

9 October 2021

Hello Neighbors!

The SRCA Board held its October meeting this past Thursday and there are a number of upcoming events and developments we want to bring to your attention.

First, thank you to all who helped make the **picnic and annual meeting** such a success! The Board approved the summary of the annual meeting; it is at the end of this newsletter. The Board also approved the September Board meeting minutes; they are posted on our website, seminaryridge.net on the Documents page.

If you have not yet **paid your dues**, please do so as soon as possible! So far only 117 households have done so. You may make checks payable to SRCA and send to Maria Browne, 3954 Fort Worth Ave, or use the website to pay using PayPal.

There are a number of important activities coming up:

* **Wednesday, 13 October, 7:00pm**: PTA is hosting a virtual forum for those running for **School Board.** See <http://alexvaptac.org/sbelection2021/> for more information.
* **Monday, 18 October, 7:30-9:30pm**: Mr. Jesse Maines will make a presentation, "City of Alexandria Riparian Project Stakeholder Engagement,” at the Environmental Policy Commission’s meeting on the stream restoration projects (including Strawberry Run) and (apparently) the City’s review of same. See <http://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail.aspx?si=38105>
* **Tuesday, 19 October**, 7:30-8:30pm SRCA will host the **mayoral forum** on Zoom. The link is posted on our website’s home page of seminaryridge.net. Spread the word, including outside SRCA! Up to 500 people can attend. And send any questions you would like posed to news4srca@gmail.com by 16 October!!
* **24-31 October**: Our **Halloween house decorating contest** returns for a second year! If you are interested in participating, send your name and contact information to Kate Hennigan, kate@bertlesrealestate.com. She will create a list of all participating homes by 23 October and will drop a plastic pumpkin off for you to put out each day of the contest (24-31 Oct) so residents can vote for their favorites by dropping coins in the pumpkin buckets (please take the buckets in each night to ensure donations are not “lost”). Proceeds will go to charity. See our website for additional details as they become available.
* **Saturday, 30 October, 5:00-6:00pm**: St Stephens (SSSAS) is hosting the second annual **Spooky Halloween Spectacular** at the upper school campus. SRCA will participate with SSSAS in this event. If your children are interested in participating, please email Kate Hennigan, kate@bertlesrealestate.com, with the number of children, whether they would like to receive a bag of candy, and if there are any peanut allergies. See our website for more information as it becomes available.
* **Sunday, 31 October**: The Seminary Ridge Halloween parade will return! Stay tuned for specific time and location, but families will meet in one of the cul de sacs. SRCA will provide a packaged snack and drink for trick-or-treaters before they march in a parade. We will also try to have a fire truck come by to lead the parade, but this is always dependent on availability.
* **Tuesday, 2 November is election day**!
	+ Especially for those new to the area, remember that Temple Beth El on Seminary Road is our in-person voting location.
	+ For those who have requested an absentee ballot, a reminder that you MUST have a witness sign your envelope (this requirement was waived in 2020, but has been reinstated for this election).
	+ For those who wish to vote early, in person, you can do so at the following locations and times:
		- Beatley Library, 22-30 October: hours vary. See https://www.alexandriava.gov/elections/info/default.aspx?id=1720
		- Registrar’s office, 132 N. Royal Street, currently M-F: 8am-5pm; Sat, 10/23: 8am-5pm; Sun, 10/24: 11am-3pm; Mon 10/25 – Thurs 10/28: 8am-8pm; Fri 10/29 and Sat 10/30: 8am-5pm.

Other issues of interest discussed at the October Board meeting

* The **City Council Forum**, held 6 October, was a great success. If you missed it, here is the link (note that you need the passcode provided to access it): <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/0LoHWCpHbzO3rZQrlco9DPxB4XpN1-1cIExQ7C8meWakDJJCNIDxJE3jjatFCy6V.oqqgkqfJC6h5FCLB> The Passcode is: 76?+Ug.e. As soon as we have it available, we will also post a YouTube link for the forum on our website’s home page.
* A large number of people attended the information session on **Karig Estates** at Beth El the end of last month. Ground-breaking will probably not occur for some time.
* Some residents have expressed interest in participating in a **caregiver support group**, whether the caregivers are taking care of a spouse, child, or parents. If you are interested in participating, please contact Dave Cavanaugh, dacavalx@gmail.com. Caring for someone may also mean needing to temporarily use equipment such as a wheelchair, walker, or other items. NextDoor can be a helpful resource for reaching out to see if someone has such equipment available to loan.
* Several residents have expressed concern about trucks (including dump **trucks** from the MacArthur school site) **speeding** **on Ft Williams Parkway**. The Board will investigate whether a “no through trucks” sign can be posted.
* Several others have asked what can be done about **scooters being parked on our sidewalks**, in some cases blocking handicap access ramps. We have been told that the City will take no action on this matter and that the specific scooter company must be contacted and asked to remove the scooters. The Board encourages residents to not only contact the scooter company, but also to call the City’s “311” number to ensure your voices are heard.
* Officer Moore provided reports on:
	+ the arrest of a student with a gun at Alexandria City High School on 6 October, which was also widely reported in the press. (Since then Superintendent Gregory Hutchings has called on City Council to reinstate SROs in Alexandria’s school in light of this and other recent cases of violence.)
	+ October is Domestic Violence Awareness month. The City’s Domestic Violence Hotline includes a Safe House shelter; counseling; confidential support groups; and legal help, including court accompaniment and assistance with protective orders. All services continue to operate throughout the pandemic. **Visit**[alexandriava.gov/DomesticViolence](https://www.alexandriava.gov/DomesticViolence)**for more information. If you or someone you know may be a victim of domestic violence, call 703.746.4911 to speak with skilled staff about services that are available. If someone is in immediate danger, always call or text 911**
* The SSSAS Fall play opens on November 5 at the upper campus.



**Minutes of SRCA Annual Meeting
September 19, 2021**

**Call to Order and Welcome – 5:07 PM** Jeanne Jacob, President

* Jacob welcomed those attending the annual meeting in person and started the Zoom call at 5:07 PM by welcoming those participating electronically. She explained that due to Covid, the Board decided to hold the meeting both in-person and by Zoom for those not wanting to meet in person.

**Establish a Quorum** Mike Souza, Parliamentarian

* A count was taken and the President and Parliamentarian conferred to confirm that representatives of 25 households were in attendance in person, six via Zoom, and 15 via proxy, so the quorum of 24 households (10 percent of the 237 lot owners) was met. (In addition, 76 households had returned votes for officers in advance.)

**Alexandria Police Liaison for SRCA** Sgt. Tony Moore

* Moore introduced Officer McIlvaine (beat officer who covers Quaker Lane to Inova hospital, and Duke to Seminary, thus encompassing SRCA’s area) and Officer Nunez (who is currently in training). They operate one of three shifts covering this area.
* Most complaints for this area focus on noise from surrounding areas.
* Noting resident concerns about the lack of a speed limit sign posted at the bottom of Fort Williams Parkway, it was noted that SRCA can make such a request to the City, but it is not the police department that can do so.
* There has been no particular increase in activity with schools being back in session.
* Traffic enforcement and ticketing data will be provided back to the SRCA Board, per residents’ request.
* SRCA is one of the lowest crime areas of the city, but there is a police presence on a routine basis.

**Alexandria Sherriff Liaison for SRCA** Sgt. Lemuel Houston

* Sgt Houston was unable to attend, but has been present on the Board’s monthly Zoom meetings, as has Sgt. Moore.

**Year in Review** Jeanne Jacob, President

* Recognized the 2020-21 Board members, committee chairs, block captains, and numerous other volunteers who helped make this such a successful year for SRCA, despite the challenges presented by COVID.
* Reported that SRCA has had a very active year in spite of the Covid restrictions placed upon us all. This was due to a very active board with many hard-working officers and committees, as recognized.
* Following the SRCA bylaws, this past year the board was expanded to include the following Committee Chairs: Historian; Communications; Events; Welcoming; Beautification; and Liaisons with the City of Alexandria, St. Stephens St. Agnes School, Beth El Temple, and the Seminary Hill Association. The Chairs of each of these Committees served alongside the SRCA officers and allowed us to do even more for the community.
* SRCA actively invited everyone in the community to become involved with SRCA by volunteering their time or telling us of their concerns. And, we encouraged residents to join the many City commissions to be the eyes, ears, and voices of Seminary Ridge in City affairs.

**BOARD AND COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS**

**Treasurer’s Report** Maria Browne, Treasurer

* SRCA currently has a balance of $18,249.86.
* Dues collection this year has been through both check and use of the Seminary Ridge website. Over $6,000 has been collected already for 2021. The website still has some issues to be resolved to make it easier to use, and those who have paid using the website, will get a “shipping invoice,” which is simply proof that the dues have been paid.
* The plan for 2021 is to collect at least $10,500 in dues (approximately 210 households). The most that has ever been collected is $11,500.
* Key expenses for the past year and anticipated budgets are as follows: Halloween ($1,000), holiday party ($3,500), annual picnic ($2,600), screen on the green ($370, which will be increased for 2022 based on exceeding in 2021), insurance ($882), yard sale ($200, which can probably be reduced), welcome committee ($100, may consider increasing this budget), and mailing and administration ($300, some of which gets billed to a specific event). New budget items for 2021 were: Zoom ($160), which was extremely necessary. Also in 2021, dues were paid to the Alexandria Civic Association, and one donation was made to charity ALIVE ($1,000). Publication of the SRCA Directory was a very high expense (had budgeted $3,400, came in at $4,400). The creation of the website was 2021’s additional, unprogrammed expense ($3,000).

**Secretary/Communications Report** Susan Clark-Sestak, Communications

* Have tried to focus this year on improving communications within the neighborhood, both about Board activities and City developments of interest.
* The SRCA Directory was published in February
	+ Anyone who has paid dues and not received copy, please let Clark-Sestak know. All Covenant households automatically receive the Directory; non-Covenant homes receive one upon payment of dues.
	+ Creating addendums every few months, the next one will be out (via newsletter) by 1 October. Each of these addendum updates includes all changes since printing, so residents need only keep the latest update and the printed Directory
* Created an electronic newsletter, which usually comes out twice a month. It is sent via MailChimp using SRCA’s g-mail account (news4srca@gmail.com)
	+ Requested that anyone who has provided their email address and is NOT getting the newsletters, let Clark-Sestak know
	+ Several meeting attendees noted that they were not receiving the newsletters. As a first step, people should check their SPAM or Junk mail folders to see if it is being caught there.
* Also created Seminary Ridge Facebook page, led by Erica Jones. It is ONLY for SRCA-eligible households
* The Communications Committee researched and interviewed several companies to create a website
	+ The website went live in March. It is: seminaryridge.net and is publicly accessible
	+ It has all the newsletters, Board minutes, pictures, calendar of events, issues of interest
	+ Residents are requested to send in neighborhood pictures! New fall photos will soon be put on the home page
	+ The website can be used to pay annual dues
* Also established a Zoom account, which has been used for Board and committee meetings and today’s annual meeting. AND Zoom webinar for upcoming political forums.

**Events Report** Kate Hennigan, 2nd Vice President

* Because Hennigan was unable to attend this annual meeting, Jacob expressed her appreciation for the extraordinary job Hennigan has done over the past year in planning a range of events. Specifically, the events included the following:
	+ When Covid restrictions said no gatherings, Hennigan began planning alternatives for SRCA’s usual Halloween pizza party. She organized a fun-filled **Halloween** for everyone that featured house and pumpkin carving. There were collection boxes for members of the neighborhood to vote for their favorite decorations, and more than $600 thus collected was donated to Carpenter’s Shelter.
	+ In lieu of the annual Holiday Party, she encouraged elaborate displays of lights throughout Seminary Ridge brightening everyone’s spirits for the holidays. Organized a food drive and a monetary contribution to Alive.
	+ In March, she organized ***Pots of Gold*** to be hidden throughout the neighborhood for St. Patrick’s Day.
	+ Spring clean-up day was held in May to beautify some of SRCA’s public areas.
	+ In May, a neighborhood **Community Yard Sale** was held with 17 homes participating.
	+ Then, in July, ***Screen on the Green*** returned and nearly 100 neighbors enjoyed SRCA’s second annual movie night watching Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory on the football field of St Stephens.
	+ Finally, Hennigan is responsible for putting together the delicious picnic food provided tonight.
* She thanked all the volunteers for their hard work during this very trying year.
* Hennigan also reported monthly on homes sales in Seminary Ridge; this information is contained in the monthly Board minutes. Sales have been very strong, with an average price now of $1.3 million.
* Coming up, Hennigan will be planning Halloween activities for October 31 and will be planning the return of the annual Holiday Party in December. Of course, these both will depend upon any further Covid restrictions this year.

**Seminary Hill Association (SHA) Report** Paul Judge, SHA Liaison

* SHA covers nine different associations in adjacent neighborhoods. Meetings are open to public. It is just starting to transition to in-person meetings. SHA spends much of its time focused on City issues, such as flooding, density (types of housing being allowed in Alexandria, including Accessory Dwelling Units, or ADUs), transportation issues (such as renovating Duke Street), and how the City prioritizes issues (state-city interactions).
* In the case of ADUs, SHA pushed that the owner of the property must reside on the property, but this stipulation was not incorporated into the final version of ADU regulations.
* Sale of Inova on Seminary Road is also a big issue for SHA. Generally, for the City, the move is a good one. The bad news is that Inova insists that the value of its existing property must be maximized to be able to afford the move to Landmark. While there was an MOA between the hospital and SHA that zoning at the current Inova hospital property could not be changed without SHA approval, City Council voted to ignore the MOA. SHA is still trying to see if it can secure funding to fight the City’s decision.
* The SHA website also has a good deal of information; while you don’t have to join SHA to use its website, access must be requested.
* SHA also has connections with other West End organizations to collaborate in negotiating with the City.
* Any questions regarding SHA should be addressed to Judge.

**SSSAS Report** Beth Chase, SSSAS Liaison

* If there are issues with speeding or other problems with the school, please contact Chase.
* School is back in session, as are sports activities.
* There are plans for a major renovation on campus with construction likely to begin in May 2023.
* SSSAS has worked with St Andrews Methodist Church to purchase the back parcel of its land; the church will erect a new building closer to the street. SSSAS has no immediate plans for using this new parcel of land.

**Beth El Report** Jeremy Flachs, Beth El Liaison

* This was the first year for Beth El Hebrew Congregation to be part of SRCA and Flachs served as the Liaison.
* Flachs was unable to attend today’s meeting due to a work commitment. He asked that Jacob read the report he provided in advance. His report is as follows:
	+ It is important to know that Beth El is the location of voting for Seminary Ridge residents.
	+ Beth El has returned to limited attendance in-person services for the High Holy Days, but the majority of congregants attended remotely.
	+ As Beth El’s contact with Karig Estates, Flachs tried to save at least the back lot from being developed by raising money to purchase this portion. The goal was to expand the wildlife preserve behind the Temple, which SRCA residents are welcome to walk through. Unfortunately, the developer is only willing to sell the entire property and not one piece of it. To learn more about what is planned for this parcel of land, SRCA residents are encouraged to attend a meeting at Beth El on Thursday, September 23 at 7:30 PM in the lobby.

**City of Alexandria Report** Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison

* Bradford Pears: City had proposed taking down all Bradford Pears in Seminary Ridge. The City arborist was very easy to work with, appreciating that the Bradford Pears were a small percentage of limb/tree removal orders the City must deal with each year. As a result, only several trees have been removed within Seminary Ridge.
* In Strawberry Run, which runs along Ft Williams Parkway, the City proposed doing natural channel design (NCD), which would remove 80+ trees and involve a great deal of construction equipment. The City was unaware that a previous NCD had already failed, until this fact was pointed out to City staff. Its engineering plans for the proposed NCD anticipate a velocity of 9 ft per second for a 100-year storm, but the City’s own study found it was 22 ft per second for a 10-year storm. The City has now agreed to do a review and to consider alternatives to the proposed NCD. It is also now actually measuring soil content rather than just using a model. SRCA is not involved in the review process directly, but has provided its recommendation to the lead point of contact, including the need for an independent expert to participate in this review.
* Proposed changes to Duke Street: inputs from the neighborhood were solicited several times and a committee was formed to assemble all the inputs. These were developed into a set of 14 recommendations, were reviewed by the Board and sent to residents for feedback. After this process, the recommendations were provided to the City as SRCA’s input. The City wants to create a dedicated bus lane and says it is the one thing that will not change in its plans for Duke Street. As a result of the public responses to the City’s Duke Street in Motion survey, the City has begun to consider a pilot near the Duke Street/Telegraph Road intersection. The pilot would block West Taylor access to Telegraph Ramp, forcing this traffic to turn left to access the Telegraph ramp via Dove Street, about ¼ mile toward Old Town.
	+ There was considerable discussion among annual meeting attendees about Duke Street plans, noting that DASH buses are now free to all (as of early September), uncertainties about bus usage trends because of the elimination of fares as well as changed travel patterns due to COVID, and the use by other, non-DASH buses of future dedicated bus lanes.
* Election forums: SRCA sponsored a series of forums in May, prior to the June primary. It will again host two forums next month: Oct 6 for all nine City Council candidates and Oct 19 for the two mayoral candidates. All residents are encouraged to submit questions via news4srca@gmail.com.

**Historian Report** Mike Brookbank, Historian

* This committee was created this year to capture events in community since it was established. Looking for old documents, meeting minutes, etc. over the last almost-50 years, including old Directories. SRCA would welcome any such documents from residents; send them to Brookbank.
* Brookbank is trying to create a database of original sales prices.

**Welcoming Committee Report** Laura Plati, Welcome Committee

* Eight new families have moved into the neighborhood this year. Plati gives each a welcome packet which includes Directory and gift card for Great Harvest bakery.

**Nominating Committee** Don Frahler, Nominating Chair

* Ballots were sent to all households and Frahler received 76 votes. The Nominating Committee (Frahler and Marianne Coates) verified the validity of the votes and counted them together to confirm accuracy. One of the votes was a write-in for one position and 75 confirmed the proposed slate. The rule is that a majority is required, so the proposed slate passed 75-1. The new Board officers are:
	+ Jeanne Jacob, President
	+ Richard Weiblinger, First VP
	+ Kate Hennigan, Second VP
	+ Maria Browne, Treasurer
	+ Susan Clark-Sestak, Secretary
	+ David Pritzker, Parliamentarian

**New President’s Comments** Jeanne Jacob, President

* Jacob expressed thanks for being re-elected and said she is willing to serve again. She asked other members of the newly elected Board to stand and be recognized and noted Pritzker was joining the meeting by Zoom.
* She wished that Covid restrictions were over and SRCA could have a normal year of activities, but noted that the Board would continue to serve the community in spite of the restrictions. She welcomed residents’ inputs and said that Committee Chairs will soon be appointed for the new year. She welcomed participation of anyone who is interested in volunteering, and if anyone hadn’t signed up who wanted to volunteer, to please do so before they left. For those joining on Zoom, she asked for them to send an email to her or to Susan Clark-Sestak via news4srca@gmail.com.
* Please mark your calendars for October 6 and October 19 when SRCA will be holding two Candidate Forums: one for those running for City Council and the other for the two running for Mayor of Alexandria. Questions will be asked concerning issues that are of importance to Alexandria. Thus, we are seeking questions from residents. What do you want to be asked of the candidates at these two Forums? Please send your questions to Jacob or to Joe Sestak via SRCA’s email, news4srca@gmail.com.
* SRCA Board meets the first Thursday of the month and will continue to meet via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out via newsletter and posted on the website.

**Other Business**

* None

**Meeting Adjourned – 6:40 PM** Jeanne Jacob, President

* With no other business being raised, Jacob asked for a motion to close the meeting. Maria Browne made the motion, Don Frahler seconded it, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.