

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 10 May 2017

DRAFT

Attendees: 37 people signed in.

Proceedings:

President Natasha Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the newly renovated community center.

The new Sinners and Saints (Grill Kabob at the corner of 23rd and Eads) use permit discussed at last month's meeting comes before the County Board on May 20.

The April Monthly Meeting minutes were approved.

South Park Update

Bethany Heim, Arlington Parks and Recreation, discussed the South Park master plan. The park will be located just south of the buildings that house the Harris Teeter on Glebe Road at Route 1. Funding for this effort is coming from the Arlington Capital Improvement Plan. There is also Federal grant money to connect Route 1 to the Four Mile Run Trail. There will need to be additional funding in the future for construction. They are in Phase 2 now and are considering both aesthetics and recreation opportunities. Three public meetings have been held to get input and another will be held at Gunston.

Part of the land is owned by Alexandria and they will improve it as part of development in North Potomac Yards. Arlington is meeting with Alexandria and sharing information. Alexandria doesn't have funding or a timeline yet. Other considerations include the 2000 Potomac Yards Phased Development Site Plan and the 2006 Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan.

The Arlington South Park Master Plan should be done by November 2017 and construction is estimated to start in 2022. Ms. Heim showed diagrams and explained proposed and possible uses of the space.

Virginia Delegate Alphonso Lopez

His 49th District covers Pentagon City south to 23rd Street and over to Bailey's Crossroads and includes most of Columbia Pike. He handed out 2017 legislative highlights and urged his constituents to contact him about state or county problems, issues or service needs. He said that

he adores his job representing the 49th District with all its diversity. He discussed his philosophy, efforts to get more Democrats as delegates, and problems with gerrymandering in Virginia. Questions ranged from possible park use of the old Dominion electric site at 18th and Ives Streets (A: Site is small and not as clean as it should be and expensive to remediate. He needs to talk to County more.), to changing the name of Rt. 1 (A: It's an abomination, but not likely to happen soon.), outreach to Mr. Gillespie (A: Yes, he works with both Democrats and Republicans to get legislation passed.), the importance of the June 13 primaries (Vote!), the County Democratic caucus, endorsements for County Board (Erik Gutshall for Board and Ralph Northam for Governor.) The Democrats in Richmond are trying to get changes to make it easier to vote, such as early voting and no-excuse absentee voting. He is for non-partisan re-districting of the state where he said there has been "a demographic tsunami" and the House of Delegates should look more like Virginia is now.

Police report

Officer James O'Daniel reported that crime at the mall is down for the first few months of 2017—only 1 robbery this year compared to 8 during the same time period in 2016. There has been more intensive policing and under-cover work. The mall also has hired more security people and they are working closely with County police.

Traffic report

Dennis Leach, Arlington director of transportation, and staff updated us on their work on traffic issues on Fern and other residential streets. They have worked with the police and have collected data from technology, traffic lights, etc. They discussed short-term measures and next steps. He said that they are continually monitoring 22202 with 25 monitoring sites. They also have bike counters and use CCTV at the County's central traffic monitoring location. He discussed the many recent changes--such as development, neighborhood conservation projects, the new Whole Foods store, the Post Office move, the ART bus barn--along and between Fern and Eads Streets. Traffic conditions at Eads and 23rd Streets cause backups and spillover to other streets. He emphasized the problems that result because Route 1 and Eads are so close together. Illegally parked trucks block the right turn lane on Eads during morning peak driving time. To correct this problem they propose several steps. 1) Cut back the legal parking space further at the intersection of Eads and 23rd Streets (next to 7-11) to create a real right turn lane. 2) Implement "signal optimization" with better timing, etc. They will complete traffic counts in the next 2-3 weeks, collect data from 30 locations, analyze it and make improvements by fall 2017. 3) Begin a capital improvement project for 23rd Street to create more turning space between Eads and Rt. 1. This project would continue beyond 2018. And, 4) Coordinate with Arlington County Police Department on enforcement.

They acknowledged concerns about the 23rd and Eads intersection and other streets and concerns about future traffic increases. Higher use of National Airport will also spill over into our

neighborhood and they coordinate with the airport but can't dictate to them. Also Metro ridership is down, especially at our stations, so more people are driving. There is also a problem with bike safety at the 23rd St. intersection.

Questions were raised about using signs to limit access to Fern St. and other residential streets from Eads at least during rush hours. Residents cited serious problems that have a major detrimental impact on them, their families, neighbors and property. The list includes daily traffic back-ups, congestion, residents' cars getting hit, commuters driving up on lawns, traffic bypassing stopped school buses and overall dangerous driving that frightens and endangers children and adults. Frustrated residents even offered to pay for signs to limit access. They passionately presented their concerns and stressed that they have been pleading with the County since 2014 when Eads St. was redone for solutions to the many safety and other problems that now exist as a result of rush hour cut-through traffic. They feel that their past requests have been ignored. Mr. Leach re-iterated what his staff has done. He also said that he will try to get signs authorized and would get back to our association about the possibility of getting signs within the next week or so.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Maureen Quinn

Recording Secretary