

Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
January 8, 2025, at Aurora Hills Center and via Zoom

Opening of Meeting

President Rachel Hicks opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with a welcome to the membership and an overview of the agenda.

Minutes Approval

The draft minutes for the November 2024 regular meeting were approved.

President's Updates

- **Officers for 2025** – The slate approved at the November meeting is in place and we still have a vacancy in the 2nd Vice President position. We had a volunteer but still need to confirm his eligibility. The office remains vacant and members are encouraged to let Rachel know their interest in joining the leadership team.
- **Plans for 2025** – Rachel will do a survey to get priorities and we had a brief discussion about repeating some of the events from last year such as the spring fair, water balloon fight, and pumpkin painting. Another possibility, although pricey, is a 5k race.
- **Melwood** – The applicant will be presenting tonight, current proposal is for a 60' building. Another concern is the lack of parking (for residents and caregivers) and impact on the local churches when the existing parking lot goes away. The current proposal is to park at a .71 ratio, which is significantly less than would be required in jurisdictions such as nearby Alexandria, which instead look at a ratio per bedroom rather than per apartment. The project goes to the Planning Commission and County Board for review in February 2025. Now is the time to let your voices be heard on this project!
- **RiverHouse** – Next SPRC meeting planned for January 16.
- **Potomac Yard** – JBG Smith announced a large housing project for the arena site in Alexandria.
- **VDOT Route 1 Study** – Next virtual meeting will be on January 14.

Circuit Tree Maintenance

County Urban Forester Andrew Benjamin presented on the County's proactive 5 year management cycle for street trees that was identified in the 2004 Urban Forest Master Plan. They are just completing our portion of South Arlington and the program now proceeds northward. The goal of the program is to identify trees that need pruning or removal in order to ensure public safety. Since this was the first pass for the new program, a large number (approximately 35 trees or 6.5% of the street trees) had to be removed. They were dead or severely declined, and posed a real danger. The majority will be replaced (where the planting strip is 4' or wider) and it could take up to a year for the new tree to be planted (to allow time for the ground stump to decay).

Andrew noted that the best way to identify problems with a street tree or opportunities for planting is to use the Report A Problem system. Andrew is also available for questions (abenjamin@arlingtonva.us,

703-228-7907) as is Vincent Verweij, the head of urban forestry (vverweij@arlingtonva.us, 703-228-1863).

Melwood Update

Attorney Cathy Puskar led the development team through a presentation of the slide deck from the December 19 Site Plan Review Committee meeting, [link](#). One update from last month is that Melwood will no longer be using the tree canopy from Parcel B to make up the required 25% tree canopy coverage on Parcel A. They have also redone the driveway on South Grant Street to eliminate the encroachment on Nelly Custis Park that AHCA had identified at the last meeting. There was a lot of discussion of the inadequate parking for the building, the programs that would take place and how many staffers would be onsite for operations, as well as the length of the term for affordability (not perpetuity, likely 30-50 years, then can flip for market rate housing). Melwood will be making a revised submission to the County on January 10 and the project goes to the Planning Commission in February and to the County Board on February 22.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary