

Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
January 10, 2024, at Aurora Hills Recreation Center

Opening of Meeting

President Rachel Hicks opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m. with a welcome to the membership and an overview of the agenda for the evening. Rachel noted that it was the first in-person meeting since the pandemic and thanked Good Company Donuts for the delicious donuts.

Minutes Approval

The draft minutes for the November 2023 regular meeting and December 2023 special meeting were approved.

Membership Survey

Rachel reviewed results of the membership survey that was in the newsletter, a practice she intends to follow each month in order to gauge the opinions of the members. As of the time of the meeting, 78 people had completed the survey, 59 reported being members. In discussing the budget question, Rachel gave an overview of the Association's finances and the fact that we have a current balance of \$11,267.94. She proposed keeping a balance of about \$5,000 in reserve. According to the survey, respondents indicated an interest in funding community events and community projects. Some of the activities that led on the survey were environmental services and a neighborhood fair. In order to accomplish these activities, we will need volunteers to lead each of the efforts.

In response to the questions on the survey related to the Monumental Sports arena project in Potomac Yard, 51% were opposed to the project. The reasons cited were traffic, the public financing scheme, and the potential for increased crime. In looking at the positives the top 3 were economic boost, followed closely by none, and then job creation. Nick Giacobbe also gave a brief overview of the forum hosted two nights earlier by the Del Ray Citizens Association with Senator Adam Ebbin and other local officials, available online at <https://delraycitizens.org/2024/01/special-arena-townhall-minutes-january-8-2024>. A motion passed to send a letter to the appropriate authorities pointing out the concerns of our neighborhood.

Development Updates

- Alyssa Gardner, AHCA rep on the KIMCO long range planning committee, gave an update from the November 20 meeting. KIMCO is proposing a modification in their approved site plan for the 17 acre site which includes 2 office towers and 3 residential towers plus open space. This update increases density and redistributes the open space. Worth noting that this is a long-term effort, COSTCO has about 20 years remaining on its lease.
- Nick Giacobbe, AHCA rep on the Block W long range planning committee, reported on the December 17 meeting to look at JBG Smith's initial plans for the site currently occupied by the airport off-ramp. This project is a ways out, JBGS is still negotiating with VDOT on their abandonment and demolition of the roadway. The sector plan permits a 200' tall building but

JBGS is proposing only 7 stories (85') with 370 units, 3,360 square feet of retail, and 200 parking spaces. The site will also include about 38,000 square feet of open space, currently where the volleyball courts are located and the daycare playground.

- Stacy Meyer, AHCA rep on the Melwood Horticultural Training Center long range planning committee, gave an update on their November 28 meeting. Melwood is proposing demolition of the existing former Nelly Custis School building on 23rd Street South and construction of a 104-unit, 100% affordable building with certain units set aside for disabled residents. Stacy reviewed the many concerns the neighborhood has with the building, including its size, financing scheme, and questionable use of the Special GLUP amendment process. When raised with the County Board on January 2, 3 of the 5 Board members expressed concern that nothing is special about the Special GLUP process and that it needed a comprehensive review. The Association sent a letter to the County on January 3 outlining the many concerns, see <https://aurorahighlands.org/wp-content/uploads/AHCA-Melwood-LRPC-Follow-Up-240103-sig-1.pdf>. Rachel is also going to send a letter to Melwood asking them to schedule the meeting on project details that they had agreed to when they briefed the Association on the project on November 8.

Crystal House 3

Danny Ross and the team from APAH briefed on the “minor” site plan amendment to construct a new building on the Crystal House parcel with 432 units for families earning 30-80% of the AMI. The project will have a mix of studio to 3 bedroom apartments, 3 levels of underground parking with 190 spaces for building residents (at a .45 rate), and space for 198 bikes. Since the County is considering this a nominal change to the approved commercial project, there is no site plan review, but rather an online public meeting on January 16 at noon. The project is scheduled for approval at the County Board meeting on February 24, with construction to begin in Q3 2025 and run through Q4 2027.

There was a lively discussion about a number of issues, many of which are still unresolved. Among the neighborhood concerns are:

- Parking – is the .45 ratio sufficient and what will be done to ensure that overflow parking does not end up on the streets of the neighborhood? It has not been an issue in the past since Crystal House is so over-parked, but may become an issue as the number of spaces declines.
- Pets – what will be the pet policy and impact on the neighborhood? It’s an open question and determined on a building-by-building basis.
- Transportation Demand Management – what is the plan? Question taken.
- Public Access Through the Impermeable Superblock – lots of questions about maintaining the cut-through at the corner of 18th and Eads, short answer is that neither APAH nor Washington Housing Conservancy (owners of the overall Crystal House property) want a pedestrian path.
- Student Generation – since the APAH project has more bedrooms and will likely have more school students, has there been a discussion with Arlington Public Schools? No, but will follow up with the schools.
- Park Delivery – Park on Eads Street and park at Fern and 22nd Street scheduled for delivery in 2027/2028 and 2030 respectively, any way to advance them? No, space is needed for parking and construction staging, so no way to deliver any earlier.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary