

Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
June 12, 2024, at Aurora Hills Center and via Zoom

Opening of Meeting

President Rachel Hicks opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. with a welcome to the membership and an overview of the agenda. She also thanked the Crystal City Sports Pub on 23rd Street for contributing appetizers for sharing at the meeting.

Minutes Approval

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

President's Updates

- **Grants** – AHCA received a grant of \$500 from the County for a proposed 5k road race and \$2,500 from the National Landing Business Improvement District for future events.
- **Upcoming Newsletters** – Keep an eye out for opportunities to submit photos of summer activities and pets.
- **Melwood** – The Planning Commission and the County Board agreed to proceed with the draft Tier II study for 750 23rd Street South. None of the comments or recommendations that AHCA submitted for consideration were incorporated into the final report and County Board members noted that there is an “expectation” that the building will be 60 feet in height. The County Board did encourage a reset of the relationship with the neighborhood and Melwood will present later in the meeting and likely at the July meeting as well.
- **Eads Park** – The County is requesting input to invest approximately \$500,000 in the small “park” at the corner of South Eads and 23rd Streets. By a vote of 25-0 the membership recommended sending a letter voicing concern with the budget, hardscape, timing of park redevelopment while there is a possibility that restaurant row and the parking lot will be redeveloped, the reasoning for doing it now, and why the funds cannot be shifted to a more needy park such as Ives Street.
- **Ives Park** – The letter discussed at last month’s meeting is still in draft.
- **Libraries** – Livability22202 sent a letter to the County expressing concerns with the County’s proposed buyout of the requirement for a library in Crystal City as a community benefit on a project and reminding of the need for an update to the Aurora Hills library.
- **Schools** – Livability22202 sent a letter to the County about the school system’s propensity to use boundary shifts as a solution to severe overcrowding in South Arlington public schools.
- **Local Historic District** – On June 20 the Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board will take up a proposal to study creation of a local historic district at the former Nellie Custis School. A motion recommending a letter from AHCA supporting the approval of the study passed with a vote of 17-0 with 6 abstentions. (Editor’s note: On June 20, the HALRB voted 5-3 to proceed with a study. End Note.)
- **Route 1** – A reminder that comments are being accepted on the VDOT report that supports bringing Route 1 to grade at 15th and 18th Streets. The contention is that crossing at grade will

be safe and that it will not be nearly as dangerous as crossing is today at 20th and 23rd Streets. The public comment period closes June 28.

- **Sustainable Scoop Updates**– Sustainable Scoop is still hoping to sponsor a National Night Out program in August at Melwood, but they have not yet received a response to various requests. Sustainable Scoop is also planning a program for National Disability Independence day on July 26 (with a \$1k grant from the County) and will produce a video on Urban Agriculture Family Day (thanks to another \$500 grant from the County).
- **Code Enforcement** – Teaira Nowkin from the code enforcement team is on the Zoom call and willing to answer questions in the chat.

Melwood Presentation

Cathy Puskar from Walsh Colucci led the presentation on behalf of Larysa Kautz from Melwood and Kamilah McAfee from Wesley. The project's Tier II special GLUP study was approved by the County Board in May and the project has been revised since the May 29 community briefing at the Marriott in Crystal City. The building has been moved closer to 23rd Street (with the elimination of the large tree) and pushed further away from the park. The building maintains its 60 foot height and steps back in various places. There are a now total of 104 units (down from 113) with 18,000 square feet of space for the Melwood program (up from 16k) and 96 parking spaces (up from 93 spaces). The parking entrance has been moved to 23rd Street, but loading is still via South Grant Street.

Crystal House 7/8

Kathy Taylor from Walsh Colucci opened the presentation on behalf of EYA and the design team and then turned it over to the project managers for a briefing. This proposal builds on the approved 2019 infill plan for the Fern Street side of the Crystal House block with 42 back-to-back townhomes with 84 below grade parking spaces. The units will be 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath units, each with two dedicated parking spaces and will likely sell in the range of \$1M - \$1.1M, though it will depend on the market at the time of delivery. The proposed timeline is to begin construction in Q1 of 2026 and complete the project in Q1 of 2028. All of the open space around the units will be open to the public and held by a homeowners association comprised of the 42 unit owners. The plan maintains pedestrian access through the site.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary