

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2018

DRAFT

Attendees: 17 people signed in, including 12 AHCA members.

Proceedings:

--President Natasha Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Aurora Hills Senior Center.

--The minutes from the March and April monthly meetings were approved.

--Oakridge Elementary School PTA has asked for a donation from AHCA for their spring fling fundraiser. In the past we have donated \$250-500 to them. **A motion was passed to donate \$250 to them.**

--The county wants comments on new street lights. You can make your preferences known through the online survey.

Water Main Replacement Projects

Staff from the Department of Environmental Services discussed four projects in or near our neighborhood. The oldest water mains date to the 1920s, with most from the 40s and 50s. They are cast iron and unlined. Those from 1960 on have a protective coating on the inside. Work will be done 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday. Signs will be posted 72 hours in advance of work. Non-emergency water shut-offs should last a maximum of 6 hours and residents will be notified in advance. There will be debris, noise and dust. On Ridge Road, a 1-mile water main needs to be replaced. Work will not begin until 9 a.m. and one lane should always be open. Sidewalks will not be affected. Neighbors will receive a detailed letter and there will be online updates. They will try to limit work at major intersections, such as 23rd St. and 20th St. to weekends. The "Drinking Water Quality Report" is now published online only.

Pedestrian Tunnel under Route 1 at 23rd Street

The County has gotten complaints from citizens and local business owners about the condition and safety of the tunnel. People say they don't like to use it because of perceived safety issues and odors. The County power washes it four times a year and spends \$10-15,000 a year on maintenance. The long range proposal is to tear out the surface structures and to reconfigure the intersection. VDOT owns the tunnel. The proposal is to put temporary doors on the entrances to the tunnel this fall. Neighbors raised concerns about the difficulty of crossing Route 1 at grade and about why the tunnel can't be kept clean. Left turn arrows from 23rd Street were suggested. The Crystal City section plan eliminates the tunnel in 2-3 years. The County is now in phase 1 of a project on 23rd Street from Eads St. to Route 1, which will be finished by fall. Lanes will be narrowed and the sidewalk on the 7/11 side will be widened. In 2 years, the street will be narrowed between Crystal Drive and Rt. 1 and the surface tunnel structures removed.

A question was raised about closing the 23rd St. entrance to the Exxon station, but the County says that is not possible. It was suggested that 23rd Street be put under Rt. 1. JBG Smith has proposed changing the 15th and 18th Street crossings to grade at Rt. 1. Several people said they feel safer going under the highway at 18th St. In the last year there has been 1 traffic accident at 23rd and Rt. 1 and there has been no reported crime in the tunnel.

Dominion Energy Substation Site

Scott Remy, Dominion Energy, discussed the site of the former Dominion substation at 18th and Ives Streets that was built in the early 60s. It was retired in 2014 when neighborhood transformers were no longer needed. It is now vacant down to the gravel and gets maintenance 3-4 times a year. Dominion has held on to it to see what the next step in energy generation will be. The company has no plans to sell it. There is no record of any spills at the site, but it was an industrial site.

Overall, Dominion is looking to put the worst performing lines underground. The whole system will benefit from this 10-year project. You can call Dominion to ask their arborist to come out and assess trees that you think may be a problem for the electric lines. They now are looking at remedying potential concerns related to the Glebe Road substation, which needs upgrades.

Neighborhood Conservation

David Litman updated us on the Nellie Custis project. The construction preparation phase is underway and construction is scheduled to begin this fall. The project should be completed in the summer of 2019. The County awarded a storm-wise grant to Linden and that work should help with the water issue in the park.

The County has approved no Neighbor Conservation (NC) projects in the last 18 months. Our projects are near the bottom of the list and there is no money available. The growth in construction costs has resulted in an increase in the size of NC projects. There is \$6 million left in NC funds in this bond cycle. More requirements are being put on NC projects, such as storm water management. Overall, NC is slowing down. We can update our NC plan, which is 10 years old, and it is important to document demand for new projects in case money comes through.

Airport Construction Update

Representatives of the Aurora Highlands, Crystal City and Arlington Ridge Civic Associations recently met with airport officials about construction at the airport. "Project Journey," which will "transform the passenger experience" is expected to be done in 2021. Passengers are urged to take Metro to the airport in the meantime. www.FlyReagan.com has information on the project and radio 1640 am has 24/7 roadway updates. The CCBID website has a map and directions for how to walk to the airport from Crystal City. The old Hertz lot on Eads Street is now a waiting area for Uber and Lyft drivers for airport pickups.

A concern was raised about the benefits that developers are required to pay to impacted neighborhoods. Other jurisdictions require developers to take into account the impact on schools,

infrastructure, parks, etc. Others compute costs and negotiate with the developers. Arlington says that the County cannot legally do that. Why can't Arlington County more effectively negotiate for community benefits, especially when the project benefits do not accrue to the neighborhood that is impacted?

A motion was passed to send a letter to the County asking for the rationale/reasoning behind Arlington's legal determination that Arlington County cannot require developers to take into account the impact on our neighborhoods and to compensate for it.

Other concerns

A neighbor noted that the new building at 23rd and Grant Streets will be the new Arlington Realty office. That means that there will be a vacancy at the old office in the strip of commercial businesses on 23rd and Hayes Streets. We should keep restaurants out of there—especially delivery places.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Maureen Quinn

Recording Secretary