



SEMINARY RIDGE CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

MINUTES

SRCA BOARD MEETING

December 7, 2023 – 7:00-8:00 PM by Zoom Conference Call

In attendance:

Lyn Allen, First Vice President; Michael Souza, Second Vice President; Karen Meade, Secretary; Scott Sutherland, Treasurer; David Pritzker, Parliamentarian; Mike Brookbank, Historian; Jeanne Jacob, Beatification Committee Chair; Beth Chase, SSSAS Liaison; Jeremy Flachs, Beth El Liaison; Residents: Antonio Longo; Patricia Evan; Sonia (last name unknown); unidentified Zoom user

1. Welcome and President's Report – Mike Resnick (via Lyn Allen)

1.1. Welcome to SRCA Board Members and SR Residents Joining Meeting: Allen called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and welcomed those in attendance via Zoom.

1.1.1. Questions/Concerns from SR Residents – “Open Mic”: No questions or concerns were raised.

1.2. Priority Areas for Tonight's Meeting:

1.2.1. Confirm Date for SRCA Winter Party: The Goodharts are not available to host in January, so we can look at alternative dates in February. Allen suggested that we not hold it over a 3-day weekend such as President's Day weekend, as that could limit turnout. Jacob recommended we try and hold it before Ash Wednesday on the 14th for those who may not wish to party during Lent. Souza agreed to reach out to the Goodharts and ask about their availability on Friday, Saturday or Sunday in the first part of February and will report back to the group when he hears back.

1.2.2. Discuss Directory Updates:

1.2.3. Zoning for Housing & Other Community Updates: Allen attended numerous meetings and read lots of things from the head of these different associations. She reported the basics of what's going on:

1.2.3.1. Alexandria's Zoning for Housing/Housing for All: This passed unanimously last week. The author of this article says that the City Council is

completely tone deaf and that we need to get the vote out in 2024.

Our Mayor, Justin Wilson, announced he will not run for mayor again in 2024. Vice Mayor, Amy Jackson, and Alyia Gaskins say they will run for mayor. During the night of the Zoning changes vote, Amy Jackson made a motion to remove the text amendment regarding changes to single-family zoning changes to defer it for another vote, but that motion failed. Ms. Gaskins, Kirk McPike and Justin Wilson were in known contact with developers during the process and before the vote. Note that developers are great contributors to local candidate election campaigns. Also of interest is that the city staff expects that less than 1% of single-family homes in the city may be redeveloped as a result of zoning changes. Seminary Ridge is zoned R-8, R-12 and R-20. The homes along Col. Ellis on the N side are R-20, most of the houses are R-12 and only a few are R-8.

A study done in Minneapolis finds that the vast majority of redevelopment would be done in R-2-5 and R-5 neighborhoods. R-8 through R-20 would remain relatively untouched with R-12 and R-20 being nearly completely unaffected. The R-1-5 and R-5 are the City's higher density zones and most redevelopment will be here.

Zoning changes in other areas such as Minneapolis, Seattle, Oregon, etc. have proven to be expensive and risky; they have not been proven to work out anywhere in the US and in some places have outright failed.

According to staff estimates, only around 66 current single-family homes are expected to be converted into units with two to four units over the next decade. That is less than one percent of all current single-family lots in the city.

At the SHA meeting it was mentioned that one problem is that there's no prohibition of Air BnBs. The City could face serious financial problems with the need for more schools, increased city services, etc.

Phase II of the zoning changes that are coming up are going to be serious because they're talking about no setbacks, no parking, or so little parking that it will impact everyone who lives on the street, no open space requirements and no height restrictions. It's important that we stay informed about what's to come in Phase II.

1.2.3.2. West Taylor Run Parkway and Duke Street Intersection Project:

The upcoming in-person open house on proposed safety improvements to West Taylor Run Parkway has been rescheduled to Thursday, December 14 from 7-8:30 p.m. at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. During that

meeting, staff will give a brief presentation on updated options for the service road and right-turn lane improvements that are part of the W Taylor Run Parkway and Duke Street Intersection project. The project scope also includes providing new access onto Telegraph Road east of the West Taylor Run intersection.

1.2.3.3. Duke Street in Motion: No new updates.

1.2.3.4. Bradlee Street Diet: There may be a meeting on the subject of King Street including the Bradlee Center Connection Street on December 14th. Allen wasn't certain whether it was still going to happen or not. The City wants to wipe out the side street and put in bus-only and bike lanes and change the configuration of King Street including that side street.

1.2.3.5. Candidate Forums: Pritzker noted that we hosted online candidate nights the last time City Council members ran for office and suggested this would be a good way to attract attention to our neighborhood. Souza was really instrumental in making that happen and he was also the moderator. Jacob asked whether we thought this Board should do it again since it's an election year. It was noted that we held a session with all candidates running for City Council, before the June elections, and that we held two sessions because we had so many candidates. If nothing else, the advantage to us for doing this is that every member elected will know that this neighborhood has civically active and interested people. Jacob still has the outline and all the questions from those meetings. Jacob and Souza will talk off-line further, and we can discuss it again at the January Board meeting. Souza suggested splitting it out between the City Council candidates and Mayoral candidates since we'd want to ask different questions to each.

1.3. Reports from SRCA's ACPD Liaison/Alexandria's Sheriff's Liaison: Allen shared the recent Police and Sheriffs reports from Oct 1- Nov 9, 2023, which included mostly car accidents, as well as four vehicles that were stolen. The officers reminded everyone to lock doors and not keep any valuables in your car.

Fentanyl is definitely a problem in both the middle and high schools. One overdose in the Bradlee shopping center was reported and Narcan was used to bring the individual back.

The Alexandria Police Department is still down in its numbers. It's important for us to understand that when they talk about the whole number in their department, which includes 20 people that are recruits, 20 in the police academy who are about to graduate, and 30 who are injured or on leave. Therefore, if they say there's 300 total in the force, we must take 70 away from that number to get a true indication of how many officers are on the street. Females make up 20% of their numbers. In January, their numbers were better than other areas. Seminary Ridge is area #9.

2. Secretary's Report – Karen Meade

- 2.1. Approve meeting minutes from the November 2, 2023 Board Meeting:** Meade received some edits from a few Board members which were incorporated into the final version. Souza moved to approve the November 2, 2023 meeting minutes and Sutherland seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved as edited.
- 2.2. SRCA Directory Updates:** Meade is working on making final updates to the latest SRCA directory and aims to send it to print in early 2024. Pritzker offered to review it beforehand. Jacob noted that each year the cover is printed in a different color. She also suggested that we try to obtain new contact information for the households that have recently changed ownership before printing.
- 2.3. Upcoming Fee Increase for SRCA Zoom Account:** Beginning on January 2, 2024, the price of our Zoom One Pro plan will increase by \$10 to \$159.90 a year/user. The new price will take effect with our next renewal cycle on or after January 2, 2024. Meade confirmed that we only have one user. Jacob moved that we approve accept the \$10 increase in the cost of our annual Zoom fees; it was seconded by Allen and unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report – Scott Sutherland

- 3.1. Status of Dues:** Since the last Treasurer's report at our last meeting, \$478.60 was received from PayPal to pay dues for 10 households. That was the only deposit this month.
- 3.2. Updates on any Outstanding Reimbursements:** Our Burke and Herbert Bank balance is \$12,938.00 as of 12/07/23. Since the last Treasurer's report at our last meeting, we've had payouts of \$1,055.00 to reimburse costs incurred for the annual Halloween Parade and party.

4. First Vice President's Report – Key Updates from Partner Associations/Coalitions – Lyn Allen

- 4.1. Seminary Hill Civic Association (SHA) Report:** See agenda item 1.2.3. above.
- 4.2. West End Coalition (WEC) Report:** No updates
- 4.3. Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations (AFCA) Report:** No updates

5. Second Vice President's Report – SRCA Events – Mike Souza

- 5.1. SRCA Winter Party Planning:** See agenda item 1.2.1. above. Souza also indicated that it's a little premature to ask for a budget for the winter party just yet, so he'll do so in January.

6. Communications Report – Stephanie Karner: No updates.

7. City of Alexandria Projects – Jeanne Jacob

- 7.1. Strawberry Run Updates:** On the North end of Strawberry run there has been construction of a solar panel with a camera underneath on a structure with a pole that goes up. This is there to measure the water coming through underneath Ft. Williams

Parkway from the northern part of Strawberry Run down to the second part. The city wanted to completely make natural channel design, take down trees, widen the stream and change the channel of the stream for credits for pollution going into the Chesapeake Bay. There was no data gained from Strawberry Run about what sort of pollutants were there. We fought the city on this, and we won the battle but the war continues. The City took measurements for pollution but found none so they couldn't justify doing what they wanted to do. They now want to add a pool at the southern entrance to Strawberry Run that goes through the parks and tributaries (really pipes carrying overflow stormwater). Right now, they are measuring and Jacob doesn't know for how long they'll measure, but she's hoping there will be no flooding coming through which they seem to think happens all the time.

Per Allen, the city wanted to use a method to improve the stormwater system, get rid of most of the trees, and bring in big bulldozers and spend 1.5-2 years making a wide stream bed. They've given Rod Simmons such a hard time that he retired after 27 years, effective in December. His retirement will be a great loss to the community – he's done so much to help us keep our tree cover and streams. He's tried to encourage the city to do the right thing environmentally, not shut anything down. Both City personnel and the Mayor have been horrible to him. Now that he'll be gone, it's a great time for the City to do what they wanted to do several years ago. They dismissed the committee of residents who were working on this, and Allen doesn't believe they're going to have any type of public comment on what they do in the future, so she's hoping they'll do something responsible and minimal.

8. Parliamentary Report – David Pritzker

8.1. SRCA Constitution and Bylaws Update: Pritzker revised the official copy of the Constitution and Bylaws and Deeds and Covenants and corrected a couple of typos and it's now available for printing.

9. St. Stephens & St. Agnes School (SSSAS) Liaison – Beth Chase

9.1. SSSAS Construction project underway: Construction is going great. Most of the steel is up so the big crane will be coming down later in January. Students will be in exams next week and then school lets out on Friday until Jan 2, 2024. Over Christmas break SSSAS will be hosting their annual wrestling tournament on December 18, 2023.

9.2. Concerns with December 2, 2023 Car Crash in Seminary Ridge: The crash occurred on December 2 at 11:30pm. A car was driving down St. Stephen's Road and hit a parked car. The driver will cover the damage to the parked car via their insurance. The other car was towed away after the accident. Thankfully no pedestrians were involved, and no one was injured.

10. Beth El Hebrew Congregation (BEHC) Update – Jeremy Flachs: There's been some real collaboration with SSSAS – Mr. Potter and about 15 freshmen came to our chapel in the woods and helped with planting and removing invasives. They had really good collaboration. The other day they finished a whole renovation of what they'll call the center

of the chapel in the woods. It's considered the heart of the woods. This area has been totally renovated. If you have a chance, go take a look because it may never look as pristine as it does now. We continue to work every week out there.

Flachs knows Rod Simmons very well and is very discouraged and disappointed that he resigned. Flachs was on the Taylor Run Citizens Advisory Board. Mr. Simmons was sidelined from being a City representative. Sometimes they'd let him speak as a private citizen as the scientist he was and an employee of the City. You'll probably see some more info about his departure in the local papers.

Regarding the Bradlee renovations, Flachs doesn't know much about the road diet part of the plan, but the one good thing he hopes will come from it is a whole stormwater capture system that will be integrated into the building of the new lanes and roadway work they're going to do. A lot of the problems with Taylor Run and Strawberry Run are from the neighborhoods that are paved over and are within the watershed – so the water just ends up in the gutters and pipes and eventually flows into those streams. Some have tried to go the more difficult route of capturing the water before it ends up in the underground pipes. Perhaps they'll keep their word on this, and they'll start capturing water up at Bradlee and release it in a more sustainable manor which should help with some of the gushing of water that happens when some of these big storms hit. As far as he understands, the grant money had to be returned, so he doesn't believe they have the funding to do much of anything now. However, Flachs had heard that citizens would remain in the loop before they did anything new - this was from the City Manager.

Souza said Four Mile Run that runs along Telegraph Rd. looked great at first, but it's all been taken over by invasive plants over the past 5 years. If it's not maintained that's what happens.

Allen asked how the congregation is doing during this very sad time. Flachs responded that there have been no reports of violence and no vandalism, but they've ramped up security recently and the police presence is designed to prevent this. He isn't aware of any threats, but he will ask their Executive Director. People are tense in general – there's daily tension with what's going on in the country.

11. Home Sales in Seminary Ridge – Kate Hennigan: No updates.

12. Welcome Committee for New Residents – Kate Hennigan: No updates.

13. Continued “Open Mic” for SRCA Community – Mike Resnick (via Lyn Allen): Jacob expressed concern about the leaves on the medians on Ft. Williams Parkway and the island on Ft. Worth. We have discovered in the past that if the leaves aren't removed, they smother any grass. Last year Weiblinger was able to coordinate with Parks & Rec and T&ES and got them blown off and picked up (they wouldn't bag the leaves). Jacob asked

Weiblinger if he could do so again this year and he agreed to try reaching out. The time that the City stops mowing (end of Oct) and the time they collect the leaves (we have one more leave removal scheduled for December 12, 2023) do not coincide. Mowing is done by Parks and Rec, and blowing is done by T&ES. If the City doesn't get them blown off in time, we'll need to find someone who can. January is too late to do this. Jacob suggested we request a motion to hire someone to blow off the leaves on Ft. Williams from Seminary Rd. all the way down to Duke St., as well as on the island on Ft. Worth – this would be Plan B if Weiblinger doesn't have success with Parks & Rec and T&ES this year. Souza Proposed a motion that no more than \$500 be spent towards clearing the leaves off the medians in the neighborhood; Sutherland seconded, and it was approved by all except one Board member who didn't feel it was a wise investment.

14. Adjournment of SRCA Board Meeting – Mike Resnick (via Lyn Allen) – Jacob moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 pm; it was seconded by Sutherland and unanimously approved.