

Seminary Ridge Civic Association (SRCA) Meeting Minutes

October 1, 2020

- **In Attendance:** Jeanne Jacob, President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Maria Browne, Treasurer; Mike Souza, Parliamentarian; Don Frahler, Past President; Beth Chase, St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School (SSSAS), CFO; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chairman Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; and Mike Brookbank, Chairman SRCA History Committee.
- **Call to Order** - Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.
- **Secretary's Report – Jacob/Clark-Sestak**
- **Minutes:**
 - Draft minutes of September 24, 2020 Board Meeting were circulated before the meeting and approved by the Board.
 - Because McIntyre was unable to attend this meeting, Clark-Sestak offered to take the minutes.
- **Directory status:**
 - There was a discussion about whether residents should be asked to verify the information being included in the directory, but the consensus was that the information is as accurate as possible and changes can be issued as an addendum.
 - Final edits of directory are being made; Jacob and Clark-Sestak will meet with the publisher on October 2. All changes must be received by October 15.
 - Block captains will also be asked to distribute directory, approximately November 1. All SRCA residents will receive a copy, as will all non-covenant members who have paid SRCA dues for 2020

Treasurer's Report - Browne

- Dues renewal: payments continue to be received. Currently 151 residences have paid.
- Jacob has prepared a letter to be sent out to non-covenant members who have not yet replied, reminding them of dues and asking for their information to include in the directory

Officers/Committee Chairs Contact List – Jacob

- Has been completed; ready for distribution. Board agreed to send to all residents as part of October monthly communication

Block Captains Update – Jacob – no new developments to report

SSSAS Update - Chase

- Movie nights: SSSAS has begun hosting movies nights for each middle and upper school class. They are being held on Fridays (October 2, 9 and 16) and Tuesdays and Wednesdays (October 6, 7, 13 and 14). There will be security, administrative, and other personnel on-site to ensure compliance with CDC guidance. While these events are not open to Seminary Ridge residents, SSSAS shared this information so that residents are aware of them.

Seminary Hill Association (SHA) Liaison Report - Judge

- Judge was unable to attend this meeting. Jacob provided a letter sent by SHA to the City concerning tree removal and replanting plans for Taylor Run. SRCA joined many other civic associations in signing this letter. It will be provided to all SRCA residents as part of the October communications.

Communications Committee – Clark-Sestak

- Established SRCA email account, called SRCANews. The email address is: news4srca@gmail.com
- This month's communication to the neighborhood will note that this email may be used for residents to communicate with and raise issues to the Board. Clark-Sestak, McIntyre, and Jacob will regularly monitor the gmail account. Other documents to be distributed to residents this month:
 - Summary of this meeting
 - Officers/committee chairs contact list
 - SHA letter on Taylor Run
 - Halloween flyer (to be sent separately, about mid-October)
- Reviewed alternatives to Constant Contact. The Board agreed that Mailchimp offers what SRCA needs, and at no cost, so if the gmail account is inadequate for sending large-batch emails to residents, a Mailchimp account will be established. Of note, Mailchimp only allows for one-way communication, so the gmail address will still be useful for residents reaching out to the Board
- Discussed use of GoogleDocs as repository for SRCA files
- Proposed contacting all Block Captains
 - Reminder to distribute all email communications in hard copy for those residents who do not receive them via email (each Block Captain was sent a list showing who is receiving information by email and who needs to still receive hard copy)
 - Anticipated delivery of directory
 - Assistance in notifying Welcome Committee of new residents

SRCA Events – Hennigan

- Working with volunteer Nicky Gray, identified two proposals for Halloween activities that will follow CDC COVID safety guidelines, since the traditional pizza and parade are not viable options this year.
- Board approved a budget of \$400 to pursue both these activities
- Saturday, October 31, 5:00-7:00pm, SSSAS Upper Campus
 - The SSSAS theater group will be creating pumpkin cut-outs and upper classmen will be decorating trunks, which will be parked in the driveway. There will be various decorations and goodies to be picked up as visitors DRIVE through the display. All will be required to wear masks.
 - There will be a Google registration form sent to SSSAS and SRCA by about October 12, to determine approximately how many will plan to attend, whether there are food allergies, etc.
 - SRCA will purchase candy and perhaps some non-food items for distribution. Volunteers may be needed to help assemble them.
- For the Seminary Ridge community: a house-decorating and pumpkin carving competition, October 15-31
 - Open to anyone in the neighborhood who wishes to participate in the competition
 - Neighbors may vote for their favorite house(s), dropping a coin into an SRCA-provided bucket on the house's front stoop.
 - The winner will be announced on November 2, and monies collected will be donated to a local charity to help those affected by COVID.
- Gray will create a flyer with these details and more, and will work with Clark-Sestak/McIntyre to distribute it to all residents about mid-October.

City of Alexandria Liaison – Sestak

- Strawberry Run
 - At a City meeting on September 23, it was announced that this project will begin no earlier than Fall 2021. Current plan is to remove 88 of 387 trees, replacing them with 1,050 trees/shrubs. Dearborn Road will become a parking lot for workers and some construction equipment.
 - There is considerable opposition to these plans by residents on Featherstone Place and in Strawberry Hill. The model to be used to develop this project has been criticized for local utility and accuracy (including in the Alexandria Times by other City personnel not working on the project); it is not clear that it has been appropriately adjusted for this region. While the project is being driven by a goal to reduce sediment, phosphorous, and nitrate going into the Chesapeake from Alexandria, the city representative said they have not done a study to measure Strawberry Run's water quality. The model also does not provide a way to know how much sediment would actually no longer be going into the Bay. In asking about alternative ways to address the issue of erosion and water flow such as an

enhanced piping system, the City's response is that this would require different permits from other departments.

- There will be a Zoom meeting with City officials in mid-October, but no specific date or time has yet been identified.
- Because of the similarities of the projects, Sestak participated in Taylor Run Zoom meeting with city, September 29.
- Bradford Pear
 - In October 2019, representatives from the City briefed the SRCA Board about plans to remove 62 Bradford Pear trees from the Seminary Ridge neighborhood in the first year; within 5 years, all 374 would be removed (53% of SRCA's tree canopy.) Each resident would be allowed to decide whether a different type of tree would, or would not, be planted in its place. Several of the alternative trees being suggested by the City are subject to disease, do not provide the same kind of shade, etc. The City said the proposal was a draft and they would return.
 - In June 2020, the SRCA Board was told by the city that 58 trees would be removed in the first stage, followed by the others. At both meetings, the City had said the plans were only a draft and they would return to the Board, but it has not done so.
 - A memo sent September 14, 2020 by the City's Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) to the City's Parks and Recreation Committee, stated it is "preparing for fall implementation of phased, proactive removal and replacement of Callery Pear (Bradford....)" Of note, in 2009, the City actually approved in its Urban Forestry Master Plan a rotational, five year cycle for the pruning of all public street trees. It was because without it, the City was being forced to take a "reactive approach (to storms, citizen requests, public repair and development ... at higher cost)." However, it was not funded until 2019, and then only partially. It *appears* that the City may be using these funds to remove the Bradford trees, rather than either for its intended purpose or to prune those Bradford trees that remain safe and do not need to be cut down. When the tree was first introduced by the Department of Agriculture, it had tested them under such a five-year pruning cycle that was to prevent unwanted breakage as other cities do.
 - The Board agreed this was important to share with all residents and gain their input on such a proposed project, with consideration for having the City follow its approved pruning program. This is important as the 374 trees add tremendously to the ambiance and attractiveness of Seminary Ridge, and a sudden removal of so many will change that ambiance for years to come. It also agreed to send a letter to the City regarding this issue, including asking for representative(s) to attend the Board's next Zoom meeting, November 5. In drafting this letter, Jacob asked Sestak to separately include reference to the Beautification Committee's recommendation of the types of trees SRCA would

like to see planted in the community's medians and on Ft. Williams for their normal tree replacement.

- Duke Street corridor
 - Plan is to create a bus lane and bike lanes between Landmark and the King Street metro station. Date is TBD.
 - This issue may be addressed through the City Mobility Plan.
 - There will be a City Mobility Plan virtual town hall presentation and Q&A, October 15, 6:00pm
 - Purpose: “to solicit input on the draft strategies for the Alexandria Mobility Plan for transit, streets, smart mobility, curb space and parking, and supporting travel options”
 - Registration Link:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DUSxbXzOQPOoak6-zfV5xw
Webinar ID 952 6850 5574
Webinar Passcode 213671
Dial in: 301-715-8592
A recording of the presentation will be available shortly after the live event at www.alexandriava.gov/mobilityplan
 - A feedback form on the draft strategies will be available at www.alexandriava.gov/mobilityplan from Thursday, October 15 through Sunday, November 8
 - For more information: www.alexandriava.gov/MobilityPlan or contact: mobilityplan@alexandriava.gov
- Single Family Homes Zoning
 - For the first time ever, there is a proposal for the City to change zoning from a single-family house to a multi-family residence on Seminary Road (next to the firehouse). The question is: if approved, will this be used as precedent for other locations in the city?
 - At the September City Council meeting, the Racial Equity Officer argued that, if the City wants to address racial equity, it will need to work on its zoning ordinances.

SRCA History – Brookbank

- The SRCA History committee will gather materials together for this and future SRCA Boards so that there is one location with all relevant documents). Brookbank and Clark-Sestak will develop a GoogleDocs repository for these documents.
- Any past Board members or other residents who have files (Board minutes, previous directories, communications from the City, etc.) are asked to share them with Brookbank

Beautification Committee – Jacob

- Looking for a new Chair.
- One aim of the committee should be to share with residents which new (replacement) trees would work best in Seminary Ridge. We also want to encourage the City to be proactive in planting new trees, which is in line with the City's objective of increasing the tree canopy.

Welcome Committee

- Looking for a new Chair.
- Responsibilities include providing the directory to new families with a letter of introduction from SRCA Board. And providing a welcoming gift, which recently has been a gift card for a loaf of bread from Great Harvest. There is a question: should anything else be done aside from these welcoming materials?

Old Business – Jacob

- No new business.

New Business – Jacob

- Next SRCA Board Meeting: Thursday, November 5 at 7:30pm. It is hoped that representative(s) from the City of Alexandria will participate to discuss plans for removal of Bradford Pear trees from Seminary Ridge.

Adjourn Meeting – Jacob adjourned meeting at 8:58 PM