

North Ridge Citizens' Association
Minutes for May 11, 2020
Virtual "Zoom" Meeting

NRCA President Chuck Kent called the meeting to order at 7:30. An attendance list is attached to these minutes.

Sgt. Thomas Ground, the Police Department's liaison to NRCA, gave a report that covered the period of April 14 through May 11. He said that crime in North Ridge during this period was "very, very low." There had been only two thefts: one was a license plate. In the second, an individual had had an automobile stolen on Circle Hill Road. That individual then rented an identical vehicle, which the same persons tried to steal again. The attempt was captured on video. In both instances the vehicle was unlocked.

Helen McIlvaine, Director, Office of Housing for the City of Alexandria, addressed the group. She presented a detailed PowerPoint on the missions of the Office of Housing and the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority ("ARHA"). That presentation is on the North Ridge Citizens' Association website.

In response to a question Ms. McIlvaine noted that the average rent in Alexandria is up 122 percent and the average cost of buying a home is up 200 percent since 2000, while the average wage is only up 46 percent over the same period. There has also been a decrease in federal funding for affordable housing. New job growth in the City has been in hospitality, construction and service jobs that are relatively lower paying. Thus market rate rents are outstripping average incomes and many homes that were affordable for purchase by average wage earners are no longer so. Of Alexandria families earning incomes up to \$75,000, 73 percent pay too much for housing under standard affordability formulas. Three percent of Alexandria housing stock is deemed "market affordable," 5 percent is "committed affordable" (i.e., committed to be available for 40 or more years), and 11 percent of the city-wide housing stock is affordable condos. (See slides in PowerPoint for definitions of affordable housing.)

Ms. McIlvaine said that the City goal is 2,000 affordable housing units. Two ways the City seeks to reach this goal are 1) asking developers who seek extra height or density to provide affordable units in return for approval of their requests and 2) seeking voluntary developer contributions to the housing trust fund. Alexandria also receives revenues from the meal tax.

Ms. McIlvaine said the City is looking at the idea of "co-location" where housing would be part of a municipal project. Reginald Brown asked whether the City was planning to look at placing affordable housing units on the George Mason School property. He asked what standards would apply to a decision to place affordable

housing there and noted that there is considerable neighborhood opposition to the idea. Ms. McIlvaine replied that her office had not done any work on "City uses of that site." She said that the City does need to look at all opportunities to use space but noted that shared use could be open space or athletic fields. She emphasized that the City will engage the community before making any decisions about shared use.

Ms. McIlvaine mentioned two rental assistance programs. The first was federal block grants, which are approximately \$70,000 for this year. The second consists of allotments from the State. The amount of State funds available this year had not been shared yet with the City but the City Manager expected to hear from the State soon, perhaps as soon as the day after the meeting. The portion of the affordable housing budget that has been provided by the dedicated meal tax has been just over \$5 million but is likely to be reduced in the revised budget to an estimated \$4.1 million. Along with approximately \$2 million in developer-provided funds and \$1.7 in federal grant money, the overall funds for affordable housing will be approximately \$8 million.

Ms. McIlvaine noted that the affordable housing the City builds is just "a more affordable option" for persons who are already living in Alexandria. There is no intent to "bring new people into the City." She further noted that affordable housing goals are built into small area plans. The City attempts to build plans that will produce a variety of benefits for residents such as access to public transportation, parks, and other amenities, along with affordable housing where appropriate and feasible.

Jennifer Dougherty asked if the affordable housing units above the firehouse in Potomac Yards are scheduled to revert to the developer. She also asked what amount of affordable housing was expected as part of the proposed developments in Arlandria. Ms. McIlvaine replied that the sixty-four units above the firehouse were provided by a non-profit developer and will always be affordable units. She said that the Arlandria development plans are in their "early days." The City wants to keep the existing affordable housing in the area but wants to include affordable and as well as market rate housing in the development. There is, however, no goal yet for the number of these houses.

Kay Stimson asked if housing is an acceptable use of the land behind George Mason. Ms. McIlvaine's response was inaudible due to a poor connection.

Ms. Stimson then asked if the City makes a developer's application available for review by interested members of the community and, in general, what the level of disclosure and transparency is for development projects. Again, Ms. McIlvaine's answer was largely inaudible.

Fran Vogel asked what effect Covid was having on the development of affordable housing plans. Ms. McIlvaine replied that one result might be changes in design standards.

Sunny Yoder asked for further information on the ratio between increases in permitted density for builders and "bonus" affordable units. Ms. McIlvaine said that she would need to check and would send North Ridge information on this. She noted that increased density permits provide the only opportunity for the City to require affordable housing to be built.

Mr. Kent noted that it was 9 o'clock and thanked Ms. McIlvaine for her presentation. Ms. McIlvaine then left the meeting.

Sunny Yoder gave an update on behalf of the Association's Planning and Zoning Committee (PZC). The Committee believes the City has been doing a good job keeping itself running during the Covid emergency. It has been setting emergency operating principles and processes and conducting open proceedings. Under the Freedom of Information Act, electronic meetings are not allowed unless they deal directly with the emergency. State Attorney General Mark Herring, though, has issued an opinion granting greater latitude to local governments, stating that they may hold electronic meetings on matters that, if left unattended, could cause harm. Now the City has decided that as of June it will do all of its public meetings electronically, including those involving land use matters.

Ms. Yoder moved that the Association adopt the land use guidelines that the PZC had prepared. Ms. Stimson seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Ms. Yoder reported that the owners of 1317 Circle Hill will be seeking a special exception to construct a second story addition. The neighbors are supportive. The matter is scheduled for hearing by the Board of Zoning Appeals on June 8.

Ms. Yoder next reported that the owners of 1301 Circle Hill are planning to demolish the existing home and build another. They will need a special use permit and the Association will need to consider whether or not to take a position on the special use permit application.

Ms. Yoder then reported on several Alexandria-wide issues.

The PZC has been closely watching the City's actions on alternative dwelling units (ADUs). The City and the Urban Institute are working to create an ADU policy with the goal of expanding housing options. Fairfax and Arlington already have ADU policies. North Ridge has asked the City (via an April 17 letter) to ensure that there are real communications with the community over the development of the policy. The Association took no position on ADUs, pending the receipt of more information about the policy.

There is a revised "Oakdale Triangle" proposal. (The area is bounded by Route 1, Jefferson Park and Calvert and Fannon streets.) The new proposal would add an INOVA "Healthplex" and would reduce the amount of retail space. The Healthplex would include sixty-five affordable housing units in return for the developer being afforded higher density building rights along Route 1.

Ms. Yoder reported that the Association has asked about the potential effect of the development on North Ridge and, in particular, the effect on traffic on Route 1 and Glebe Road and were informed that a traffic impact study is expected to be completed by July. We have also inquired about routes for ambulances using the Healthplex and were told that the estimate is between four and five trips a day between 10 am and 10 pm. We are seeking more information on this subject. The current estimate is that there will be a hearing on the developer's special use requests in early 2021 and the project will be completed in 2023.

Ms. Yoder advised that four building will occupy the movie theater space in Potomac Yard. The Potomac Yard design Advisory Committee will be reviewing architectural designs at its virtual meeting on May 13. The developers are seeking amendments to their permits to increase building heights, to have additional flexibility between the residential and commercial space in its southern-most buildings, and to relocate the space dedicated for a public school from the north end to the south end of Potomac Yard.

Mr. Kent asked Ms. Yoder to have the PZC continue to monitor the ADU policy development and the Oakdale plans.

Kay Stimson reported that there were no new developments on the George Mason Elementary School renovation proposal.

Amy Burwell noted that the School Board plans to hold weekly virtual meetings that will be open the public. The school system is also making sure that all Alexandria children, if they so desire, will have the meals they were normally provided by the system.

Bruce Snapp reported that there were no new developments on the transportation front.

Charlotte Corcoran said that since the face mask collection program for Goodwin House was started one month ago, 650 masks had been donated. She is now thinking of distributing masks at food banks. All the masks are cloth masks, not medical grade masks.

Mr. Kent reported that the household waste pickup project had been a signal success with thirty-five households participating. He also thanked Kay Stimson and Tack Richardson for arranging for food trucks to periodically serve the neighborhood. That effort has also been a major success.

Ms. Stimson noted that Board member John Winstead will match donations to provide food truck meals to essential personnel such as firemen, up to \$2,000. She also noted that the Association has committed to deliver a meal service to Carpenter's Shelter by the end of the month. She also asked that North Ridge members contribute to Trinity Methodist's food drive fund.

Mr. Kent reported that Ms. Yoder has volunteered to put together an inventory of Board member skills.

Mr. Kent noted that parents had been asking about whether an alternative type Wheel Day could be held this year. Ms. Burwell suggested that we could have "car day." Ms. Snapp said she believed Campbell Vogel and Elizabeth Goslin were looking at alternatives.

Mr. Kent said that Lindsay Cadillac is planning a redevelopment and had asked to make a presentation to the Association at our June 8 meeting.

Mr. Kent gaveled the meeting closed at 9:41.

Russ Bailey
Scribe

Attendance List:

Chuck Kent	Bruce Schmid
Russ Bailey	Carter Flemming
Kay Stimson	Jackie Colburn
Bill Clayton	Jarred Brown
Lyn Gubser	Jason Scofi
Jeanne Snapp	Scott Gunn
Bruce Snapp	Matthew Hardiman
Amy Burwell	Meghan Rainey
Rachel Newhouse	Pamela Smith
Tack Richardson	Sean Gallagher
Bruce Johnson	Jennifer Dougherty
Diana Day	Julie Porter
John Winstead	Kelley
Kate Crawley	Stacie
Mike and Linda Oliver	202-361-7447
Bruce Johnson	301-785-8717
Charlotte Corcoran	703-806-6980
Jane Seward	
William Barnett	

AJ Heidmann