

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2017

DRAFT

Attendees: 19 attendees, 5 guests

Proceedings:

President Natasha Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Aurora Hills Senior Center.

Community Police

Captain Wayne Vincent introduced himself as our new 2nd District Commander and introduced other community officers:

- Officer Moses Kang, officer assigned specifically to our community
- Detective Aaron Queen, School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned to Wakefield
- Detective Leo Bello – SRO assigned to Gunston and Oakridge

Overall crime is still low in Arlington. We live in one of safest communities in the area. We are the “high crime” area of the county, but only because of Pentagon City mall. It is a “hot spot” for thefts that distorts the overall crime rates for the area. Our area police substation is at the mall. Top problems outside of mall thefts are car break-ins followed by garage break-ins.

Tips from the officers:

- Keep doors locked. Check your key fob to make sure it is actually working.
- Keep valuables out of sight. Most thefts are crimes of opportunity.
- Report break-ins even if nothing is stolen. They could provide good fingerprints and help identify perpetrators and build a stronger case.
- Remember to register your bikes; it’s free and makes it more likely a stolen one will be returned to you.
- If you’re away for an extended period, you can let the police know and they will do extra patrols (request this through the non-emergency number).
- To safeguard construction sites, ask neighbors to keep lookout, padlock pods, and use cameras.

On specific resident issues:

- Traffic problems in front of the mall were raised. Officers acknowledge in high season there are lots of buses, double and triple parked. They do their best to enforce and manage.
- New turn lane at 23rd and Eads – they are currently not writing many tickets, but are focusing on educating drivers of the lane changes and the importance of not blocking bike lanes.

- Some residents have speed concerns on streets. Police will put up monitors; usually turns out that the speeds are not that fast. Will put out an officer if average speeds are 10 above the limit.

Aaron Queen has been an officer for 16 years, assigned to schools for 10 years. Coached basketball, and has worked all school levels – elementary, middle, and high. Wakefield has the lowest reported rate of crime of the high schools. Role of SRO is to make sure children are safe, investigate crimes, handle runaway juveniles, and provide assistance to the special victims unit. They try to act more as mentors, coaches, and counselors and do enforcement if necessary.

Leo Bello has been an officer for 21 years, mostly in criminal investigations, financial crimes, and gang unit. Just started as SRO at Gunston and Oakridge in May. SROs also help with lockdown drills, fire drills, etc.

National Park Service

NPS had to cancel, as they have been called to work with response to hurricane Irma.

Boo Ha Ha Update

The 10th annual Boo will be this October the 14th. It is a fun community event that brings the community together. There will be a hayride with horses, banjo band, bounce houses, pizza, popcorn, and much more.

Fundraising is still underway. AHCA agreed to fund most of the Boo with the proviso to be refunded if possible. Boo volunteers, primary Geva Lester, have so far raised \$4300, with approximately \$300 additional donated by neighbors through PayPal. Last year there were more than 600 kids, so overall cost was about \$10 per head.

Many volunteers are also still needed during the event.

Cut-through Traffic

The county is doing more study of the cut-through traffic problem around Fern Street. County Board member John Vihstadt came out one morning and saw firsthand the large amount of traffic.

Parking Day

(Park)ing Day is an international event where people transform parking spaces into nano parks. There will be an Aurora Highlands entry headed by Natasha with help from others this Friday the 15th in front of Whole Foods.

Motion to Request a Pocket Park

A motion was made by a member that “AHCA request that the county purchase the vacant lot at 20th and Ives for a pocket park with minimal improvement.” After debate about costs, impact to county revenue, suitability of that particular location, the motion passed unanimously 11-0, with abstentions.

Crystal House Addition

The building being proposed at Crystal House along Eads street would result in taking down 100 trees. The SPRC did a site visit and asked the developer to go back and try to have less of an impact. But it would be helpful if people go to the next planning commission meeting and speak.

Royal Pawn

Rick Riser introduced himself as the owner of Royal Pawn, which is opening on the corner of Eads and 23rd street in approximately 2 weeks. He runs other locations in Franconia and Vienna with good success and has eyed the location since it was Zavarella's Music a long time ago. His son Rick Riser will be working at the store. The store will trade mostly in items like jewelry, antiques, and musical instruments. No firearms will be sold.

Motion to revise Bylaws

A motion was proposed to make two changes to the AHCA bylaws to make the membership year the same as the calendar year and to allow the president to serve a third term. An amendment was proposed to revise the calendar year dates in other sections of the bylaws. The final proposal was seconded and will be voted on in October:

Article III, Section 3. Dues.

Except as otherwise provided, every membership in the Association shall expire on ~~October~~ December 31 of each year unless renewed by the payment of the annual dues. ... New members shall be eligible to vote if they have paid membership fee by October 31 for next annual year, beginning ~~November~~ January 1 and ending ~~October~~ December 31. ...

Article IV – Officers. Section 4.

The President shall not be eligible to serve for more than ~~two~~ three consecutive terms.

Motion to support independent facilitator for upcoming VHP work

A motion was proposed to write a letter in support of the recent request by the Friends of Aurora Highlands Parks asking the county to use an independent facilitator, Project for Public Spaces, to manage and perform outreach for the work to be performed at Virginia Highlands Park. This was proposed as a way to ensure the community as a whole has meaningful input into the process as opposed to past projects at VHP where this was not felt to be the case. After debate, the motion passed unanimously.

Possible dog park at Ft. Scott Park

Bob Hyde from Arlington Ridge Civic Association indicated that some ARCA residents are working with the county to create a dog park at Fort Scott Park behind the tennis courts. He indicated that the county

has acknowledged that our area is in need of a dog park. This is still in the investigative phase, but the county has been out to the park twice to review the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Scott Miles

Vice President