommendations it had developed, sent to the SRCA community to elicit input, and then were approved by the SRCA Board. (The 11 recommendations are posted on the SRCA website.) At a subsequent meeting on Duke Street with the City’s point person, Mark Schnaufer, he informed the Committee that a consultant was developing an “outreach” process to help ensure that the input from the more vulnerable communities along Duke Street also would be included. Schnaufer said he had been contacted by a number of others, including the bicycle lobby, and that he could not rule out a bicycle lane (shared or unshared) along the corridor. (The Mayor said the same thing during the SRCA Mayoral Forum.)

Schnaufer stated that despite the plans developed over the past ten years that were submitted to Virginia for the grant it had approved, “what will be done” is still in the design phase and awaiting the public’s input. When previously asked if modeling would be done to forecast if bus ridership would increase with a dedicated bus lane, Schnaufer had said “yes.”  This time, when asked if we would have access to those models, he replied they were “propriety” information. When pressed on why transportation modeling paid by the public taxes were “propriety,” Schnaufer said he misspoke and assumed that they were not, but did not commit to letting the models be made public.

Schnaufer also said there would be three opportunities for public comment: the first starts June 19th and runs for 11 days in a “full blitz” effort to obtain input from “stakeholders,” including doing “pop-ups,” etc. When asked if they would survey those who live on either side of Duke Street – which was one of the SRCA recommendations – the consultant said that this was not a good way to do public outreach. The second outreach period would be in late summer, and the third was to be in early fall.

Judge recommended that one additional recommendation be included: the first responders along Duke Street (fire station and police headquarters that exit onto Duke Street) be asked by the City for their input early in the first outreach period and that their input be made public. (This was not done for Seminary Road.) In addition, Judge recommended that Inova Hospital be asked for its public input at the same time as it will become a “first responder” on Duke Street with its new campus at Landmark Mall.  This recommendation was approved by the SRCA Board, and the final list of 11 recommendations were sent again to Schnaufer as the SRCA’s official public input.

On June 14, the City announced its plans for public engagement and seeking inputs on the Duke Street corridor. That announcement is posted on the Duke Street section of the “Issues of Interest” page on Seminary Ridge Civic Association's website SeminaryRidge.net. Click on [20210614 City Asking for Inputs on Duke St](https://www.seminaryridge.net/s/20210614-City-of-Alexandria-Seeks-Input-on-Duke-St.docx)

* + 1. **Strawberry Run – Sestak**  
       The City has agreed to conduct a review of Strawberry Run (and Taylor Run) that considers alternatives to its proposed Natural Channel Design that presently involves removing 88 trees and constructing a dirt road alongside the stream to permit the movement of heavy equipment to place dirt fill and boulders in the stream with the goal of preventing erosion. The review won’t take until October as the City also has agreed to take soil samples to measure the actual amount of pollutants (i.e., phosphorous, nitrogen and sediment) in the stream’s banks rather than using a “default” rate from a stream in Pennsylvania. This will permit the city to know the actual “pollution credits” it should receive from reducing the stream’s pollution of Chesapeake Bay by a design that prevents the banks’ erosion.

In considering the alternative methods of restoring the stream, the City has not yet agreed on what they are. SRCA provided an alternative to the City’s Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) that is immensely less destructive to the ecological environs and the EPC – who is working directly with city staff – favors using it. It is important that the scientist who did SRCA’s proposed alternative design (Dr. John Field) be included in the City’s deliberations rather than just having the City’s contractor (who proposed the original Natural Channel Design) be the only stream restoration expert doing the review. We are working for Dr. Field to be included.

1. **Continued “Open Mic” for SRCA Community – Jacob**
   1. **SR Community Additional Time for Questions/Answers**

A few questions were raised about Karig Estates, Seminary Road, and the City’s plans for Duke Street.

1. **Old Business – Jacob.**

There was no old business raised.

1. **New Business – Jacob**
   1. **Date for SRCA Board Annual Meeting & Picnic in September**

Jacob asked the Board to look at potential dates for the Annual Meeting in September noting that it usually has been held the second or third Sunday of September. Pritzker asked the Board to consider planning around the Jewish holidays. Giannotti questioned whether the community was ready to have a family picnic this year because children have not yet been vaccinated or if it should be an adults-only event along with the SRCA Annual Meeting. Chase will see if alcohol can be served (if a wine-and-cheese option were pursued rather than a picnic) and if masks would be required. Jacob asked Giannotti to work with Hennigan to present a proposal at the July meeting.

* 1. **Nominating Committee and Candidates**

Jacob reported that Don Frahler, SRCA Immediate Past President and Marianne Coates, a past SRCA Board member will serve on the Nominating Committee. One or two more members will be sought. Jacob said she would be contacting all of the current Board members to see if they wished to stay on the Board and what roles they would like to play.

* 1. **July SRCA Board Meeting**

The July SRCA Board meeting will be held on Thursday, July 1, 2021 by Zoom.

1. **Adjournment of SRCA Board Meeting – Jacob**

Jacob asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Brookbank made a motion to adjourn the June 3, 2021 Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Clark-Sestak. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

Jacob adjourned the meeting 9:00 PM.