

**MINUTES**

**SRCA BOARD MEETING**

**August 5, 2021 – 7:30 PM by Zoom Conference Call**

**In attendance:**

Jeanne Jacob, President; Nick Giannotti, First Vice President; Kate Hennigan, Second Vice President; Maria Browne, Treasurer; Don Frahler, Immediate Past President; Mike Souza, Parliamentarian; Mike Brookbank, SRCA Historian; Paul Judge, SHA Representative; Beth Chase, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School (SSSAS) Liaison; Susan Clark-Sestak, Chair Communications Committee; Joe Sestak, City of Alexandria Liaison; Laura Plati, Chair SRCA Welcome Committee; Officer Tony Moore, ACPD Liaison; and SR residents Bill Pfister, David Pritzker and Cindi Bartol.

1. **Welcome and President’s Report – Jacob**

Jacob opened the meeting at 7:34 PM and welcomed those attending. She asked SRCA Parliamentarian Souza if there were a quorum present. There was, so the meeting was official.

She informed the SR Residents in attendance that there would be two “open mic” sessions for questions/concerns of interest to SR Residents. The first would be immediately following her opening remarks and the second at the end of the meeting

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

Sgt. Houston from the Alexandria Sherriff’s Office sent Jacob an email saying he was unable to attend this month. Officer Moore of the ACPD mentioned that there have been numerous complaints about loud exhaust noise from autos and traffic enforcement to address these complaints has consequently been increased.

In response to the Board’s request, Officer Moore confirmed he would plan to attend the SRCA Annual meeting on September 19. The Board will let him know the exact location and time, once that has been determined.

* 1. **Report on ACPS Activities/Issues – Pfister**

Jacob welcomed Seminary Ridge resident Bill Pfister, past president of the MacArthur PTA and the community representative to the Seminary Hill Association on Alexandria school issues. Pfister reported on the progress being made at MacArthur Elementary School, which is set to open in January 2023, as scheduled. Currently there is a big hole in the ground where underground parking will be. The final bid for the major portion of the building will be submitted at the end of September, which will offer additional insight whether all is remaining on budget and on schedule.

He encouraged everyone to register their children, especially those entering kindergarten. School is starting on August 24, two weeks earlier this year. The plan is for all 5 days a week, in-person learning. He noted that the school board voted to require masks be worn by teachers and students as they can’t maintain 5-foot distance due to overcrowding. Visitor policies are still unclear, including how that will impact school activities. He praised the staff for their commitment to the students during this past very trying year and a half. Superintendent Dr. Hutchings’ contract was just renewed and extended to June 2025.

He noted that the school board members are up for election this year. Alexandria has 3 Districts, each electing 3 school board members. SR is in District B, the district with the most candidates. There are more candidates this year than there are spaces on the board for District B. A Forum will be held, likely in late September, so the community can meet the candidates.

He noted the renaming of the high school to Alexandria City High School (ACHS) from TC Williams. There will be a split of students between the ACHS and the space at Minnie Howard, but it hasn’t been decided on how the students will be divided. The board has acquired a new building on Beauregard, which will house administrative offices and offer swing space as schools are remodeled, freeing up space at Patrick Henry School.

As a member of the Douglas MacArthur (Rebuild) Advisory Group, Pfister noted that he would welcome any questions or feedback (Bill Pfister - [wcpfister@gmail.com](mailto:wcpfister@gmail.com)), and anyone can also directly contact the ACPS project team at [newmacarthur@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:newmacarthur@acps.k12.va.us).  Relevant and timely project information is also available at these two websites:

* ACPS Site for Douglas MacArthur Rebuild: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/2651>
* Skanska Project site (includes on-site contacts, weekly progress updates, a live site webcam, and other information):

<https://kuula.co/share/7swGf/collection/7Ptrl?fs=1&vr=1&thumbs=1&info=0&logo=-1>

The school board voted 6 to 3 to retain the ACPD Resource Officers in the schools, but the City Council voted to rescind the budget for them and to replace them with mental health professionals. There will still be police officers on the force who maintain familiarity with city schools. To date, there has been no issue on critical race theory (CRT) being taught in the schools. Alexandria is the second smallest school district in the areas and has close relations with other public schools. Even though this has been an issue in Loudon County schools, he doesn’t think it will be in Alexandria.

Finally, it was noted that three graduates of TC Williams (now ACHS) are Olympians with one (Noah Lyles) having won a bronze medal (to date).

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

Jacob received an email from the City that staff would begin taking soil samples in Strawberry Run on the week of July 25. Nothing has been reported from this effort.

She made calls to 311 regarding the damaged curbs in the neighborhood, street cleaning needed, and a branch being down on North Garland. Since her calls, another branch fell on Colonel Ellis. The City has been prompt in removing both downed tree limbs.

* 1. **July Activities Report**

Community input for the Duke Street in Motion initiative ended on July 31. The SR community was reminded three times of this deadline in SRCA emails. Additional comments regarding the Duke Street initiative will be made later in the meeting in point 4.4.1.

SRCA held a very successful ***Screen on the Green*** on July 29. Events Chair Hennigan will report on this in point 4.6

* 1. **August Activities Report**

Three activities are taking place in August: ***Alexandria Night Out*** – Hennigan to report.

The **Nominating Committee** will begin placing candidates in areas of interest. Anyone who is interested in serving on a Board position, should contact Jacob by August 15 so that all this information can be passed along to the Nominating Committee.

Souza stated that current officers should not be part of the nominating committee or process and all names should be passed directly to the Coates and Frahler as the Nominating committee members.

Browne will update the Board on the **Dues Renewal Plan** when she presents the Treasurer’s report.

* 1. **September Activities Report**

Upcoming September activities include the **Annual Meeting and Elections**. The SRCA bylaws state the association must have at least one meeting annually, usually in the month of September for the transaction of business and the election of new officers. The Board is required to notify the membership in writing at least ten days prior to the annual meeting, which has been done through SRCA newsletters. The meeting will be held on Sunday, September 19. It is necessary for at least 10% of SR households be represented (including via proxy) in order to hold the meeting.

Time, location, and any accompanying event still need to be decided. SSSAS graciously offered their facilities for SRCA to use again. The question is whether the meeting can be held inside, outside (under tents SSSAS has set up already), or if it will need to be held by Zoom because of the uptick in Covid cases in Alexandria and potential new in-person meeting restrictions. The decision was made to monitor this closely and defer a decision until the September 2 SRCA Board meeting. This will still allow more than 10 days to notify the membership. It was agreed already that if the annual meeting is held in person, the option to attend via Zoom also will be offered. If it is held only on Zoom, it will be necessary to upgrade the Zoom account for a webinar session to ensure that all interested SRCA members can be accommodated.

In the meantime, the Nominating Committee will do their work and make their presentation of the slate of 2021-2022 officers at the September meeting.

1. **Secretary’s Report – Jacob**

Since there was not a quorum at the July meeting, both the June minutes and the July notes needed to be approved.

**Approval of June 3, 2021 Minutes**

Jacob asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2021, SRCA Board meeting.

**Giannotti moved that the minutes of the June 3 meeting be approved. Hennigan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.**

**Approval of July 1, 2021 Minutes**

Jacob asked for a motion to approve the July 1, 2021 notes taken at the SRCA Board meeting. There were notes (not minutes) as there wasn’t a quorum to hold an official board meeting.

**Brookbank moved that the notes of the July 1 meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by J. Sestak. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.**

**Distribution of Minutes to Residents**

Discussion ensued over a question that was raised by SRCA Parliamentarian Souza regarding the amount of time given to approve the draft minutes and whether they should be shared as “Draft Minutes” with the SRCA membership before being approved as final minutes by the Board at the next monthly board meeting. There was general consensus that minutes should not be shared until they are formally approved, but highlights from the meeting could be shared. Some felt strongly that the minutes should not be shared until after they were approved at the next SRCA board meeting, while others thought that this was too long to wait to share the Board’s actions as there are some issues that are time sensitive. Another suggestion was to cull important information from the draft minutes and send it out via the newsletter. Another option suggested was the Officers of the Board could vote via email to approve the draft minutes within a week and then they could be circulated as final minutes via the SRCA email newsletter. Two SR members in attendance also offered input. No decision was made and further discussion of the issue will be held at the September 2 SRCA Board meeting.

**3. Treasurer’s Report – Browne**

Brown reported that the balance in the SRCA account was $14,933 and she wrote two checks in July: $250 to SSSAS for Screen on the Green projectionist costs and $30 to AFCA (Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations) for dues. Browne reported following the meeting that there still appears to be an uncashed check written to K. Hennigan for $132.46. The balance – including that outstanding check and after interest in July and two recent checks is $14,801.24.

She and Clark-Sestak met to discuss the plan for dues renewal with a focus on offering on-line dues payment as well as paying by check. They will have a final plan to report at the September 2 board meeting after they have heard back from the website designer on several questions. Once that information has been received, they requested that Board members be willing to test the system to ensure a smooth process before it is announced to all SRCA members.

Browne noted that she has filed annual reports, required by the IRS and VA, as well as having updated SRCA’s insurance. Browne noted that she filed VA State Corporation Commission annual report updating officers and paid related $25 registration fee (in April), filed annual 990-N electronically with IRS to maintain non-profit status, as well as having paid SRCA’s insurance (Chubb and Travelers) in November.

Following the meeting, Browne responded to a question raised at the meeting noting that last year’s budget for annual picnic was $2,600.

1. **SRCA Committee Chair Reports – Committee Chairs**
   1. **BEHC (Beth El Hebrew Congregation) Liaison -- Jeremy Flachs**

Flachs was unable to attend.

* 1. **SSSAS (St. Stephen’s St. Agnes School) Liaison – Beth Chase**

Chase reported fall pre-season sports activities would begin on August 23 and school would begin on the day after Labor Day. They are pursuing the purchase of land from St. Andrews Methodist Church.

On August 11, at approximately 3:30-8:00 PM, SSSAS will be working with the ACPD on security issues, so the SR community will see many police vehicles on site and should not be concerned.

* 1. **Seminary Hill Civic Association Liaison – Paul Judge**

Judge reported that SHA did not meet in July, so there was no report. He did note that a copy of an agreement made between SHA and INOVA Alexandria Hospital 25 years ago had been found, and SHA is petitioning the City Council to revote on the proposed rezoning of the hospital grounds.

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

As Cheney was unable to attend, Sestak reported on the “**Duke Street in Motion**” initiative. The City completed its public engagement period at the end of July to solicit citizen input on what should be done to improve travel and safety in the Duke Street corridor. The SRCA Board sent the City’s public survey questionnaire to residents three times in the SRCA newsletter, and it was posted on Nextdoor Neighbor. In addition, the Board’s approved recommendations from its Duke Street Committee were submitted to the City after having sent them to the residents for comment in the SRCA newsletter.

The next step is to await the results of the City’s public solicitation. The City will then begin to consider incorporating them into its vision of what should happen to the Duke Street Corridor, including the best means of having Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), most probably by dedicated bus lanes. Other potential considerations are pedestrian and bicycle changes. There are no indications that changes to roadways will be contemplated to improve vehicle traffic flow.

Sestak updated the Board on **Strawberry Run**. As noted previously, in late April, the City agreed to consider alternatives to restoring the stream in Strawberry Run park by a method called Natural Channel Design (NCD). NCD requires heavy construction equipment and unavoidable removal of scores of trees with a roadway being built into the park alongside residents’ properties. The reason to do a stream restoration is to receive “pollution credits” for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay by having less phosphorous and nitrogen flow into the Bay from the erosion of the stream’s banks.

The present status is:

(1) The City first will determine if it can earn the pollution credits it is mandated to achieve by means other than stream restoration. This includes better stormwater runoff “best practices” by new developments, including at Landmark Mall and the housing that will go into the old Inova Alexandria medical campus once the hospital moves to Landmark Mall. Calculations done by the Environmental Policy Council (EPC) of Alexandria indicates that doing so is a possibility. This would preclude a requirement to do a restoration of Strawberry Run by NCD, and instead do only what is required to protect private property from stream erosion.

(2) The City has agreed to actually measure how much phosphorous is in the banks of the stream, rather than using a prediction model. This will provide a more accurate measurement of how much phosphorous is actually eroding into the Bay. If the actual soil measurement for phosphorous is small, then the pollution credits that the City achieves may be too few to justify the expense of NCD restoration. The City completed its measurements at the end of July and it will take until September or October for the soil measurements to be analyzed.

(3) The City also will have its consultant investigate why the Natural Channel Design done in 2010 in the southern part of Strawberry Run failed. This should help determine lessons learned if the City still decides to do its proposed NCD in the other section of Strawberry Run. The City also needs to determine how much the repairs will cost to fix the failure.

(4) Finally, the City has agreed to consider alternatives to NCD. SRCA has provided for consideration to the EPC Chair a proposal that would protect private property and key erosion areas along the banks, which was developed by a stream restoration scientist. The EPC chair has been designated by the City as the key point of contact in the community for City officials to work with on the issue. We also have recommended that the scientist who outlined the proposal be part of the City’s working group in assessing the alternatives to be considered to ensure the review’s objectivity.

It is expected that the entire review will be completed in the October to December timeframe, with a final decision on how best to proceed for the pollution credits at that time.

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

Plati reported that three new families moved in: 3817 and 3808 Griffith Place and 3806 Colonel Ellis Avenue. Clark-Sestak will provide her with more SRCA Directories to distribute and noted that two of the three families attended Screen on the Green.

* 1. **Events/Activities -- Hennigan**

**Screen on the Green (SOTG) - July**

Hennigan reported that SOTG was held on July 29 and was very well attended with more than 90 in attendance. This was the second year for the event (2019 first) and many new families participated. Distributing flyers helped with the good attendance.

**Alexandria Night Out - August**

She mentioned that this was the first time for SRCA to participate in Alexandria Night Out on Tuesday, August 3. The recommendation was for neighbors go outside and greet their neighbors between 7:00 and 7:30 PM. She suggested that it could be a more formal event in 2022.

**SRCA Annual Meeting & Elections - September**

SRCA Annual Meeting & Elections will be held on **Sunday, September 19.** Due to the uncertainty of newer Covid Restrictions, the details of the accompanying family picnic will still need to be determined. Browne will provide Hennigan with the amount spent in previous years for a budget and Hennigan will report at the September meeting with a food plan and any activities for children that do not include a Moon Bounce. Many volunteers will be needed to hold the annual meeting, election, and picnic – registration table, food table, proxy collection, games for children, Zoom coordination, set up of chairs and tables, etc.

**Halloween and Candidate Forums - October**

Hennigan suggested that house decorating be done again this year as it was so popular in 2020. The decision about a pizza party for the children will be determined later as we learn more about Covid restrictions.

**Candidate Forums for November Elections - October**

If SRCA will hold candidate forums again, they will have to be held in October as elections are in early November. This will be discussed at the September board meeting.

**Holiday Party - December**

Date and hosts need to be determined, again pending Covid trends. Decisions will be made at the November board meeting whether or not it will be held this year**.** Frahler said they will consider holding it again at their home.

**Home Sales in Seminary Ridge**

Hennigan reported that it is a sellers’ market right now. There have been two sales since the last meeting – 3617 Griffith Place sold for $1.3 million in 5 days and 3806 Colonel Ellis sold for $1.38 Million in 7 days. Inventory is low and home values are up. Most sellers were leaving the area. It is easy to sell, but difficult to find homes.

* 1. **Communications – Susan Clark-Sestak**

There have been two recent changes to Block Captains: Patty Collette will cover Bruce McCarthy’s section of Colonel Ellis Avenue and Safia Ktiri-Idrissi istemporarily replacing Nan Rawlings to cover certain portions of the non-covenant areas. These changes will be reflected in the next addendum to the SRCA Directory.

* 1. **SRCA Historian – Mike Brookbank**

The Historian had no report.

1. **Old Business – Jacob**

There was no old business.

1. **New Business – Jacob**

Souza noted that he was the one who asked that trash cans not be placed in front of garage doors or in public view. Jacob thanked Clark-Sestak for including this notice in her last email to the community.

Jacob thanked Browne for completing and filing the IRS and State Tax and non-profit Forms. She noted that Browne requested that the Board consider making this a responsibility of the Secretary and not the Treasurer. As they had been filed for this year, the new SRCA Board can make this decision.

The next SRCA Board meeting will be held by Zoom on **Thursday, September 2, 2021.**

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

Jacob asked the SR community attendees if they had any additional questions or comments for the Board. There was none.

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

There were no additional issues brought forth and the meeting was adjourned at 9:29 PM.