

**MINUTES**

**SRCA MEETING**

**January 6, 2022 – 7:30 PM by Zoom Conference Call**

**In attendance:**

Jeanne Jacob, President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Maria Browne, Treasurer; Susan Clark-Sestak, Secretary; Don Frahler, Immediate Past President; David Pritzker, Parliamentarian; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; Mike Brookbank, SRCA Historian; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS) Liaison; Paul Judge, SHA Liaison; Sgt. Tony Moore, ACPD Liaison; and SRCA residents Eileen Giglio, Antonio and Teresa Longo, Harriett McCune, and Jack Roome.

1. **Welcome and President’s Report – Jacob**
   1. Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm. No SRCA residents raised issues during the open mic session.
   2. **Reports from SRCA’s ACPD Liaison/Alexandria’s Sheriff’s Liaison**
      1. Sgt. Moore stated that the Police Department is still awaiting a response to its request to T&ES to determine whether it would be worthwhile to put a mirror at the intersection of Fort Williams Parkway (FWP) and Seminary Road to address poor visibility issues.

Moore explained that, while the Police Chief had planned to attend this month’s meeting in part to discuss whether the Police, as first responders, will take a position on the Duke Street in Motion initiative, the snowstorm had required emergency City meetings. The Chief will try to attend the February SRCA meeting instead. In anticipation of this, SRCA will request that the Chief (or other ACPD representative) provide information about accident rates specifically in the section of Seminary Road that was subject to the road diet.

Jacob posed two questions, which had been submitted to her prior to the meeting by residents: was there any information to share about “shots fired” reports at Duke Street and Taney or Early Street? Moore responded that it believed the increase in shots fired in this area is gang-related. Second, with regard to the fire bombing of the 7-11 at Jordan and Duke Streets, Moore explained that this is the work of a regional team, which is targeting 7-11s. There were no injuries during this incident and ACPD is working to make arrests in the case.

Jacob expressed appreciation for the notices that Moore sends and confirmed that this information, when relevant to SR, is distributed via SRCA newsletters.

* + 1. LT Houston was unable to attend this month’s meeting.
  1. **Downed Tree Limbs – Jacob**

Jacob commented that the snowstorm on 3 January had caused considerable damage to many trees in the neighborhood. The City has begun clean-up of the downed limbs, and Jacob and Pritzker developed a list of all the downed limbs within the neighborhood and this list has been called in to the City (311 number).

1. **Secretary’s Report – Clark-Sestak**

**2.1 Approval of 2 December 2021 Minutes**

The draft minutes for the December SRCA meeting had been distributed earlier and all changes were incorporated. **Browne moved to approve the minutes; Hennigan seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved**.

1. **Treasurer’s Report – Browne**

**3.1 Dues Income/New Members Through 6 January 2022**

Browne reported that fewer households have paid their dues for 2021-22; only about 150 have done so to date (and this includes non-covenant households whose membership is voluntary).

It was agreed that Browne, Jacob, and Clark-Sestak will discuss how best to reach out to those covenant households who have not yet paid their dues – whether via individually addressed emails, delivery by block captains, or mailing an invoice.

**3.2 Total Assets and Year-End Preliminary Report**

As of 6 January, SRCA has a balance of $15,616.41, although there are still several checks to be issued for the holiday party. Overall, Browne estimates that expenses exceeded the 2021 budget by about $3,000, but this was due largely to the printing of the SRCA Directory and the development of the SR website. There was additional discussion about some activities - such as the Screen on the Green - which exceeded the budget because of the expense of the ice cream truck, and others – such as the yard sale – for which there was no expense.

For 2022, there will be only minimal costs for maintaining the website and possibly obtaining additional insurance. One initial estimate was for $500, which seems high compared to other insurance the Association maintains, so Browne will continue to investigate other options.

Browne will prepare a 2022 budget for the February meeting, at which time it will be voted on by the Executive Committee.

1. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports – Committee Chairs**
   1. **Recent and Upcoming Events/Activities – Hennigan**

**4.1.1 Holiday Party** **– Hennigan**

Hennigan reported that about 80 people had RSVP’d for the Holiday Party, and about 65-70 attended. While the amount of food ordered was cut back, there was still an abundance left over. These leftovers were brought to the Fire Department. The total cost of the party was kept on-budget, at approximately $3,000.

All expressed appreciation to the Frahlers for having hosted the event. Jacob read a thank-you note that the Frahlers had sent to the Executive Committee for all its assistance.

**4.1.2** **SRCA Events for 2022** **– All**

There was continued discussion about planned activities for 2022 and the need to keep budgetary considerations in mind, so perhaps planning only one major event per season.

Hennigan suggested dropping the Halloween house decorating competition in 2022 as so few had participating in 2021; instead, SRCA can focus on a holiday light display. There was also a discussion about a different St Patrick’s Day event, perhaps a beer tasting or having each block host its own event. Clark-Sestak suggested that two Screen on the Green events could easily be held under budget if SRCA provides waters and bags of popcorn rather than ice cream. She also reported that two companies had provided an estimate for a shredding event: for paper shredding, the cost of a truck to be at one location in the neighborhood for 2 hours is $750-800. If electronics disposal were also included, this would increase the cost. Jacob mentioned that Arlington provides shredding opportunities free to its residents, and she and Weiblinger will contact the City to see if Alexandria would be willing to do something similar. If a shredding event is approved, it will be necessary to schedule it quickly after the February meeting as they are generally done only on Saturdays and there is considerable demand in Spring and Summer.

Those who suggested or supported a specific idea were tasked with researching costs, now to be presented at the February meeting so that a 2022 budget can be approved also at the February meeting.

* 1. **Home Sales in Seminary Ridge – Hennigan**

Hennigan reported that there is one pending sale on Templeton Place for $1.137 million, being sold “as is.” She expects the spring market to be strong.

* 1. **Seminary Hill Association (SHA) Liaison – Judge**

Judge explained that SHA is expecting a heavy focus on housing issues in the coming year as part of defining “where is Alexandria headed”? There are also questions about how political changes at the state level may affect the City’s ability to secure grants.

Judge confirmed that SHA will address the scooter issue at its January meeting and will follow up on the December SRCA discussion about whether SHA would be interested in addressing the possibility of adding “when pedestrians are present” to the sign on Seminary Road turning onto St Stephens Road. Chase confirmed that SSSAS would be in favor of such as change. To his knowledge, there has been no public sharing of any information the City has done on assessing the Seminary Road Diet. It was suggested that the Police Chief be asked to report on the accident rates for the specific area of Seminary Road that was subject to the diet, ideally at the February SRCA meeting.

Judge noted that it will be important for the SRCA Transportation Committee to remain active in following proposed changes to Duke Street, as SHA intends to do. It was agreed that at least one more volunteer for the Transportation Committee would be very welcome.

Finally, Judge submitted a written report from SHA as follows:

“On December 18th, 2021, City Council approved the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation’s (AHDC) development plans for the site on Seminary Road adjacent to the fire station. 31 affordable for-sale townhomes will be built, along with a multifamily building with 5 for sale affordable condos, and condo units to be owned by Sheltered Homes of Alexandria to provide housing for intellectually disabled adults. SHA worked closely with AHDC and adjacent neighbors to ensure that this project will fit into the character of the neighborhood.

The City Council will be taking up several projects of interest to our neighborhoods in their upcoming meetings. Among those coming up are the High School Project at Minnie Howard, and the Parc View II massive redevelopment on Holmes Run Parkway which will build a new apartment building in the current parking lot of the existing building and create a 127% increase in the number of units there. Among the items to be considered for the High School project is an increase in the height of the lights for the sports field from the originally-proposed 60 feet to 77 feet. Those of us familiar with the stadium lights at the former TCW knew that the 60-foot lights would never be realistic at Minnie Howard. Apparently, the engineers have now come to the same conclusion. We will continue to follow these and other issues in the coming year.

Jan 3rd was the installation ceremony for the new City Council. SHA congratulates those who were elected, and takes special pride that our Seminary Hill resident, Amy Jackson, was elected Vice-Mayor. I think it is important to note Mayor Wilson’s remarks when he stated that previously he wanted Alexandria to be “a small city that does big things.” Tonight, he indicated that he sees Alexandria as a city “that does less things, but does them better.”  He stated that our basic services are strained and now Council must come to a “reconciliation of the role the City has.” We will be closely monitoring what these statements mean for all of us.”

* 1. **SSSAS (St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School) Liaison – Chase**

Chase reported that SSSAS  was in virtual learning the week of January 3rd and will return to in-person classes on January 10th.

* 1. **BEHC Update – Jeremy Flachs**

Flachs was unable to attend the meeting, but reported via email that Beth El has temporarily suspended in-person meetings due to the increase in COVID cases. This decision will be revisited in several more weeks.

* 1. **City of Alexandria Liaison – Weiblinger**

Weiblinger was unable to attend this month’s meeting. Jacob reported an update on Strawberry Run, which was included in Mayor Wilson’s 1 January Council Connection email. Specifically, it has been determined that the pollution reduction cost will be not $5,000 per pound, but rather $20,000 per pound, thus the cost of doing this work overall will be much greater: estimated cost would now be $1.6 million rather than $800,000. (Since this meeting, this information was clarified: the project has always been planned at a cost of $1.6 million, but that amount would only eliminate one-quarter of the pollution originally estimated. Thus, the question of whether stream restoration is the proper solution, other than to protect specified properties, is on the table.) Wilson noted that pushback from community associations and the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) about the utility of stream restoration and then whether the pollution credits are actually needed has led the City to hire a facilitator for the Strawberry, Taylor and Lucky Run projects.

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

Plati noted that there were no new residents for the past month to welcome.

Prior to this meeting, the cover letter which accompanies each welcome package to new SRCA residents was sent to all Executive Committee members to determine if the letter sufficiently stressed the need to request Community Committee approval of an exterior modifications to homes in the covenant area of SRCA. Pritzker, Jacob, and Clark-Sestak offered several changes to the existing cover letter, and the updated version will now be used in all future welcome packages.

* 1. **Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**

Clark-Sestak reported that Pat McClellan has had to step down from serving on the Communications Committee. The Committee would be very interested in having at least one other member of the SRCA community join; anyone interested should please email Clark-Sestak or SRCA’s email: news4srca@gmail.com

The Communications Committee met with website developer, Michael Woodward in December to discuss ways to archive materials on SRCA’s website. Woodward reported in early January that he would have changes ready for review within the next week or two. He is also tweaking a couple of structural issues, and Clark-Sestak has been working to remove references to the SRCA “Board” on the website, as well as updating documents.

Clark-Sestak reported that information on the website – the names and contact information for the Community Committee members – was used by someone to send spam requests for purchasing gift cards. As a result, Clark-Sestak has replaced the previous files for the entire Executive Committee and Block Captains for 2020-21 and 2021-22, eliminating all emails and phone numbers. The new files note that this information is available in the published SRCA Directory.

Finally, Clark-Sestak reported that Zoom is offering a 20% discount for its annual membership. Thus, instead of $149, the cost would be $119 for the year. As the original Zoom account was established in early February 2021, a renewal by 31 January would be timely. It was unanimously agreed that Zoom will continue to be important to have available and that the account should be renewed for 2022.

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

Frahler noted that he had recently located a number of historical SRCA documents. Brookbank will pick those documents up from Frahler. Brookbank anticipates that some historical documentation he has been assembling will be useful to scan, while others may just be kept in hard copy in boxes.

1. **Old Business – Jacob**

There was no old business to report.

1. **New Business – Jacob**

The next SRCA Board Meeting will be Thursday, 3 February 2022 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

One resident raised as a matter of interest to be shared with the community that a recent personal check, mailed at the Seminary Road mailbox, had not been delivered to the company to which the payment was being sent. Rather, the check was washed and written out for a different amount to an individual, and was cashed using a mobile app. This incident has been reported to the police, who said there have been issues with the mailboxes at this location. Two suggestions to the community: when paying a bill by check, consider not using any envelope provided by the company, as this can be a quick way for someone to know that a check is enclosed and when putting something in the mail, ensure it goes all the way into the mailbox, not getting stuck in the chute. Banks have confirmed that check washing incidents have been increasing.

1. **Adjournment of SRCA Executive Committee Meeting – Jacob**

**Frahler moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 pm; it was seconded by Brookbank and unanimously approved.**