

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2019

Attendees: 80 people signed in

-- President Miriam Gennari called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. in the Aurora Hills Senior Center.

-- 2019 AHCA officers were recognized: President Miriam Gennari (new for 2019), VP Scott Miles, VP Natasha Atkins, Treasurer Ben Davis (new for 2019), and Corresponding Secretary Heather Spence. Jane Green (new for 2019) volunteered and has been appointed Recording Secretary, filling the position that remained vacant after the last election.

-- The meeting proceeded to the three agenda topics from the January AHCA newsletter.

Accessory Dwelling Presentation

Philip C. Dales

Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh

pdales@thelandlawyers.com

Mr. Dales represents an AHCA neighbor who lives at 734 21st South, who thought his garage apartment would be a legal accessory dwelling under the regulations passed in 2017.

However, the [2017 regulations](#) regarding what qualifies as a second full story (not allowed) and what qualifies as a half story (allowed) has the unintended consequence of disallowing a building that otherwise meets the height restrictions and maximum square feet.

Specifically, if the knee wall is more than 2' high, the garage cannot be used as an accessory dwelling, even if it is still under the 25' height limit, and

Mr. Dales presented this "catch-22" to AHCA because the resident he represents is seeking one of two remedies. Mr. Dales would like feedback from neighbors about these potential remedies.

1. Have the County Board amend the regulations to only stipulate the total height and square footage, without the specific regulations based on knee wall height that caused this unforeseen problem.
2. Have the County Board allow for variances with regard to knee wall height so a structure can be permitted as an Accessory Dwelling on a case by case basis.

Residents who would like to share their perspective with Mr. Dale are encouraged to email him at pdales@thelandlawyers.com

Elementary School Boundaries and Enrollment Projections

Arlington Ridge resident and APS parent Colleen Pickford provided an update on the results of the [2018 Elementary Boundary Adjustments](#).

With the recent growth in the student population, Oakridge Elementary School, located in the Arlington Ridge neighborhood, has been severely overcrowded. As a result of the elementary boundary changes, approximately 200 students will move to Hoffman Boston elementary school in 2019. However, Oakridge will remain at or above capacity for the foreseeable future. Ms. Pickford encouraged neighbors to start proactively preparing for the long-term problems. APS struggles to find available land to build new schools, as well as find money. The next new elementary school is not projected to be built until 2029, at which point 1,400 students will be in relocatable classrooms (trailers). She suggests that our community think about how our neighborhood is going to look and what we're going to need in the future.

Questions:

What is the size of the current Montessori population?

Ms. Pickford did not have exact numbers, but was confident that the program would grow to meet its high demand, which they will have space for in their new building.

Each school has large fields, so how can you say there isn't enough land?

Fields are used by students as well as community members, but we will need to be more creative about joint use spaces. Ms. Pickford encouraged community members to follow the Facilities Advisory Committee.

How many trailers at Oakridge right now?

Currently Oakridge has the maximum number of trailers that the site can hold. The entire 5th grade occupies these trailers (5 classrooms plus some music space)

Another attendee noted that the cafeteria is the limiting factor for space

Amazon

Presentation by Christian Dorsey, Chair of the Arlington County Board, followed by a question and answer session with Mr. Dorsey and County staff Dennis Leach from the Department of Environmental Services and Anthony Fusarelli from Community Planning, Housing and Development.

Mr. Dorsey presented an abbreviated version of this slide presentation:

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Amazon-101.pdf>

TL;DR – Crystal City lost approximately 25,000 jobs since 2000, so there is capacity in the commercial property and in the commuter transportation to absorb the jobs Amazon will bring. The investment from Amazon will allow Arlington to realize some of the exciting features in the Pentagon City plan and the Crystal City Sector Plan. Arlington's direct incentive is 15% of the

growth in the Transit Occupancy Tax (hotel tax), based on the amount received above an established pre-Amazon baseline.

Questions from Neighbors

1. Which part of Potomac Yard?
 - a. North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan (Alexandria)
 - i. Concerned about shopping and retail
 - ii. Virginia Tech campus – triangle
2. Arlington benefits from what happens in our backyard
 - a. Gridlock
 - b. How will we be alleviated in South Arlington?
 - c. Hospital
3. Upzoning River House – adding 1,100 units
 - a. Changing single family zoning?
 - b. Phased plan for Pentagon City (from 1970s)
 - i. 3-4mil sq feet of unrealized development (approved)
 - c. Crystal City sector plan – 2010
 - d. Growth fits with current accepted plans
 - e. River House has inactive site plan
 - f. Additional infill opportunities at Crystal House
4. 23 million dollars incentive
 - a. Has the baseline been established
 - b. Does the baseline adjust over time
 - c. Performance agreement – 25,000 jobs and 4million sqft
 - d. Baseline will take “natural growth” into account
 - e. Stepped payments tied to leased office space – generating RE tax value
5. Sector plan – traffic infrastructure
 - a. Traffic hasn’t dropped even as the office vacancy has increased
 - b. Concerned about cut-through traffic
 - c. Applying traffic demand management
 - d. Need to create a working group to address traffic chokepoint
6. What is the plan and commitment for enforcement?
 - a. Consistently ignored
7. Process – concern about transparency
 - a. Will stuff be shared with the public?
 - b. Upcoming studies of traffic, etc – share method and data
8. Fiscal impact study does not include data or methodology
 - a. How can we check the numbers?
 - b. Steven Fuller study – Commonwealth retained it
9. Amazon should adopt the “Arlington Way” but limited policy tools
 - a. Openness of the Amazon campus
 - b. Would like retail on the ground floor
10. No \$ for the Route 1 and 23rd street intersection – this is the main issue
 - a. Traffic study is complete

- b. Ready for design work
 - c. Reconstruction is fully funded
- 11. Cap property taxes?
 - a. Too much speculation
 - b. Not off the table
- 12. Virginia Highlands Park
 - a. When will a community-based planning begin?
 - b. Need to incorporate new projections
- 13. Dorsey wishes we had more capacity for “visioning” – Amazon gives us that
 - a. Government is treading water, can’t meet demands
- 14. Senior Center – look for ways to open the center full time, and get better facility
- 15. Pedestrian safety and traffic
 - a. Wants a cross-walk at 21st and Fern
 - b. 3C program
- 16. Freddy, 23rd street realignment, Stratus – drop Route 1 below grade,
- 17. Talk more about housing # - only 6,000 residents (or is it units)
 - a. Studies – 6,000 top project of Arlington residents
 - i. 15-20% of workforce lives in Arlington
- 18. Amazon average salary of \$150,000 – will we see the actual salary data?
 - a. Dorsey says yes
 - b. Median salary?

The meeting was unofficially adjourned at 9 p.m.

Jane Green

Recording Secretary