

**Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
September 11, 2024, 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, a moment of silence for 9/11, and an overview of the agenda. She also thanked Los Tios Grill for the chips and salsa snacks for the meeting.

Minutes Approval

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

President's Updates

- **Water Balloon Activity** – It was a fun event in Ives Park with many participants of varying ages.
- **Fall 5k** – Turns out the cost will be about \$6k, so the \$500 grant from the County won't cover much of the cost. Instead, looking at a neighborhood walk and pie baking/eating contest. Bryan McPherson suggested using the WalkArlington route that has been published for our neighborhood.
- **Crystal House** – Work is underway on the initial utility relocations for the construction project. Tree removal has begun in earnest this week to clear the worksite. The contractor is publishing a newsletter to keep the neighborhood informed of traffic changes.
- **55+ Program** – David Litman announced that there is a petition effort underway to increase the senior center program from three to five days per week. Currently Aurora Hills is the only program with limited programming days.
- **Short Term Rentals** – Rachel briefed on a use permit request to permit short term rentals in the Millennium Building (across from Amazon HQ 2) because the obsolete units are not renting. Rachel is going to send a letter to the County Board expressing concern with this change, which will serve to drive up rental costs.
- **Beer Garden** – There is a permit request for a beer garden on 22nd Street South at the site of the former Greek restaurant. Much of the seating will be outdoors and we will need to raise concerns about potential noise.
- **Avis on Richmond Highway** – Avis is undertaking a major renovation of the site, we will send a letter to the County reminding them of our previous letters expressing concern with cars coming into the neighborhood rather than using Route 1.
- **AHCA Officer Nominations** – Rachel noted that we will have elections in November, anyone who is interested in serving should let Rachel know. We also need a newsletter editor, it really is too much work for the volunteer President.

Parks and Recreation - Landscape Architect Jeanette Ankoma-Sey presented on the projects that are ongoing in our part of Arlington:

- **Metro Market Square** – between the two Crystal City Metro entrances, along 18th Street South, will begin public engagement soon. Goal is to have a concept ready in the Spring of 2025 and go to the County Board for approval in the fall of 2025.

- **Pawn Shop Park at 23 and Eads** – staff is consolidating feedback on this half-million dollar TIF-funded project and will look at renaming it in the fall. The goal is to begin construction in the summer of 2025 and finish in about a year. It's a tight site and will likely cause traffic problems at the corner for the year of construction. Placement of the neighborhood sign is a significant issue and lots of staff are working feverishly on a location that will work.
- **Junction Park** – work is underway for completion in late 2025 or early 2025.

Jeanette also took questions from the audience and the pre-submitted survey questions:

- **Water Park Connector to Mount Vernon Trail** – Jeanette will need to check at the office to see what can be done to improve maintenance.
- **Ives Park** - there are no similar parks in the pipeline for our neighborhood, participants questions once again why there is no trash can and why we can't have any tree planting done until the master plan is complete in a decade.
- **Joyce and Army Navy Bus Stop** – the complete streets project is really causing problems for bus riders, she will take it back to the staff.
- **Tree Canopy** – trees are a priority for the staff, but it really helps when we raise it as well during public engagements.
- **Virginia Highlands Park, school location?** – Jeanette had no insights into the potential loss of valuable parkland for a new school, only noting the difficult balance between all county services.
- **Nelly Custis Park Flooding** – Jeanette was unaware of the chronic flooding issues, Stacy Meyer will send her more background information.
- **Nelly Custis Water Fountain** – Jeanette said the fountain was likely de-scoped from the park renovation due to the excessive construction and maintenance costs.

Sheriff Jose Quiroz – The Sheriff spoke about his 23 years with the Sheriff's department and his initiatives since being elected sheriff. AHCA was his first civic association engagement as he tries to get out more in the community to inform of the work that he and his 241 staffers are doing, of which the primary role is overseeing the 361 people in jail and operation of the courthouse. His three priority initiatives are:

1. Safe and progressive jail operations focused on rehabilitation
2. Staff wellness and development
3. Community engagement

The Sheriff responded to questions about the operations of his office and encouraged participants to visit the new website, <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Sheriffs-Office>, and dashboard for more information.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary