

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2017

DRAFT

Attendees: 49 people signed in.

Proceedings:

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

--Les Garrison presented the proposed slate of officers for the coming year: Natasha Atkins, President; Scott Miles, Vice-President; David Husband, Vice-President; Gail Fleming, Treasurer; Heather Spence, Corresponding Secretary; Maureen Quinn, Recording Secretary. Les opened to additional nominations from the floor, but there were none.

A motion to accept the proposed slate of officers passed unanimously.

--Linda Chandler with Linden Resources requested a contribution for their tree lighting and outdoor holiday activities—the annual “Miracle on 23rd Street,” which will be on Friday, December 8.

A motion to support her request at \$700 was passed unanimously.

Nelly Custis Park Redesign Project

David Litman, who has headed up the AHCA working group for this effort, introduced county DPR staff involved with the project including Tim McIntosh who runs the NC program, Kathy von Bredow, Wilfredo Calderon, Bernadette Grullon and contract consultant Chelsea Bishop. David explained that the goal at tonight’s meeting is to decide whether to proceed with the recommended design for the project at Nelly Custis Park.

Eight community volunteers on the working group have done lots of work during the past year. They looked at many other parks to gather information and ideas and operated mostly by consensus.

Nelly Custis Park is a small space with competing priorities. The current playground is an inefficient use of space. The question was: “Could it be redesigned from scratch?” But it also had to be within budget and meet other project goals. Neighborhood Conservation projects need to be flexible and changes can be made within project constraints. Changes must fit within the ecosystem of the park.

Kathy von Bredow said that she is very excited about the project. In the site survey they found things that they didn’t know about such as sanitary drains and an easement behind the fence on the Linden side. As envisioned, the site would have three zones: a play area, a grassy center, and a contemplative gathering area.

The play area would have new equipment. There are newer, safer design concepts now than when the existing equipment was put in. They will choose something with challenges for different ages. There also would be a new playground surface as part of the water management plan, which would include a vegetative swale, seating walls, and borders.

In the central grassy area, which has critical tree root zones, there would be a swale at the Linden border with drains and more holding area for water and plantings that love water.

The contemplative area would have benches, picnic tables, a new wooden fence and a mix of trees and shrubs. The concrete loop would stay, but would be replaced with porous concrete and two years of plant maintenance would be included. The surface would be less impervious. There would be benches, signage, and interesting plants for kids and adults. The new ADA-compliant gates would be different for the playground and the lower end of the park and the current maintenance gate would come out. Soil would be treated for better drainage.

All of the water that comes from the Linden parking lot and the park flows to 24th Street and there is a pipe capacity issue. There is no storm drain close by, a high water table, and poor soil filtration. The changes to the park would try to capture the run-off by using a porous surface for the playground, a vegetative swale, a rain garden, deep aeration of the center section, and more plants—including 25 new trees-- throughout the site.

The useable size of the play area increased by almost 40 percent primarily from a more efficient use of space. The play equipment will be more diversified within the 5-12 age range.

In response to a question about snow removal from the Linden parking lot, David said they would talk to Linden about a snow management plan, so that all their snow doesn't get pushed into the park. They will also discuss with Linden storm-wise steps that could be taken.

The park is NOT a dog park and the plan tries to minimize interaction between dogs and kids.

There is no restroom in the plan because it would be too expensive—about an additional \$35,000.

A motion to support the design and move forward with the Nelly Custis project was passed with 44 yes votes and one no vote.

Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulation Changes

Martha Moore with the Civic Federation Zoning Committee discussed the County's proposal to relax the rules regarding ADU's.

Since 2008 when the first rules went into effect, only 20 of these units have been approved through the permit process. All are within single detached homes. She pointed out that there are also lots of illegal ADUs. The stated goals of the changes are to provide more affordable housing and more housing options.

The proposal would liberalize lot size and unit size restrictions and allow ADU's in separate detached buildings such as garages. Buildings with sleeping areas must have a 5-foot setback from the property line. The proposal would increase permitted occupancy and allow short-term residential rentals in approved detached buildings.

A motion was passed to send a letter from AHCA to the County asking them to defer a decision on changing Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations until more data and analysis can be gathered on neighborhood concerns including environmental impact of the additional units and additional density, impact on infrastructure, parking, neighborhood character, and use of the units for short-term rentals.

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

Maureen Quinn

Recording Secretary