

**MINUTES**

**SRCA BOARD MEETING**

**May 6, 2021 – 7:30 PM by Zoom Conference Call**

**In Attendance:**

Jeanne Jacob, President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Maria Browne, Treasurer; Mike Souza, Parliamentarian; Don Frahler, Immediate Past President; Mike Brookbank, SRCA Historian; Paul Judge, SHA Representative; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS) Liaison; Jeremy Flachs, BEHC Liaison; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chair Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; Dave Cheney, Transportation Committee; Rick Gould, Transportation Committee; Sgt. Tony Moore, ACPD Liaison; Sgt. Lemuel Houston, Alexandria’s Sherriff’s Department Liaison; David Prtizker, SR Resident.

1. **Welcome and President’s Report – Jacob**
   1. **Welcome to SR Residents Joining Meeting**

Jacob welcomed board members and guests to the meeting.

* 1. **Questions/Concerns from SR Residents – “Open Mic”**

No residents were present for the start of the meeting, but Jacob welcomed one who joined later, noting that there would be an opportunity to ask general questions of the board at the “Open Mic” session near the end of the meeting as the board wants to know residents’ concerns and learn about what is happening in Seminary Ridge from other residents.

* 1. **Reports from SRCA’s ACPD Liaison/Alexandria’s Sherriff’s Liaison**

Jacob welcomed the Alexandria City Police Department Liaison Sgt. Tony Moore and Alexandria’s Liaison from the Sherriff’s Office, Sgt. Lemuel Houston, noting that they were here to answer any questions the board/residents may have. Their contact information is posted on the “About” page of the Seminary Ridge website, seminaryridge.net.

Sgt. Moore spoke first, commenting on two issues: the increased problem of cars racing on the highway and that, because marijuana has now been decriminalized, the police can no longer respond to calls reporting the “smell of marijuana.” In response to a question, Sgt. Moore explained that the main reason for the increase in auto thefts in the city is because owners are failing to lock their car doors and/or are leaving valuables in plain sight. In response to another question, he strongly urged residents who have had packages stolen off their premises to report these crimes; if there is video available, that is all the better, but even without video, the police want to know about these incidents.

Sgt. Houston began his comments by explaining the difference between the police and sheriff departments. The police are on the frontline addressing crimes; the sheriff’s office focuses on security operations of the courthouse, serving warrants, evictions, and its main priority, the detention facility. Sgt. Houston mentioned two programs of possible interest to SRCA: Project Life Saver, where an ankle monitor is placed on at-risk individuals to help locate them should they wander away from home. The second is known as Away from Home: to the extent the department’s resources allow, the sheriff’s office will check on resident’s home during times residents are away. An on-line form must be completed at least a week prior to when you would want the check to begin. To learn more about this program (and access the form), go to: https://www.alexandriava.gov/sheriff/default.aspx?id=118747

* 1. **Report on Work Done in Seminary Ridge**
     1. **Storm Damage**

Jacob reported that one pear tree and several branches from both oak and pear trees came down in the fierce windstorm the neighborhood experienced last week. The City was quick to respond to the fallen tree, and we were fortunate that there wasn’t more damage in the neighborhood.

* + 1. **Community Cleanup Day**

SRCA’s Cleanup Day appeared to have been successful, based on the number of bags of lawn debris placed on the curbs. In addition to home yards being cleaned up, several SR volunteers helped to clean up some of the Fort Williams Parkway median strip and areas in front of the upper park. Many thanks go to neighbors Jim Ray who came with his weed whacker to attack the weeds along the sidewalks at the upper park, Lyn and George Allen who focused on raking the median strip, and Gerry Frank who raked weeds and leaves on both. Much more work is needed to improve the looks of these areas, and Jacob asked the City to cut the weeds and remove the leaves so grass can grow in addition to spraying for poison ivy and other invasive weeds. SRCA will plan to hold an annual clean-up day on the Saturday before Earth Day.

* + 1. **Requested Repairs – FWP Median/Park, Curb on Fort Worth**

The City responded to calls regarding the hole in the median at the corner of FWP and Colonel Ellis that had been there for nearly a year. The orange tape and cones have been removed and the hole has been filled.

* 1. **April Activities Report**
     1. **Strawberry Run Restoration Project / April 27 City Council Meeting**

Jacob thanked Joe Sestak for his months of hard work on the Strawberry Run stream restoration issue. The Run has received a “stay of execution” by the City Council as the Council directed City staff to undertake a Review of stream restoration alternatives before any Natural Channel Design could be undertaken on three of the City’s streams: Strawberry Run, Taylor Run, and Lucky Run. Again, this is only a halt for now. Thanks to Sestak’s work, SRCA won the battle, but the war continues. Sestak will keep SRCA informed of what happens next. Additional information can be found in section 4.8.2, below.

* + 1. **Duke Street Transportation Corridor**

Sestak sent Board members one revision received from residents to the memo that the Board approved for the resident’s consideration last month. As there were no other issues other than a few word edits, the memo was sent and it has been posted on the Seminary Ridge website. Thanks was given to Brookbank for responding with his inputs.

* 1. **May Activities Report**
     1. **Upcoming Weekend Yard Sale – May 8**

Hennigan report on the details of the Community Yard Sale this weekend is under Events.

* + 1. **SRCA Forums – Mayoral/City Council Candidates – May 18, 20, 24, 27**

SRCA will hold its first Forum for candidates running for Alexandria City Council and Mayor. The Council candidates Forums will be held by Zoom on May 18, 20, and 24. The Mayoral Forum on May 27. Sestak arranged participation of the 16 candidates in the four forums.  Each Forum will be moderated by Souza and the questions asked will be those submitted by Seminary Ridge residents. All SRCA residents are invited to attend these Forums to be introduced to the candidates wishing to represent Seminary Ridge and to hear their stands on issues affecting Seminary Ridge. Souza noted that he had been working on learning more about Zoom so the event will go smoothly. Also, he had been monitoring a Facebook page focusing on Alexandria issues for questions to ask in addition to those submitted. More details can be found in section 4.8.1, below.

1. **Secretary’s Report – Jacob**

**2.1 SRCA Secretary – Search Continues**

Jacob noted that a Secretary was still needed and asked those making presentation to submit their reports in writing to her or Clark-Sestak so they could complete the minutes for the meeting.

**2.2 Approval of April 1, 2021 Minutes**

Jacob reported that the Minutes of the April 1, 2021 SRCA Board meeting had been distributed and no corrections were received.

**Brookbank moved that the minutes of the April 1, 2021 SRCA Board meeting be approved as distributed. The motion was seconded by Maria Browne. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.**

1. **Treasurer’s Report – Browne**

Browne reported that SRCA had received dues payments from 186 members, totaling $9,300; the current bank balance is $15,264.69. SRCA now has online banking and dues can be paid online using PayPal, but checks will always be accepted for dues payment. Souza confirmed that PayPal will simplify tracking of dues payments as well.

Browne recommended that any residents expressing interest in joining SRCA be welcome to do so, but that dues would not be solicited until the next annual cycle, in September 2021.

1. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports – Committee Chairs**
   1. **SRCA Historian – Mike Brookbank**

There was nothing to report this month.

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

Plati reported that there was no new sales activity. For many of the homes sold in the previous month, the new owners have yet to move out.

* 1. **Events -- Hennigan**

**4.3.1 Community Yard Sale**

The SRCA Community Yard Sale will be held on May 8, with 17 homes participating. Signs have been put up throughout the neighborhood. Hennigan made 250 copies of maps showing the location of the homes participating and will distribute them. These, as well as Community Yard Sale signs, should help guide those coming to purchase.

* + 1. **“Screen on the Green”**

Due to the possibility of disruption of the event by the cicadas emerging in June, it was decided to move the event to July or August. Hennigan will work with Chase to find a date that will work for SSSAS and will report again at the SRCA June Board meeting. The intent would be to hold the event on the SSSAS football field and using a big screen.

* + 1. **Update on Home Sales in Seminary Ridge**

There were two recent home sales that closed for $1,325,000 and $1,015,000 with a third one pending.

* 1. **Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**
     1. Directory: An addendum as of 13 April was sent out via newsletter (and distributed by block captains to those for whom we do not have emails). Clark-Sestak suggested that Block Captains be contacted to ensure they are aware of the residents who need to receive hard copies
     2. SRCA Website
        1. Seminaryridge.net went live in April. We are still looking for residents to submit more photos, especially of the summer season. Send to [news4srca@gmail.com](mailto:news4srca@gmail.com)
        2. Since then the following updates have been done:

Flyer and map for Yard Sale

Plans for 3 City Council and 1 Mayoral discussion sessions

Resident statements to City Council on 27 April concerning Strawberry Run

SSSAS construction plan summary, with illustrations

Beth El photos

Duke Street recommendations, following residents’ inputs, sent to City lead POC

* + - 1. It is planned to post the Zoom videos from the political forums on the home page (to be posted there until the 8 June primary or until the November election)
    1. SRCA Facebook Group: As discussed before, this group is for Seminary Ridge covenant and non-covenant members. Inquiries to join from those outside this area have been declined. The Board reaffirmed that the Group should be limited to those who are eligible to be covenant or non-covenant SRCA members (i.e., even those who do not pay SRCA dues may join, but those living outside this area are not eligible to join).
    2. Zoom account: Purchased a 1-month upgrade (for $50) so that more than 100 participants can sign on for the political forum discussions
  1. **SSSAS (St. Stephen’s St. Agnes School) Liaison – Beth Chase**

St Stephen's and St Agnes School is enjoying sponsoring sporting events on campus and continues to request that neighbors not come onto campus while student athletes are participating in athletic contests.

The school is preparing to celebrate the Class of 2021 with an in-person graduation ceremony scheduled for the morning of June 12. The graduation ceremony will be held on the football field and the school will follow the state covid guidelines. The school also will hold a smaller ceremony for the Class of 2020 the same day in the afternoon.

* 1. **BEHC (Beth El Hebrew Congregation) Liaison -- Jeremy Flachs**

Beth El is beginning to use its facilities a little more, while continuing to follow social distancing guidelines. It has also been doing some clean-up of its grounds, mainly those bordering on the Karig Estate.

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

Paul Judge mentioned two topics among the many that SHA is tracking: the affordable housing proposal on Seminary Road and SHA adding its name to North Ridge’s support for Taylor Run. On the first topic, Judge subsequently provided information about two upcoming City sessions:

* **June 1, 2021**: **Planning Commission meeting at 7:00 PM**. On the docket is an amendment to the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill Small Area Plan relating to redevelopment of the land where Inova Alexandria is currently located. For more information, go to: <http://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail.aspx?si=33564>)
* **June 12, 2021**: **City Council public hearing at 9:30 AM**. On the docket will be an amendment to the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill Small Area Plan relating to redevelopment of the land where Inova Alexandria is currently located. For more information, go to:<<http://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/Detail.aspx?si=32188>>.

In addition, he provided the following summary from SHA’s April meeting:

**AHDC Affordable Housing Proposal on Seminary Road:**The current plan for development stands at 31, 2-to-3-bedroom townhomes- 35 feet in height. They will be affordable-purchase housing and will be targeting 80% AMI. There will also be a multi-family building consisting of 9 condos. Three of these units will be for the residents from Sheltered Homes. Each shelter resident will have their own private bedroom and bath. The residents will share living and dining areas. The remaining six condos will be 2-bedroom, available for affordable purchase. They are targeting July 2022 for completion of the entitlement process and begin demolition of the existing homes. Plan 1A has been submitted to Planning and Zoning. We will continue to monitor the process and keep residents’ concerns known.

**Inova Hospital Site Rezoning:**Jack Sullivan confirms that INOVA agrees that Ivanhoe will not be made into a through street. He will continue to monitor the situation as the process moves through the Planning Commission and Council.

**Taylor Run Stream Restoration:**Two developments: 1. The Environmental Policy Commission of Alexandria has issued a strongly worded letter opposing the natural channel design to be used at Strawberry Run and Taylor Run. 2. Councilman John Chapman and Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker have sent a memo to their colleagues asking that they join them in requesting the City Manager docket these projects for Council to discuss. April council will continue to debate this issue but the Mayor's newsletter has made his position clear -- no increased costs. President Flemming noted Strawberry Run and Taylor Run have helped shine a light on how the grant process has worked in Alexandria. The continued pressure by the associations, environmentalists, and others who are demanding transparency and accountability is working. SHA supported a letter from Northridge residents.

**ADUs:**SHA is still waiting on what City Staff will return to Council as the definition of what constitutes “exclusive use” of an Airbnb. ADUs are coming. It is now just a question of which restrictions they will be operating under as short-term rentals.

**MacArthur School Rebuild:**ACPSmaintains that they are still on track with opening the school in January 2023.

**Duke Street Transitway:** The City has not engaged SHA any further as of today.

**Newport Village Redevelopment Project:**Has been approved. 385 units with 12 affordable-units, displacing 24 affordable-units.

**The Heritage in Old Town**: Has been approved. 750-unit building coming soon.

**West End Coalition Candidates Forum**: May 1, 2021 from 2-4pm. All candidates will be available to answer questions.

**The High School Project**:March webinar presented three build options for Minnie Howard.  See webpage.

**Taxes:**President Flemming informed SHA board that the maximum tax rate was decided by Council to protect the ability to keep it at its current rate of 1.13, if necessary. Bill Rossello said that if the rate stays the same, Alexandria residents will experience (including “fees”) an 8% increase.

* 1. **City of Alexandria Liaison – Joe Sestak**
     1. City Council and Mayoral Candidate Forums: SRCA will be hosting three candidate forums for those running for City Council and one candidate forum for Mayor. The democratic primary is June 8, 2021.

Mike Souza will be the moderator. The format will be:

Opening comments by each of the candidates for five minutes addressing: (1) The who: candidate’s background; (2) The why: reason qualified for council; and (3) The what: candidate’s goals and objectives he/she intends to achieve, if elected.

Our moderator will then ask all the candidates to each address in one minute a question submitted in advance by residents. Questions will continue be asked of the candidates during the remainder of the time in a rotating fashion

We encourage you to **send in your questions now to** [**news4srca@gmail.com**](mailto:news4srca@gmail.com)

Here are the dates, times, and participants for each. This information is also posted on our website under “Events””

**City Council Forum #1:**Tuesday, May 18, 20217:00 PM  8:30 PMCity Council candidates: Canek Aguirre, Sarah Bagley, Alyia Gaskins, Kirk McPike, and Patrick Moran.

**2. City Council Forum #2**Thursday, May 20, 20217:15 PM  8:45 PMCity Council candidates: Bill Campbell, John Chapman, Bill Rossello, and Meronne Teklu.

**3. City Council Forum #3**Monday, May 24, 20217:00 PM  8:30 PMCity Council Candidates: Kevin Harris, Amy Jackson, Jim Lewis, Florence King, and Mark Shiffer.

**4. City Mayoral Forum #1**Thursday, May 27, 20217:00 PM  8:15 PMMayoral candidates: Allison Silberberg and Justin Wilson

* + 1. Strawberry Run Stream Restoration Project: The goal of the SRCA Board’s guidance last fall was to have the city conduct a “review” of the proposed stream restoration of Strawberry Run before proceeding. The city’s plans were based upon a design called “Natural Channel Design” (NCD), which was used in the stream in 2010 and failed (the section it was done in has eroded back to its former state and the boulders used as “armoring” the banks to keep them from eroding have been blown downstream.) After a consistent effort to show the drawbacks to NCD, the city agreed at its April 27 Council meeting to assess an alternative design alongside NCD. The alternative design is less damaging to the surrounding forested area as it requires much less heavy equipment and uses “natural” structures (e.g., fallen trees) as “armor” to protect the banks. Of concern is that the engineering plans for NCD were based upon a maximum stream velocity during a 100-year storm of 9 feet per second. However, a city study done in 2016 shows that that water coming out of the 6 foot diameter culvert underneath Fort Williams Parkway does so at 22 feet per second.

It is yet to be determined how and who will conduct an analysis of the alternative stream restoration – an important consideration.

* + 1. Duke Street Transportation Corridor: After sending the recommendations for Duke Street to the SRCA community for comment, the Board approved providing them to the City for discussion prior to the public comment period opening this summer. These recommendations have to do with the City’s proposal to have a dedicated bus lane each way on Duke Street. Phase I would have a dedicated bus lane where there are presently three lanes each way (Foxchase Shopping Center to Landmark, and Bishop Ireton to the Metro train station. Phase II would connect these dedicated bus lanes together from Landmark to the Metro train station. The recommendations can be viewed by clicking: [20210503 SRCA Recs to City on Duke St](https://www.seminaryridge.net/s/20210503-SRCA-Recommendations-to-City-on-Duke-St.docx)

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

Jacob asked if there any additional questions from those who participated in the meeting. Pritzker commented that it took the City a bit longer to remove the downed tree on Seminary Road (by Karig Estate). It was also mentioned that some City Council candidates are discussing “undoing” the Seminary Road diet.

1. **Old Business – Jacob: None.**
2. **New Business – Jacob**

**7.1 FEMA Zoom Meeting on New Flood Plains – June 7**

On June 7, there will be a Zoom call with City staff presenting the new FEMA plain maps for Alexandria streams. Residents with homes near Strawberry Run will want to listen in.

**7.2 SRCA Board Annual Meeting & Picnic in September**

Hopefully, SRCA will be able to meet in person for the 2021 Annual Meeting and be able to hold a picnic. Only time will tell, so no decisions will be made until July or August. Chase will see if St. Stephens thinks SRCA can hold its meeting in person at SSSAS (either indoors or outdoors) and will let us know at the next SRCA Board meeting. If the answer is “no,” we will have to think of other ways to hold our annual meeting.

**7.3 Nominating Committee and Candidates Needed**

Jacob asked Board members to consider whether they wished to remain on the Board for next year. A nominating committee will be put together to clarify roles and responsibilities for each Board position and what the community wishes the Board to focus on. After the June meeting, the committee will contact Board members to see if they wish to serve again.

**7.4 Next SRCA Board Meeting – Thursday, June 3, 2021**

1. **Adjournment of SRCA Board Meeting – Jacob**

Jacob asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Mike Sousa made the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mike Brookbank. The motion passed by unanimous consent.**

The meeting was adjourned at: 8:48 PM.