

Membership Meeting Minutes
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
February 8, 2023 via Zoom

Opening & Approval of Minutes

President Cory Giacobbe opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with a welcome to the membership and an overview of the agenda for the evening. With 38 participants logged into the meeting, the group approved the minutes for the January meeting that had been posted to the AHCA web site for review.

Police Update

Cory introduced Corporals Kenneth Giles and Areyal Hall from the Community Outreach Unit of the Arlington Police Department. They gave an update on some of the trends, actions the Department is taking and recommendations for how to become a harder target for thieves. Some highlights:

- In the statistics for November 2020 to January 2022 as compared to November 2021 to January 2023, crime increased from 396 reported cases in the AHCA neighborhood to 424 cases. Of those, 157 have been closed (through arrest or administrative processing).
- The largest increase is in larcenies, largely due to incidents at the shopping areas, particularly the Pentagon City Fashion Centre, CVS, and Best Buy.
- A notable incident was the December 11 robbery in the restroom at the Macy's store, another was a carjacking on January 15 that involved three suspects and a vehicle recovery in DC.
- Overall, the crime rate in Arlington County is lower than in neighboring jurisdictions, noting that the overnight population of Arlington is relatively small as compared to the ballooning of numbers during the workday. However, even with relatively lower crime, citizens need to take precautions.
- In discussing carjackings, the perpetrators know that the Arlington Police are not permitted to conduct hot pursuit into the District. As a result, it seems that our neighborhood is desirable for carjackings because thieves know they can be in DC even before the police are notified. The police also suspect that it is a small group/network doing the recent spate of carjackings because the vehicles tend to be recovered in the same area.
- The police are also limited in how much they can patrol because the force is currently down 50 officers.
- How can we keep ourselves safer?
 - Be aware of your surroundings, mindfulness makes a difference
 - Make yourself a harder target, move with a purpose
 - If picking someone up, don't sit idling while catching up on social media – circle the block so that you do not look like an easy target
 - Pay attention to the time of day, do you really need to walk to the market late at night?
 - Be a responsible citizen, the County Board and Commonwealth Attorney are elected officials – let them know that police staffing and robust prosecutions are important.
 - Thieves need three things, the **ability, desire, and opportunity** to commit a crime, look for ways to remove yourself from these factors.

- For more on the Police Department's Community Outreach Unit, visit <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Police-Department/Community-Engagement/Community-Outreach-Unit>, where you can also find an online crime map under Quick Links.

Arlington National Cemetery/Columbia Pike/Southgate – Dana Bres

Dana gave an update on the ongoing effort to relocate Columbia Pike in order to free up the former Navy Annex and parking lots for eventual expansion of the cemetery. Communications as the roads are moved and detours erected are spotty at best and the key is to drive/bike/walk through that area with caution, especially at night. The current construction effort is on the tunnel under the new Columbia Pike roadway that will connect the new maintenance facility with the rest of the cemetery. The current phase runs through 2024 and full completion of the roadworks is not anticipated until summer 2025.

Expanded Crystal City Citizen Review Council – Mike Dowell

As chair of the [Council](#), Mike gave an overview of the work of the Council since its founding at the completion of the 2012 Crystal City Sector Plan. The intention is for the body to serve as a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the vision of the sector plan is reflected over the estimated 40 years it will take to fully build out the area. With the adoption of the Pentagon City Sector Plan last year, the County Board decided that the CCRC had been an effective mechanism and to expand its mandate to include Pentagon City (especially with so much shared infrastructure across the two sector plans). While increasing the area, the Council will also increase its membership of developers, business owners and residents. Our current rep is Pam Van Hine. Cory announced that Ben D'Avanzo and Jill Braun will be our additional representatives. There was also a discussion about the duties and responsibilities of the participants to represent the views and values of AHCA with the Council and also to report back regularly to AHCA on the Council's activities.

Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) reports – 1) Americana – John Whall

First SPRC was held back in November and previously reported out. Next meeting is on Monday, 2/13 and the agenda topics include; Project Updates; Transportation; Green Building & Sustainability; Community Benefits. For more on the project and the link for the meeting on Monday, visit <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Site-Plan/1400-Richmond-Highway>.

2) Crystal Towers 3 – Ben D'Avanzo

This is an infill project at the Dweck site and there was a walking tour last Friday. Some of the issues to be dealt with will include the conflicting guidance on height between the Crystal City Sector Plan and the current zoning of the site. There is not a question on density, the project is being built within the current by-right allowance. Circulation on the site will need to be reviewed carefully, they propose reducing the garage from two entrance/exits to only one. The proposed retail on Eads Street will remove a significant number of mature trees that will be replaced with twigs and a financial contribution to the Tree Canopy Fund. The first SPRC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 2/23, for more on the project and the link to the 2/23 meeting, visit <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Site-Plan/1600-s-eads-crystal-towers-3>.

Treasurer Report – Ben Watts

Ben reported that the Association is currently running a deficit for this year due to the limited number of paid memberships and increased cost of printing the newsletter. There is currently a cushion to cover these costs while the Association considers things like raising dues, increasing memberships (over the past three years 450 different people have joined, only 168 have joined to date for 2023), and increasing advertising. Cory asked for volunteers to serve on a committee to look at budget, advertising, and outreach.

Zoning – Stacy Meyer

Stacy reported that there has been no movement on the Melwood or Eads Street housing proposals, both are still in the Tier 2 review process. She expressed concerns that there is a lack of robust technical planning and that analysis of things like traffic and infrastructure are done on a project-by-project basis. Nobody is looking at the comprehensive impacts that the aggregate of these projects will have on 22202 as a whole.

Stacy also reported on a resolution that will be taken up at the Civic Federation on 2/21 looking at the lack of transparency by the County Board. The robust resolution was drafted by the past 5 presidents of the Civic Federation and has been supported by AHCA throughout the process. To read the full resolution and learn more about the next meeting, visit <https://www.civfed.org>.

Arlington Neighborhoods Program (ANP)

Following up on the presentation at the January meeting by our representative to the ANP, David Litman, Cory reiterated the call for volunteers for a committee to look at possible project proposals for the neighborhood to submit for funding consideration.

Advent Lutheran Food Drive

Cory reminded about the notice in the newsletter on the Advent Lutheran Church food collection for AFAC. Donations are being accepted at the front door on Arlington Ridge Road through Super Bowl Sunday (February 12) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 11-3 and weekends from 9 to noon.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Nicholas J. Giacobbe, Jr.
Recording Secretary