**SEMINARY RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**February 4, 2021 – 7:30 PM by Zoom Conference Call**

**In Attendance:** Jeanne Jacob, President; Nick Giannotti, First Vice President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Eileen Giglio, Secretary; Maria Browne, Treasurer; Mike Souza, Parliamentarian; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS) CFO; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chair Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; Mike Brookbank, SRCA Historian; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; and Paul Judge, SHA Representative

**Residents joining the call:** Lyn Allen; Dave Cheney; Patricia Evans; Rick Gould; Erica Jones; Larry Kocot; Christine Lytle; Pat McClellan; David Pritzker; Scott Sutherland

**Call to Order:**

1. **SRCA President’s Report – Jeanne Jacob**

Jacob welcomed the residents who joined the call and thanked them for attending. She noted that there would be a second “open mic” session at the end of the meeting and if there were any immediate questions or concerns from the residents on this call, they would be addressed at the completion of her report.

**1.1 Board Secretary**: Jacob welcomed K. Eileen Giglio, as SRCA Secretary to replace Liz McIntyre who moved from the SR neighborhood. Eileen is a Seminary Ridge resident living on Colonel Ellis. Voting for minutes will take place under the Secretary’s report.

* 1. **Block Captain:** Jacob reported that Rosi Urbine (904 St. Stephen’s Road) would be replacing Michelle Bower as Block captain for the Covenant area of the road (#s 800 – 1109) as Bower was moving from Seminary Ridge.
  2. **Transportation Sub-Committee:** Jacob introduced and welcomed the members of the Transportation Sub-Committee (Duke Street Corridor): Dave Cheney, Rick Gould, Scott Sutherland, and Fran Vogel (President of Strawberry Hill Civic Association).
  3. **Repaving Roads**: Jacob updated the Board on the City’s schedule for repaving roads in Seminary Ridge. In the City’s FY2022 (beginning July 1, 2021), North Garland Street would be repaved. In the City’s FY2023 (beginning on July 1, 2022), Griffith Place, Templeton Place, and Moss Place roads would be repaved.
  4. **Strawberry Run Resolution:** Featherstone Place Seminary Ridge (SR) residents (Kocots and Allens) submitted a resolution for SRCA’s consideration to be sent to City Council (*“Resolution Against Natural Channel Design for Strawberry Run*” (attached)). The Kocot and Allen properties abut Strawberry Run and, although they will see the more immediate impact of Strawberry Run’s stream restoration, they raised issues that will have effects for the entire Seminary Ridge community. After a thorough discussion, the Board approved the resolution with three changes (see both discussion and changes to resolution in section 9.0 below, “open mic” section).

1. **SRCA Secretary’s Report**

January 7, 2020 SRCA Board meeting minutes were reported by Jacob for McIntyre. She requested that the minutes be approved as distributed. Souza noted that his name was missing from those attending the meeting. Jacob said the minutes would be corrected to reflect his attendance. She then asked for a motion for the minutes to be approved, as amended.

**Minutes as amended were moved for approval by Sestak, seconded by Brookbank, and passed by unanimous consent.**

1. **SRCA Treasurer’s Report**

Browne reported there was $24,279.40 in the bank account with three checks to be written ($1,000 to Jacob for Directory printing reimbursement; $1,000 to Alive for SRCA contribution; and reimbursement to Laura Plati for Great harvest gift cards (for new residents). Hennigan said that she would give Browne receipts for the Halloween event for reimbursement. Browne shared that 178 of the 237 SRCA residents had paid their dues for a total of $8,900 in dues revenue.

1. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports**

**4.1 SSSAS Liaison – Beth Chase**

The City Planning Commission approved the subdivision and purchase of St. Andrew’s United Methodist Church Property and also approved the renovation plans for the St. Stephens and St. Agnes upper school with an increase in enrollment to 520 students.

* 1. **SRCA Events – Kate Hennigan**

Ideas for uplifting Winter events include a St. Patrick’s “Pot of Gold.” Spring Events will depend upon consideration of activity based on the status of COVID challenges.

**4.3 Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**

Appreciation: Special thanks this month to the other members of the Committee, Pat McClellan and Erica Jones, for their assistance in researching website design companies and Facebook options. Also, thanks to Steve Colangelo who explained how to provide links to documents when using MailChimp.

* + 1. **Newsletter:** There have been two letters since the last Board meeting:

The **firs**t contained the January Board minutes as well as requests to the community about how the Board should focus its efforts and whether there is interest in an SRCA website, Facebook, etc.

**4.3.1.1** There was one written response and several verbal responses definitely supporting continued information about City plans affecting our neighborhood and more than half supported the Board taking a greater advocacy role.

* + - 1. There was unanimous support for a website, but no specific feedback about Facebook, NextDoor, or other options.

The **second** newsletter was a flyer on Strawberry Run, including the proposed removal of 89 mature trees. The newsletter noted that public comments on the Strawberry Run plans were due by 30 January.

* + 1. **Directory:** Jacob and Clark-Sestak finalized the SRCA Directory and it is at the printer (ASAP). The printer estimates that hard copies will be ready in approximately three to four weeks. The number of copies to be printed, with consideration of cost, was the subject of discussion by the Board ranging from 300 to 400 copies, for Association residents and additional copies for future residents. It contains addresses, phone numbers, e-mails, etc. as well as the Constitution, Bylaws and the Deed of Restrictions and Covenants. The Directories will be provided to the Block Captains for distribution.

**Passed by unanimous consent – 400 copies to cover “new homeowners” and “non-covenant” members as well as all existing residents.**

* + 1. **Website:** The Communications Committee reported that it hadinterviewed four different website development companies. Based on phone interviews and subsequent email follow-ups, the Communications Committee found two companies –LMK and JumbleThink - to be the most responsive, as well as the best value. Clark-Sestak requested any inputs from Board members on experiences in using either Joomla or Square Space, the software used by LMK and JumbleThink, respectively. Board members recommended that the two companies confirm their design would incorporate accessibility requirements for those with disabilities and whether they could include a “push” notification for users to view new posts as they appear on the site. Information on both development and maintenance cost estimates was provided to the Board.

**At the direction of the Board, the Communications Committee was authorized to spend up to $3500 to develop a community website for SRCA**.

1. **Historical Committee – Mike Brookbank**

**5.1** Nothing to report.

1. **Welcome Committee – Laura Plati**
   1. **New Residents**: Three more homes sold in the community and regular welcome gifts will be provided to the new homeowners.

**6.2** **New Directory**: New neighbors’ names will appear on an addendum sheet. Plati will collect information so it can be ready for distribution with the Directory.

1. **SHA Liaison – Paul Judge**
   1. **Affordable Housing:** The Alexandria City Public Schools Board voted unanimously to exclude consideration of affordable housing at the Minnie Howard Campus. Alexandria officials will be renovating or rebuilding multiple school properties in the next decade, either because the buildings are old, too small, or no longer adequately serve the needs of students. There is a chance that affordable housing could come up as a possibility in future school construction projects.
   2. **Tree Planting Alternatives:** City Planners *should* consider achieving Chesapeake Bay pollution reduction credits through a major tree planting program rather than through the reconstruction of Taylor Run. A tree planting program option *should* be cost competitive with the cost of the Taylor Run project, particularly if reduction benefits of the project are too high.

**The Board voted to add SRCA’s name to the letter being sent to the City requesting that they plant more trees to obtain credits needed to satisfy the Chesapeake Bay requirements.**

* 1. **Inova Alexandria Hospital:** The facility currently sits on about 20 acres at the intersection of Seminary Road and North Howard Street in Alexandria’s West End. Most homes in the immediate area of the hospital are large, expensive single-family homes. Fox Chase Apartments property sets slightly to the southeast.
     1. In the coming years, Inova Alexandria Hospital will move its entire operation to a new, state-of the-art $1 billion hospital and trauma center about 2.5 miles southwest to the current site of Landmark Mall in Alexandria’s West End as part of a [massive 52-acre redevelopment](https://alexandrialivingmagazine.com/news/landmark-mall-redevelopment-community-meeting-jan4/).

**7.3.2** Hospital will be requesting a rezoning of its current Seminary Road/Howard Street property to allow a future developer to build single family detached homes and townhomes. The rezoning should ensure the value of the property to a developer to work with a purchaser to build single-family homes and townhomes on the site, however, Inova will not be the developer. SHA will be involved with Inova and the future developer to ensure that any new community built on the site is in keeping with the character of the Seminary Hill neighborhood.

**8. City of Alexandria Liaison – Joe Sestak**

* 1. **Strawberry Run Stream Restoration Project Update**: Sestak reviewed the present status of SRCA’s letter to the City requesting information on Strawberry Run’s stream restoration and the walk of Strawberry Run’s southern end with Mayor Wilson and President Jacob.
     1. When the SRCA pointed out the City had used the Natural Channel Design (NCD) using the BANCS model for Strawberry Run in 2010 and that it had failed, the top two City officials responsible for the City’s stream restorations said they were unaware that it had been done there and that it had failed. The Mayor then offered to walk the southern end because SRCA had stated caution in using the NCD again in a stream where it had not worked previously.
     2. The Mayor acknowledged during the walk that a lot of work would have to be done again if the NCD would again be used there. He later emailed that he had asked City staff for clarification.
     3. Jacob informed the board that, in the near future, members of the City Council are going to be invited to walk the area. Members stated they would like to be included in future on-site meetings with elected officials and she confirmed she would let the board know so interested board members could join the walks.
     4. The SRCA still is awaiting its initial request months ago for the five key assessments that must be done before using the NCD with the BANCS model. Despite repeated requests, the City has failed to provide them, lending concern that if the NCD is used again in Strawberry Run – as the City intends to do – it will fail again.

**8.1.5** The City also has failed to provide the names of residents adjacent to Strawberry Run that with whom it stated to City Council that the staff had met with on-site in 2018. This was prior to sending a grant application for the stream work to the Commonwealth. No meeting ever occurred until a year later after the grant had been approved by the Commonwealth. The City also has not answered why it wrongly stated in the grant application to the Commonwealth that residents had been sent a letter in 2018 about Strawberry Run’s proposed stream restoration, but that no resident had responded (no letters were ever received by any resident in 2018).

* 1. **Transportation Issues Overview: SRCA Duke Street Transportation Committee**
     1. **Duke Street Corridor Sub- Committee** – Dave Cheney, Rick Gould, Scott Sutherland, Fran Vogel and Jeanne Jacob
        1. Setting up meeting with Mark Schnaufer, the City’s lead on Duke Street. Three key questions:
        2. **One:** Will there be dedicated bus lanes each way as proposed in the already approved grant received from the City? This would mean adding a third lane each way between Fox Chase shopping center (Harris Teeter) and Bishop Ireton High School, just for buses
        3. **Two:** Can any roadway reconfigurations or alignments be done on Duke Street for traffic safety (i.e., cars) that does not have to do with pedestrian, bicycle, or bus transit since the grant was only approved for pedestrian, bicycle, or bus improvements?
        4. **Third:** Can it include improving/widening the exit ramp off Duke Street onto Telegraph Road to relieve the congestion during the evening rush hour? ANSWER: Mark Schnaufer spoke with the Commonwealth and this grant does not include that. It is very expensive to do this and it appears that Commonwealth presently is reluctant to financially do this.
        5. The City will begin a public outreach period in about May to consider what the public thinks needs to be done on Duke Street. Mark Schnaufer stated “everything is on the table” as long as a “Bus Rapid Transit” (BRT) is in it (i.e., somehow doing changes that allow the buses to move about more quickly up and down Duke Street.) The SRCA Duke Street Sub-Committee will participate in this public review.
     2. **Alexandria Mobility Plan Update:** This study is over a year old and is coming to an end. Its purpose was to update the City’s 2008 Transportation Plan in view of any changes needed.

**8.2.2.1** The two key foci of the update are to: (1) use an “equity lens” to ensure the lower-income community areas are equally included in transpiration changes for improved safety; and (2) to achieve zero serious injuries or deaths in accidents by 2028 (Vision Zero).

**8.2.2.2** Thus far, there are minimal changes from the 2008 plan (bicycle, bus, and pedestrian updates have been included). An effort to include six intersections that VDOT has identified as high accident areas in Alexandria that are in low-income areas has not been accepted. They would involve road changes for car safety.

* 1. **Area Development Issues:**
     1. **City Council approved Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):**  The City has approved ADUs that can be used as AirBnBs on any property within City limits with the following restrictions: (1) the owner of the original property must be living on the property when the ADU is constructed. After that, he/she can move away, leading to absentee landlords. (2) It has been left to the City Staff to determine on its own, (a) how much of the year an ADU can be used as an AirBnB, and (b) how much to tailor the allowed height of an ADU the closer it is to the property line (presently, it can be 20 feet tall and one foot from the property line of a neighbor).
     2. **Of note, if a civic association’s covenant does not permit ADUs, the City’s new zoning ordinance does not apply. In the case of SRCA’s Covenants, it does not permit an ADU to be constructed without the permission of the SRCA’s Board’s Community Committee.**

**8.4.3 Karig Estates Seminary Road:** The homes to be built on the site of the Karig Estates on Seminary Road backing up to Colonel Ellis Avenue are tentatively scheduled to begin construction this coming spring.

**9. “Open Mic” for SRCA Community – Jacob**

**9.1 Seminary Ridge** **Residents:** Per section 1.1.5, the Kocot and Allen Seminary Ridge residents requested that SRCA approve a Resolution for the City to consider several alternative options for the stream restoration of Strawberry Run. It asked the City to delay the project for up to a year in order to do the research needed to determine if another method would be less destructive to the park (the grant to do the stream restoration also had been extended by the Commonwealth for a year due to the pandemic). Their reasons included:

* + 1. Need for fewer trees to be removed as it will take a long time for new trees to grow to take their place.
    2. Access of alternative design would require less construction work being done throughout the stream with the primary focus on the heavily eroded areas.
    3. Can the construction be done in a shorter time period than the year that is planned?
    4. Concern with the effect of the Natural Channel Design on the environment, wildlife, and property values in Seminary Ridge with all the construction going on.
    5. Problems with heavy equipment on the streets around the area.
    6. Lack of confidence with the City in its involvement and oversight of the analyses and other important considerations having to do with the Natural Channel Design proposed, particularly since it has already failed in the southern section of Strawberry Run when it was done in 2010.

**9.2** The resolution, **“*Resolution Against Natural Channel Design Project for Strawberry Run*”** was considered and the following changes were proposed:

* + 1. Resolution: Point 6. Removed the requirement to review and assess water quality to allow the city to achieve pollution credits from the State to support urban development.
    2. Resolution: Point 11. The time frame was changed from “at least” one year to “up to” one year.
    3. Resolution: Last line. The words “Voted on” were changed to “Approved by.”

**Resolution approved with Points 6, 11, and last line as amended (see attached).**

1. **New Business – Jacob** 
   1. Next SRCA Board Meeting – Thursday, March 4, 2021
2. **Adjournment of SRCA Board Meeting – Jacob**

**11.1** Meeting was adjourned at 10:50 PM.

**Attachment**

**Community Committee Meeting -- Members (SRCA Elected Officers) Remained on Call**

**Meeting of the SRCA Community Committee – Jacob**

**1. Issues for Consideration**

**1.1** Sidewalk replacements and resurfacing are underway by City in SR. If others are needed, let Jacob know.

**1.2** Campers, Vans, and Woodpiles are obstructive and prohibited according to the SRCA Covenants. Residents will be alerted to the SRCA Covenants.

**1.3** Covenant modification request: Construct an elevator on home at 4005 Featherstone Place.

**Community Committee approved request for the elevator to be built.**

**2. Adjournment of SRCA Community Committee**

Jacob thanked the Committee for their work and adjourned the meeting at 10:58 PM.

**Seminary Ridge Civic Association**

**Resolution Against Natural Channel Design Project for Strawberry Run**

**WHEREAS:**

1. The City of Alexandria claims that the upper portion of Strawberry Run (north of the footbridge) needs restoration and that doing so will improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. However, independent analysis shows that there is very little sediment, phosphorus, or nitrogen present in Strawberry Run and that following the City’s plans for restoration may actually create more water quality problems.

2. The City intends to employ Natural Channel Design (“NCD”). NCD already has failed on Strawberry Run. It was used on the lower portion (south of the footbridge) in 2010 and its failure is demonstrated by: (1) blown out stream engineering structures (cross vanes, J-hooks); (2) washed out imported fill such as landscape cloth; and (3) a widened, eroded channel due to the misguided NCD design.

3. Properties backing up to Strawberry Run are likely to experience flooding if NCD is used and fails, as expected by independent experts.

4. This project will destroy the old-growth tree canopy and do irreparable harm to the habitat and ecology of Strawberry Run including, but not limited to, providing invasive species an opportunity to propagate.

5. This project is costing more than $1 million annually in City staff time and will cost taxpayers $1.6 million in city and state funds.

6. We are concerned that the motivation for this project will not address Chesapeake Bay water quality issues, because it is being done using predictive “pollution credits” instead of measured pollution credits from the Commonwealth.

7. We are concerned that the City has not explored any alternatives to NCD, but rather is only relying on the recommendation of one NCD industry consultant.

8. We are concerned that the City has refused to do any environmental impact studies on the potential effects of this project.

9. We are concerned that this project was approved based in part on the City Manager’s misrepresentation in September 2018 that the City had contacted and met with impacted residents.

10. We understand all of the above based on information from Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) requests and independent experts in the field.

**Be it therefore RESOLVED:**

11. SRCA, requests that the City delay this project for up to one year to fully address the community’s concerns and to explore alternatives to Natural Channel Design.

**Approved by the Board of the Seminary Ridge Civic Association (SRCA) Board on:**

**February 4, 2021** (with edits having been made to points 6 & 11 and changing “approved” instead of “voted” in the last line)