

**Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
November 13, 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.

Minutes Approval

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

President's Updates

- **Melwood** – The review of the site plan application begins with a walking tour on Monday, November 18 at noon followed by a Site Plan Review Committee meeting at 7:00 p.m. The [comments](#) from the recent community survey are on the County project page, lots of thoughtful input.
- **Pumpkins & Pie in the Park** – It was a lovely event, though the turnout was not as large as our past events in Ives Park.
- **December Event** – We will not have a regular membership meeting in December, but instead will gather at the fire pit in Westpost (Pentagon Row) on December 11 at 7:00 p.m. for an informal happy hour (and maybe even some ice skating).
- **BID Grant** – The National Landing Business Improvement District gave us a grant of \$2,500 to use on future events. We will talk in the new year about how to allocate the funds.
- **New Volunteers** – Thanks to Alex Chakrin for volunteering as our webmaster and Alix Hess for offering to serve as newsletter editor. Welcome!

Election of Officers for 2025

Rachel presented the slate of officers for 2025 and asked if there were any additional volunteers. The offices were uncontested and the slate was approved by the membership (all but one in favor, no objections, one abstention):

President - Rachel Hicks

1st Vice President – Stacy Meyer

2nd Vice President – Paul Voutsas (new member, need to reaffirm in January)

Treasurer – Ben Watts

Recording Secretary – Nick Giacobbe

Corresponding Secretary – Lexi Tinker

Block W and RiverHouse – SPRC representative Nick Giacobbe briefed on the County staff's recent draft [recommendation](#) that JBG Smith's proposal for Block W be denied by the County Board. This conclusion had never been discussed during the 18 months and lots of hours of meetings on the project. JBG Smith decided to pull back the approval request (was to go to the Board in November, then deferred to December) while they try to understand the implications. The staff's position is that the developer is

not maximizing the height and density permitted in the sector plan, a figure that everyone always considered a maximum rather than a requirement. JGB Smith is also reassessing their RiverHouse proposal in light of this new policy direction.

Airport Noise –There was a brief discussion about airport noise and the increased number of planes overflying the neighborhood. Jerry and Dave will collaborate on a draft letter.

23rd & Eads Street Park – Bethany Heim gave an update on the naming process for the space beside the pawn shop. The County has \$475,000 in TIF funds available for the project, they hope to get County Board approval in early 2025, begin construction in summer of 2025 and complete work in 2026. There was not enough money in the County’s budget for additional lighting, which is actually necessary, so the County requested funding from the National Landing BID for the lighting. The discussion centered on why the County needs to go through a very complex process to name a 900 square foot space, why this project is a priority for the County (it’s not a neighborhood priority), the amount of disruption during construction, and why we cannot get any support for trees or amenities in Ives Park. Bethany agreed to take these questions and concerns back to the County. The members reiterated the need for a letter to the County expressing our concern with this presentation and the earlier presentation on the project.

Arlington Community High School – One of the community benefits from the PenPlace project was to build a permanent home for the high school. Since the project remains on hold, Amazon intends to meet their commitment for a facility for the 2026-2027 school year by locating the school in the existing building. Amazon proposes building an access point through the vacant storefront on Eads Street between District Dogs and Peruvian Brothers. The facility will be located on the fourth floor, with dedicated elevators from the storefront entrance. The school will be built to accommodate 300-325 students, occupy 26,000 square feet of space, and include all of the facilities that would have been at PenPlace, to include classrooms, offices, labs, a library, and a cafeteria. This project will be considered a minor site plan amendment and will not need to go through the full site plan review process.

Scapegoat Beer Garden – Nicholas Cumings from Walsh Colucci presented on behalf of the applicant, who hopes to open a beer garden in the spring in the former Greek restaurant space on 22nd Street South (behind Restaurant Row). He described the long history of zoning on the property, which was owned by Mr. Pappas and is now controlled by his estate. The number of parking spaces will increase to 24, there will be no music allowed outdoors and the outdoor portion of the beer garden will close at about 10:00 p.m. In response to a question about public drunkenness, the applicant said they expect many of the same conditions placed on businesses in Clarendon, to include TIPS training and monitoring of patrons’ drinking. The operator said his goal is a family-friendly restaurant serving comfort Asian food. There will be a menu for children, a focus on the community, and once up and running for dinner will add lunch service. There was a lengthy discussion among the members about how this business will fit into the community without becoming disruptive.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary