**SEMINARY RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**SRCA BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**March 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; Don Frahler, Immediate Past President; 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, Chair SRCA History Committee; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; Paul Judge, SHA Representative

**Residents joining the call:** Rick Gould; Katy Montgomery; David Pritzker; Kitty and Jim Ray; Scott Sutherland; Fran Vogel; Richie Weiblinger; and another unidentified SR Resident.

1. **SRCA President’s Report**

**1.1** Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM and welcomed the SRCA Board members, committee members, and SR residents to the meeting. She reminded those attending that there would be two opportunities for questions/answers by SR residents. The first at the close of her report and the second at the end of the meeting. Next, she reported that the Alexandria City Police Department Liaison to SRCA will meet with the Board in April as he had a conflicting meeting this month.

* 1. Then, she reported on the work being done by the City in the SR neighborhood:

**1.2.1** Uneven sidewalks on both sides of Fort Williams Parkway have been “ground down” where there is a possibility of tripping. She asked Board members to take note of other sidewalks that may need work or Block Chairs could submit recommendations of sidewalks needing attention. Please let her know.

* + 1. Cables are being laid on Colonel Ellis Avenue, but no further information was made available by the City. SRCA residents on Colonel Ellis were not notified of the work and Giglio had contacted the City and was told we would be informed in five days.
    2. New water pipes are being laid on Fort Williams Parkway from Trinity to Duke Street. This is causing much disruption with traffic, but the work should be done within a week. SRCA did not know if residents along FWP were notified in advance of the work.

1. **Secretary’s Report - Giglio**

Giglio previously circulated a draft of the February Board meeting minutes for review and had received edits. The revised minutes were distributed with the agenda and were approved as presented.

1. **Treasurer’s Report – Browne**
   1. Balance reported in February was $24,580.44.
   2. Current Expenditures were approximately: $1,675 for Website development (the remainder to be paid upon completion); $69 for Great Harvest expense reimbursement; $157 for Zoom; $1,000 Alive Contribution; $3,243.60 for the Directory Printing; and $87.64 for envelopes to deliver the Directory.
   3. Current March balance is $17,267.34 and includes $50 in credits for another member who paid dues.
2. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports – Committee Chairs**
   1. **Welcome Committee for New Residents: Laura Plati**

The 2021 Directory (with Bylaws and Covenants) is ready for distribution to Covenant Members, “Non-Covenant dues-paying” residents, and all Covenant new residents.

* 1. **St. Stephens & St. Agnes School Liaison: Beth Chase**

Plans have been submitted to modernize the school with new building and added parking. The new development will include temporary trailers while construction is underway. The Enrollment will increase from 480 students to 520.

The school is now open for athletic competition. No one outside the school (parents or SR residents) may attend. When competitions are on-going, the school will post a notice at its entrance that no one is allowed on campus at this time.

* 1. **Seminary Hill Association Liaison – Paul Judge**
     1. The SHA covers nine (9) residential areas and SRCA is included as one of these areas. Meetings of the SHA are scheduled for the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. Its leadership includes three At-Large positions, plus President, Vice President, and Treasurer, as well as representatives from each of the nine (9) areas within SHA. They meet at Parish Hall of the Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill, 3606 Seminary Road (corner of Seminary Road and Quaker Lane). All residents in the nine (9) areas, including SRCA Residents are eligible and welcome to join and participate in the SHA meetings.
     2. Key Issues involving Seminary Road:

-Housing Development next to firehouse under review.

-Moving INOVA is scheduled for 2028.

* + 1. Fairfax re-zoning is under consideration, but they are ignoring residents’ concerns. The objective is to protect traditional housing objectives.
    2. Recommend supporting SHA Board Member Bill Rossello who has declared as a Candidate for City Council.

1. **City of Alexandria Liaison – Joe Sestak**
   1. **Strawberry Run**
      1. The City wants to do stream restoration in Strawberry Run and Taylor Run to gain “pollution credits.” The City is tasked by Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) to achieve these credits as its “fair share” in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay by preventing phosphorous and other nutrients from flowing into it.
         1. Strawberry Run’s stream restoration effort in working with the City is similar to but different from Taylor Run’s approach. Taylor Run is opposed to the City using the Natural Channel Design (NCD) methodology to do restoration and wants to end it. Strawberry Run’s approach is to have the City delay awarding the contract for NCD until June 2022 (one year) to do a review of whether NCD actually will work in Strawberry Run, since it failed previously.
         2. The grant the City received to do Strawberry Run has until June 2022 to select a contractor, so the City will not lose the money from the grant.
         3. As noted, the NCD the City did in Strawberry Run in 2010 failed. Therefore, we have questioned why it would/should work again – particularly since the City staff did not know either that it was done there previously or that it had failed. (There is a *word document with the seven slides that was put together to show the Mayor and Council Members who walked individually with us along the stream to view how NCD failed to work. The document will be available on the Seminary Ridge website as soon as it goes live as the file is too large to attach to these minutes. The slides show photographs immediately before and just after the 2010 NCD was done, along with photos then taken today from the same vantage points. The “today photos” show how immense boulders that were once put into the stream’s banks to stop erosion have been blown out and that the erosion is as bad, or even worse, than it was before 2010.)*
            1. The Expert’s Panel of Chesapeake Bay is like the CDC or Dr. Fauci of stream restoration and provides guidance to the Commonwealth on how best to do stream restoration and stipulates that specific assessments are to be done to see if NCD can actually work with the predictive erosion BANCS model. So far, after six letters and two verbal requests, the City has not provided us with the assessments.
            2. If a contract is not awarded by January 1, 2021, the Expert’s Panel states that you must measure the actual amount of nutrients (such as phosphorous) in the soil and not use the predictive default measure that the City did. However, VDEQ can overrule this.
            3. For the above, and other, reasons, SRCA has requested a “reset” or review be done before June 2022 to ensure if the NCD actually can work in Strawberry Run, or if a less expensive (and less destructive) stream restoration approach should be used, while not losing the grant.
   2. **Transportation -- Duke Street Committee**

Sutherland summarized the work of the Duke Street Committee composed of six members (Scott Sutherland, Dave Cheney, Rick Gould, Fran Vogel, Jeanne Jacob, and Joe Sestak). The major priority of the City’s plans for Duke Street is a “Bus Rapid Transit Project.”

**5.2.1 Background:** Plans to make Duke Street more expedient as a bus route go back to 2012. The affected area is Duke Street between Landmark Mall and King Street Metro. The plan to be accomplished in two phases.

**5.2.2 PHASE I:** Focus will be on the widest parts of that stretch (areas of Duke Street that already have three lanes each way) to use the third lane for a dedicated bus lane so bus transit might be more rapid, using the third lanes. This will include Duke between Landmark (near Van Dorn) and Jordan Street, and between Roth Street (near Bishop Ireton) and Diagonal Road (near King Street Metro). Potentially, it will include shelters, facilities, and utility relocation. The remaining stretches of Duke Street with just two lanes each way would have a bus lane shared with cars, much like now.

* + - 1. City has received funding from the N. Virginia Transportation Authority to implement getting buses to more quickly transit over the Phase I stretch of road.
      2. $12 million is to be used FY’18-23 for staff, planning, environmental analysis, and design.
      3. $75 million is to implement the plan starting in FY’ 24-25.

**5.2.3 Current situation**: City has hired staff and is beginning the planning. Mark Schnaufer is the lead for the City, and he currently is starting to engage informally with citizen groups along the affected portions of Duke Street, including civic associations. SRCA’s Duke Street Task Force had a one hour Zoom meeting with Mr. Schnaufer on February 13. He said that the City is required to abide by the scope of the grant monies received, but with that in mind, he is open-minded about ways it can be implemented. In response to a question, he stated that two phases aren’t necessarily required despite the original vision for two phases. Schnaufer and his coworkers are currently developing materials to explain the situation to the public in preparation for seeking public input that is supposed to begin now in **May.**

* + 1. **PHASE II:** has been envisioned as creating a third dedicated bus lane each way on Duke Street where there are only two lanes each way now. This would require eliminating access roads and even perhaps taking private property. However, Mark Schnaufer stated that he did not see that this would be possible as people park on the access roads for their residences, and therefore he did not see it as an option at this time.
       1. The Duke Street Committee’s opinion is that it would be better and possibly more effective to be proactive and weigh in early before the project is designed, rather than to wait until the design is released and only then to potentially object.
       2. The Duke Street Committee is meeting in March to provide recommendations to the Board about what the SRCA should propose as its public input to the City when the public comment period begins in about May 2021. These recommendations will be emailed to the neighborhood for its comments.
  1. **Alexandria Mobility Study**
     1. Sestak briefed the final outcome of the effort to include in the City’s planning the high accident rate intersections on Duke Street identified by VDOT in a 2019 study, which also included West Seminary Road (a very high accident rate in a low-income community that the City mis-used as part of its effort to justify the Seminary Road Diet in a more affluent East Seminary Road area that had an accident rate 17 times less than the West Seminary area.) After a series of presentations to the Alexandria Mobility Study (*tasked to “update” the City’s 2008 Master Transportation Plan through an “equity” lens and “safety” lens)*, the Transportation Commission, and the City Council, the City staff agreed to include these dangerous intersections in the City’s Long-Range Transportation Plan.

1. **Events – Kate Hennigan**
   1. The event for March is a St. Patrick's Day treasure hunt for the “Pots of Gold!” It is open to all residents of the neighborhood, including kids and adults. The Hunt starts on Sunday March 14, at 6:00 pm and the objective is to find 6 Pots of Gold hidden throughout the neighborhood. Each Pot of Gold contains a trivia question – answer all 6 correctly and win a special prize! Answers should be submitted to kate@bertlesrealestate.com by Sunday, March 21 at 6:00 pm. The Board applauded the idea and approved the initiative.
   2. The Board approved $125 to be used for contest supplies and gifts for winning responses.
2. **Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**
   1. **Directory:** The Directory has been printed. Copies were provided to the Block Captains on March 4 for distribution to all Seminary Ridge Covenant household and to all non-Covenant households who have paid SRCA dues in the last two years. Additional copies are available and will be distributed by the Welcome Committee to new residents when they move into Seminary Ridge.
   2. **Website:** SRCA has signed a contract with JumbleThink for $3,350 to develop the Seminary Ridge website. Design work is under way and launching of the website is expected within about six weeks. There should be a draft for Board members to review in about two weeks. One option the website will offer is the ability to pay annual dues using either PayPal or Stripe. Browne is investigating whether SRCA bank account will permit either of those options.
   3. **Facebook:** The Communications Committee has created a Facebook group for the SR neighborhood. The link is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/4srca>. The group is limited to Seminary Ridge Civic Association members, sponsored by the SRCA Board and the content will be monitored.  The group is visible to the public so it can be found by anyone searching for it, but it is private so only members of the group can post and see posts.  Any SRCA member interested in joining can either search for it or use the link and request to join the group.  As with other community interest groups, our rules are that all participants be kind and courteous and that there should be no political advertising. The Board discussed any other possible rules to be added, but no additional suggestions were offered. There also is a need for at least one other volunteer to help monitor the content of the site once people start using it, which Hennigan volunteered to do.
   4. **Zoom:** The SRCA Zoom account has now been established. Clark-Sestak provided the information to the Board members for setting up a Zoom meeting.

**9. SRCA Historian – Mike Brookbank**

**9.1** **Electronic Fences:** In response to a complaint of an electronic fence installed in the neighborhood that has proven to be ineffective, Brookbank brought to the Board’s attention four articles that show that electronic fences are not recommended as replacements for regular fencing to confine dogs. Although the issue is out of the Board’s control, neighbors are encouraged to contact the City directly regarding pets that are uncontrolled, create intrusions, defecate on neighbors’ properties, intimidate walkers, or disrupt the neighborhood with their barking.

**10.** **Continued “Open Mic” for SRCA Community – Jacob**

**10.1** Vogel commented that the Duke Street effort has been underway since 2008, but the revitalization lacks cost-benefit analysis; changes are not worth the investment. The greatest bottleneck is at Telegraph Road, and the current plan does not propose any solutions for the traffic at that point.

**10.2** Sutherland mentioned concerns about transportation and the bus routes on Duke Street.

1. **Old Business – Jacob**

There was no old business brought forward.

1. **New Business – Jacob**

12.1 Next SRCA Board Meeting – **Thursday, April 1, 2021**

1. **Adjournment of SRCA Board Meeting**
   1. Jacob adjourned the meeting at 9:03 PM.