

Seminary Ridge Civic Association (SRCA)

Board Meeting Minutes

December 3, 2020 by Zoom Conference Call

- **In Attendance:** Jeanne Jacob, President; Nick Giannotti, First Vice President; Liz McIntyre, Secretary; 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; Mike Brookbank, Chairman SRCA History Committee; Laura Plati, Chairman SRCA Welcome Committee; Paul Judge, SHA Representative; and SRCA neighbors Teri and Tony Longo.
- **Call to Order** - Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

President's Report – Jacob

- Jacob welcomed the Longo's to the SRCA Board meeting and explained that "Open Mic" has been officially added to our Board meetings. Q&As will occur at the end of the meeting.
- Jacob reported that she has received questions from SR residents as a result of our sending out the minutes in the newsletter. As desired, we are getting more community involvement.
- Jacob explained that SRCA is part of the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations (AFCA). Paperwork has been completed to replace Frahler with Jacob as the SRCA representative. Jacob was asked to complete a questionnaire prior to tonight's meeting that identified the three biggest concerns to SRCA. With input from others, Jacob identified: 1 - Zoning issues such as Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs); 2 - Alexandria's Mobility Plan's Duke Street Corridor, and 3 - Increased representation of Central Alexandria residents on City appointed Commissions to allow for meaningful input on City decisions and policies.

Secretary's Report – McIntyre

- Minutes:
 - Draft minutes of November 5, 2020 Board Meeting were circulated before the meeting and were approved by the Board.
- Directory status:
 - ASAP Printer provided revised directory pages on 11/20/2020 and Jacob, Clark-Sestak and McIntyre reviewed and found a large number of errors. Another draft was to have been provided 11/23/2020, but was not received. Two follow-up emails were sent and no response was received.

- o The Board discussed the printer's lack of progress. Giannotti will provide the name and contact information of another printer. McIntyre will notify ASAP Printer that we will work with another printer if we do not receive a reply with a more complete draft by 12/11/2020.

Treasurer's Report – Jacob for Browne

- 170 residents of 237 households have paid dues for this year. The current balance is \$24,627.44. This includes payment to Chubb insurance premium (\$382)).
- Browne still owes people for Halloween expenses and she asks that they resubmit any reimbursement requests.
- Browne will meet with Jacob to get her on the bank account by the week of December 15.

SSSAS Update - Chase

- Christmas Break starts on Thursday, 12/17/2020 and students will return on Monday, 1/4/2021.
- The purchase of property from St. Andrews United Methodist Church will go before the City Council on 1/5/2021. If approved, the property will be subdivided and SSSAS will proceed with the purchase of property adjacent to SSSAS. Neighbors adjacent to St Andrews UMC will get a letter from the City notifying them of the purchase.

SRCA Events – Hennigan

- Halloween Wrap-Up – Have collected donations and will bring to the Carpenter Shelter on 12/7/2020.
- Holiday Decorating Drive By – An email will be sent to encourage families to drive the neighborhood to see the displays in the neighborhood. Hennigan will put a container on her front porch to collect food drive donations to Alexandria ALIVE! or other non-denominational entity. McIntyre will contact ALIVE! to see if they take food donations and to get suggestions on desired food items.
- SRCA Holiday Party Cancelled – Due to the current CDC guidelines, the Board has officially cancelled the SRCA Holiday Party for 2020. We thank Don and Sharon Fraher for their generosity in offering the use of their home. We hope to be able to host a Spring Fling or Summer Social that would be held from 7 – 9 PM on SSSAS grounds, if Covid-19 restrictions are lifted by then. Date and details to be determined.
- Clark-Sestak made a motion to donate money to ALIVE! because we will not have the costs of the Holiday Party. The Board agreed to donate \$1,000 to ALIVE! McIntyre to contact.

SHA - Judge

- SHA had their annual meeting. Judge will remain SRCA's representative to the Seminary Hill Association (SHA).
- Jon Frederick, the Executive Director of AHDC submitted a formal Concept 1 design to Planning and Zoning on 9/25/2020. The design is for the construction of an apartment

building with 52 (up from the original 40) affordable housing units on the land near the Seminary Road Fire Station. SHA was not notified of the submission despite assurances made by AHDC to do so.

- Karig Estates is moving forward. The area now has a large chain link fence with a sales sign advertising the 4 new luxury homes coming soon.

Communications Committee – Clark-Sestak

- Our news4srca@gmail.com remains active and residents have been using this email as a way of communicating ideas and questions to the Board.
- MailChimp account has been used to distribute the last newsletter. We have 345 email addresses and MailChimp reported that approximately half of the emails were opened.
- We received several requests from neighbors to send out notifications of specific events. The Board discussed and decided that such requests will be denied, and we will suggest that the notices be placed on NextDoor Neighbor instead. The SRCA email is for information directly affecting the neighborhood. We do not want to send out excessive emails to the neighbors.

Historical Committee – Brookbank

- Brookbank repeated his request for neighbors, especially former SRCA Board members, to deliver historical SRCA documents to him, either in electronic or hard copy form. No documents have been received to date.

Welcome Committee – Plati

- Plati met with the new homeowners on St. Stephens. Will reach out to the new owners on Templeton, Moss Place, Carson Place and Harris Place.

City of Alexandria Liaison – Sestak

- Strawberry Run (the stream that runs between Fort Williams Parkway and Seminary Ridge homes on Featherstone Place)
 - There is an ongoing discussion between the City's plan to use the Natural Channel Design (NCD) method to stop the erosion of Strawberry Run which causes sediment to flow into the Chesapeake Bay versus consideration of other alternatives. The reason is that NCD both moves over and raises the stream's bed so storm water will flow over a wide "artificial" floodplain. This requires heavy construction with loss of trees. The neighborhood proposal is to use alternatives such as what is called "boulder armoring." The reason is because NCD is not meant for small, urban streams, and Alexandria's only prior attempt to use NCD occurred 10 years ago on the southern end of Strawberry Run -- and it failed.
 - Because the City did not provide the design plans and supportive modeling analyses despite repeated requests over the past months to do so, SRCA's letter to the City to extend the "public comment" deadline to 1/31/2021 was granted

(the plans were provided after the original public comment period ended November 30).

- o The neighbors/SRCA are considering requesting a delay in the project for consideration of alternatives for the following reasons: Originally, Strawberry Run was to help meet the Virginia mandate for 35% reduction of the City's flow of sediment into the Chesapeake by 2023. But now the City intends to use Strawberry Run to help it meet its 60% sediment reduction compliance set for 2027/8 since it is not needed for meeting the 2023 compliance. In addition, we found out that VA's DEQ \$800K grant was extended one year to June 2022 because of the pandemic, and this money won't be lost by delaying a year to consider alternatives.
 - o Lastly, the Chesapeake Bay's "Expert Panel" is also redoing the calculations that the City must use to determine how much sediment reduction there will actually be, and will not have those calculations available for about a year. All of the above would now allow the City time to assess alternatives to NCD, especially since NCD failed on the southern end of Strawberry Run.
 - o Sestak also informed the Board that a 9/28/2018 City Manager memo requesting permission to apply for a VA DEQ grant for NCD apparently inaccurately stated that neighbors whose properties were adjacent to Strawberry Run were notified in writing and that an on-site meeting with them was held to discuss the Strawberry Run proposal. However, those neighbors said they never received a letter nor attended a meeting in 2018. Their first letter receipt and meeting was a year later. The Mayor said they'd look into who might have gotten letters.
 - o If any Seminary Ridge neighbor wishes to provide your views on Strawberry Run, please go to: <https://www.research.net/r/AlexandriaVA-StrawberryRunStream>
 - o (Note: it says public comments are open until January 8, but we were assured public comments would be accepted through January 31.)
- Bradford Pears Trees
 - o The City's former plan was to remove all 376 trees, then changed to 200, over five years. As a result of Sestak's discussions and SRCAs deliberations, the City intends to **remove only three damaged trees**: 3700 Ft Worth Ave; 3717 Ft Worth Ave; and 508 Ft Williams.
 - o Two trees will be pruned on Ft Worth Ave.
 - o The City began looking at SR partly due to the cost of clean-up of 16 Bradford Pear branches, but a review of City data showed that of ~2500 tree work requests from citizens to clean-up branches, prune trees, plant or remove them, only 16 were for SR's Bradfords. The majority of clean-up requests come from Del Ray and Old Town – not SR. Also, most of SR trees are older than 25 years and therefore do not propagate, defeating the City's invasive non-native species argument, while the cost of pruning them three times in the next 15 years of their lives is less than the cost of removing them.
 - Duke Street corridor – Update of 2008 Transportation Plan

- City is continuing with its plan to create a dedicated bus lane each way on Duke Street – while evaluating how to also have parallel bike lanes -- between Landmark and the King Street metro station. Public input on this plan begins in early 2021, construction beginning by ~2023 for Phase I. However, the City procured a \$75 million grant from the state of Virginia last year on its proposal.
- Goal: Faster, more convenient and frequent **public transportation**. Ease traffic by **getting people out of cars** and onto public transport as well as bicycles, scooters, etc.
- **Duke Street E/W Transitway:** Presently, the east and west ends of Duke Street have 3 lanes. Therefore, Phase I will make one of these lanes each way bus-only. For Phase II, the City will purchase land to create a third lane each way where there presently is only two. Those third lanes will be dedicated for buses only.
- **The congestion that occurs during rush hours to come off and go on the Telegraph Road Exit appears not to be addressed.** Approximately 40-60% of traffic on the main roads in Central Alexandria come from cut-through traffic from I-495 via Telegraph Road.
- Sestak recommends early involvement in City planning and providing responses when public comments are requested. Also pointed out lack of transit equity in parts of the Alexandria Mobility Plan (AMP) and questioned whether AMP will ease congestion since 5 of 6 Alexandria resident commuters leave to work elsewhere and the above efforts do not directly assist them since about 85% of those use cars to go to work.
- **For information, the remaining two parts of the City's AMP are:**
 - **East end:** Metroway to N. Potomac Yard Segment C of the Transitway (US 1 and E Glebe Rd to Alexandria- Arlington border) is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2024 with dedicated bus lanes.
 - **West end:** N/S Transitway (Van Dorn to Beauregard to Pentagon) dedicated bus lanes, with 2.5 miles bike lanes to be done ~2020-2028.

Open Mic – Questions & Answers

- Further discussion of Duke St. Corridor with comments made that: Metro currently is planning to close two of Alexandria's Metro stops; nothing has been decided on what to build in the Landmark shopping mall land; and there are already bicycle lanes on Seminary and Eisenhower, so why are ones needed on Duke Street, a major automobile commuting artery. Is this a "build it and they will come" idea?

Old Business – None.

New Business – Jacob

- Next SRCA Board Meeting: Thursday, January 7 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 January 6 as well as notifying residents when the minutes are distributed.

Adjourn Meeting – Jacob adjourned meeting at 9:12 PM