

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Minutes from Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, 11 January 2017

MINUTES

Attendees: 11 members signed in. (See attached sign-in sheet.)

Proceedings:

President Natasha Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Aurora Hills Library.

Community Updates:

There was no meeting in December, but a good social event was held at the Pentagon City ice skating rink. The association will try to plan more social activities this year.

Association officers, committee representatives, and County Board Vice-Chair Katie Cristol were introduced.

Captain Tiffany Wesley of the Aurora Highlands Fire Station was unable to attend the meeting as planned.

County Site at 31st and South Eads Streets:

John Mir, Arlington County Department of Environmental Services, and other staff members discussed the County's plans for the site at 31st and S. Eads Streets across from the Water Pollution Control Plant. The site has been used for parking for the transfer station and other facilities since the 1970's. It is zoned as a Public Facility. The County is looking for ideas on uses. They are planning on two phases. In the short-term, they plan to remove brush, weeds, invasive species and provide parking for private vehicles of ART employees. There would be a minor expansion of the gravel lot to the west, two entrances, lighting, and landscaping. After these short-term efforts, they will evaluate long-term options; present those options to the community; and finalize the project when funding is available. Considerations include: light, noise, visual impact, landscaping, and traffic.

After Mr. Mir's presentation, discussion and questions covered a number of neighborhood concerns.

Has there been any consideration of the fact that even though the lot has been there since the 70's, our area has changed dramatically during that time? However, the County is looking at the same uses—a parking lot and a spot for junk. It sounds like the County has already decided what it is going to do. Why not go through the normal County process for

approval? County staff said that the County has immediate needs and that the facilities' study went through normal processes. The site would be used for free personal parking, which is stipulated in the County's contract with ART drivers. There are few other options for driver parking because the ART site is too small. How did the County get to this point without community consultation? Concern also was raised about potential negative impact on property values for neighbors near the site and neighbors asked whether the County had evaluated that impact.

Motion put forward by Natasha Atkins to wrap up the discussion and put our questions in writing to county. Friendly amendment by Janet Dunkelberger to oppose the project until Civic Association's concerns and questions addressed. The County is looking for a solution in a few months. **A motion was made, seconded and passed to forego further Association discussion of the site and not approve short-term changes until the Association puts forward its questions and concerns to the county.**

Sewage Treatment Plant Update:

Neighbor Paul Guttridge gave an update on work at the Sewage Treatment Plant. There has been community input on priorities such as odor and appearance. Concerns have been raised about the health effects of burning solids, such as the creation of biogas and steam. The plant bureau chief has agreed to "score" a regional option, which would involve trucking solids to other locations nearby, such as Blue Plains. It would take a few more trucks than currently in use but there would be environmental benefits.

Approved Neighborhood Conservation Project for Nelly Custis Park:

Representatives from the County's Parks Department and the Neighborhood Conservation Program discussed implementation of the approved neighborhood conservation project for Nelly Custis Park. Natasha explained that the focus at our meeting would be on the process going forward. Lisa Grandle read the Parks Department apology to the community regarding its handling of the process leading up to approval of the Nelly Custis project. Katie Cristol said that the Board is interested in moving the project forward and realizes how important it will be to do a better job in reaching out to all of the community. She thanked David Litman and Natasha Atkins for their involvement and said that the County is grateful for being able to take another shot at the project.

Kathy Wing von Bredow, County landscape architect, covered the scope of the project, which includes several main elements—drainage, invasive species, circulation and accessibility, playground, tree canopy and site furnishings. She went through an 18-28 month timeline for implementation. We are now in the design development/public engagement phase. David Litman wants to have a working group of 8-10 people ready to provide community input this spring, but has been waiting to put out a formal request for volunteers until timeline dates are firmed up. The group will reach out to the many different community stakeholders. There also was discussion on best methods for bamboo removal and concern about the continued use of Roundup. Kathy urged people to take photos of the park during and after rain with times and dates to document drainage issues.

New Business/Updates:

--The project manager for the Aurora Highlands Park will be invited to a future meeting.

--The dog park on the Vornado property hasn't moved forward because of County ordinances regarding dog parks on private property.

--The Crystal City BID will sponsor a wine and beer walk on January 21, the Crystal Couture fashion show February 2-4, Artomatic late March-early May, and the Crystal City Farmers' Market, which will reopen in March.

--Uber cars are now parking below the underpass to the airport. Joe Petty, CCBID, thinks this is temporary and that land is for airport use only.

President Natasha Atkins adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

I certify that these minutes are a true and accurate representation of the business conducted at the meeting and were adopted as the official meeting minutes by the membership of AHCA.

Date: _____

Maureen Quinn

Recording Secretary