

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2019

**DRAFT**

**Attendees:** 14 people signed in

**Proceedings:**

Scott Miles called the meeting to order at 7:03 in the Aurora Hills Senior Center

**Updates:**

1. Nelly Custis Park reopened, although the center grassy area is still closed. Thank you to the sponsors
2. We sent a resolution in the support of dog parks. Unfortunately, the county is being resistant at the moment, but not giving good reasons. Neighbors need to voice their support. Erik Gutshall is responsive. We had \$600k allocated for a study of the Virginia Highlands Park, but now the county can't find it. And they are saying that a dog park is not a community priority.
3. The County is seeking input on a park for the corner of Fern and 22<sup>nd</sup>, as part of the Crystal House infill site plan development.
4. If you have ideas for topics at our meeting, email [president@aurorahighlands.org](mailto:president@aurorahighlands.org).
5. We will need new officers next year – particularly, President, Vice President, Recording Secretary. Nominations are October, vote is in November. We have really important developments coming and it makes a difference if the Civic Association is engaged. The only chance of influence comes through the Civic Association.

**Regular agenda:**

1. Livability22202

In April, AHCA drafted and approved a “livability statement” to outline the community’s values and needs. This is an opportunity for the three civic associations to come together and work toward positive changes in 22202.

Mike Dowell has been leading a series of community workshops turn this statement into a set of concrete asks we can make as part of upcoming developments.

We've received a positive reactions about the statements and the community conversations, but they need specifics right away. When we have all three civic associations working together, we have a chance to move the needle.

One issue is that Pentagon City doesn't have a sector plan, which means we need this effort even more. The community workshop process is working toward creating a list of community benefits that we can include as part of site plan development processes. We want to ask for long-standing, built commitments, not programs (that rely on a yearly budget and could fade away).

In August, a group of participants held a "charette" to talk about the types of needs for this community. Some highlights from that event:

- We need a centrally located elementary school.
- The community center is small and has limited program, which could be expanded. Unfortunately, community facilities are siloed, and underused.
- We need a hospital-affiliated urgent care center.
- Green pathway through the Neighborhood
- Roaches Run nature trail has plans, but no money
- Dog parks
- Public restrooms, open year-round, 24/7
- Public art
- Historic recognition
- JBG interested in sponsoring a circulator with a small electric vehicle. But, how long would this last? Can we build in assurances?

The next step is the community benefit-focused Site Plan Review Committee on October 14 (unless they reschedule due to Columbus Day).

The plan is to structure community benefits with four components:

1. Affordable Housing – income restricted – we don't have enough knowledge for specific recommendation on this front.
2. Site and area mitigations – for traffic, site benefits
3. Plans and studies – funding for future stuff
4. Pilot projects – opportunity to try cool new ideas – if something fails, we can bank money for other ideas

The next community charette will be on September 28.

Some other things that came up:

- There is a lot of discussion of Route 1 connectivity, particularly should it be elevated or lowered? What do WE want?
- Can we have biophilic, walking corridors through 22202?

- A member of Amazon's community engagement staff, and a 22202 resident, introduced herself.
- We could raise the standard for LEED buildings in the development process. Right now Silver is a community benefit, but it could be the baseline.