

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

July 17, 2019

DRAFT

Attendees: 30 people signed in

Proceedings:

Natasha Atkins called the meeting to order at 7:08 in the Aurora Hills Senior Center

Regular Agenda:

1. Dog parks

Keith Fred, part of the organization that sponsors the Shirlington Dog Park, kicked off the discussion. This park, located at Jennie Dean Park is at capacity. People from 22202 and across the region travel to take their dogs to this park.

Drawing on his experience managing a very successful to park, he advised that we develop a park that people will actually come to. Recently, the county opened a dog park in Clarendon. They spent a lot of money and it has artificial turf. But the dogs don't like it. They want grass and dirt. Residents need to need to keep pressure on the county for basic, dog-friendly features. The park should not be just a photo-op with fancy stuff.

Shirlington dog park is a long narrow park on 2 acres, which gives dogs good opportunity to run. Nowhere else in the county can duplicate this.

As residents continue to move to 22202, especially into new apartment units that are dog friendly, more dog parks are needed.

A couple of locations in 22202 are under consideration for dog parks. Each would need its own sponsoring organization that would be responsible for volunteer maintenance.

According to the County's POPS plan, the standard is a minimum of 10k sq ft for a dog park, but Keith thinks that is not really big enough.

Amazon has dog park facilities as part of their developments, including the PenPlace site Amazon said their space would be open to the public, but this development is a long way out. We need the dog park now.

The additional benefit of a dog park is that it preserves open space that might otherwise be redeveloped.

If we don't create dedicated dog parks, our other parks will be destroyed by dogs and people will run their dogs off leash.

Location #1: Northern side of Virginia Highlands Park near the softball field. This could provide 15k square feet, for both large and small dogs. Keith thinks we need 25k sq ft needed for 30-50 dogs. This would be a temporary use before the community undergoes a reassessment of the space and uses. One option is that the northern softball field could be removed to make both a large dog park and community open space.

The VHP site has many of a dog park's basic requirements:

- Fence
- Water source
- Trash service
- Shed

It is especially important that the new dog parks have good car-free access. The Shirlington dog park is losing 40 parking spaces in the redesign of Jennie Dean Park.

The main discussion involved the concern of dog parks being close to houses. Does the county have standards for distance from a home? It seems not. Decibel levels are established by the county for maximum volume for all uses. Dog parks close at dusk.

Option #2: Eads Park southeast corner (intersection of Eads St. and Fort Scott Dr.)

This site has been submitted by Arlington Ridge Civic Association. The County wants AHCA to also support this location. It must have a sponsoring organization. There needs to be a survey of surrounding residents.

Two neighboring residents attended this meeting, although they are in ARCA, to voice their concern about the noise and traffic that a dog park would bring to their street.

There was discussion of the trees already on the site. We need trees to provide shade, so would trees be cut down? This would have to be worked out with the county to have some protection on the trees.

There was also lots of discussion of other potential sites.

AHCA drafted a letter of support for dog parks in 22202.

Resolution: Aurora Highlands Civic Association supports the creation of at least two public, fenced, off-leash dog parks of sufficient size to accommodate residents within a 15 minute walk, with one temporary park on the north side centered at Virginia Highlands park with the option of expanding into space currently occupied by a softball field, and one on the south side centered at Eads park, open for use by 2020.

In favor – 19

Opposed – 0

2. 23rd Street Bohemian Village

[Powerpoint presentation](#)

The Twenty-Third Street Corridor LLC, owner of many of the properties along 23rd Street “restaurant row” have asked Virginia Tech School of Architecture to undertake a vision study of a village on 23rd Street so as to create an arts and entertainment district in Arlington.

As part of the study they are seeking neighborhood/community support and input for the project to achieve a vision we can all live with. They have already been engaging the Crystal City BID and have a signed letter of intent with Artspace, which provides low-income housing for artists.

Stratis Voustas, managing member, discussed the vision, answered questions, and requested a formal vote from membership to support the initiative.

They are looking at the two square blocks between 22nd and 24th and Eads and Fern. Residents from 24th street were very concerned about the increased development, especially near their homes. They were also concerned that a successful “bohemian village” would lead to increased visitors and a severe shortage of parking for residents. They were especially concerned that Voustas supported rezoning of the north side of 24th St. between Eads and Fern to commercial.

The general response from the audience was that the plan needs more specificity before the community can offer meaningful feedback. At this point, there were too many ideas to be practical. The proposal needs to have clear goals and measures of capacity and capability.

The Twenty-Third Street Corridor LLC will be working with an architecture class at Virginia Tech in Fall 2019. They will come back later with some draft options and, ideally, hold a facilitated conversation with residents.

3. Nellie Custis Park ribbon cutting

The County is planning a public event on July 27 at 11am. AHCA would like to fill out this event with food and music. Natasha suggested a budget of \$500 for the food and entertainment. The attendees voted to approve this budget of \$500.

Final business:

- Update on assault on 26th street
- Traffic count on Fern
- No meeting next month
- Crystal House SPRC meeting postponed until September