

MEETING MINUTES: North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) Monthly Meeting December 13, 2021 – Zoom Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by President John Fehrenbach. This meeting had approx. 35 virtual attendees.

Board Members in Attendance

- John Fehrenbach, President
- Tack Richardson, Treasurer
- Kay Stimson, Scribe
- Moira Buzby
- Jaqueline Coleburn
- Jeanne Snapp
- Bruce Snapp
- Lyn Gubser
- Sunny Yoder
- Lee Guerry
- Chris Gay
- Bob Miller
- Meghan Rainey
- Sean Gallagher
- Joe Costigan
- John Winstead
- Mimi Saunders

ACP Neighborhood Crime Report & Presentation on Sheriff's Office Outreach

ACP Sgt. Tommy Ground reminded residents to lock their cars and take their keys, and he gave some friendly advice on secure holiday package delivery/theft prevention.

Presentation – Mr. Brian Rahal, P.E., CFM, Civil Engineer IV / Section Lead, Stormwater Management Division, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (slides attached)

Overview and discussion on City stormwater management efforts, including raising the stormwater management fee for residents to offset costs of major projects the City is undertaking, with a PowerPoint slide presentation. Mr. Rahal said North Ridge is part of three major watersheds: Four Mile Run, Hooffs Run, and Taylor Run. Rain gauges have been added in various sites, including the George Mason Elementary School property. Q&A followed, including three questions provided by NRCA prior to the presentation.

- **Q: How does City treat runoff from neighboring property being developed/redeveloped?**
A: Not every property can capture its stormwater runoff. It will follow topography as a storm progresses, and it will run downhill. No requirement for properties that are developed or redeveloped under stormwater mitigations, unless the existing runoff path is altered (e.g., 401 High Street).

- Q: Please discuss local problem areas, including Scroggins & West Braddock, plus Tennessee Avenue.**

A: Mr. Rahal presented stormwater drainage images before development near the W. Braddock mega-church site under construction, stating the existing infrastructure is “shallow” and doesn’t handle all drainage well due to age (adding it was recently inspected and the City seeks to maintain it). The church renovation is adding some pipes, etc. Upon additional questioning, Mr. Rahal said it was important to understand the cause of basement flooding for residents in this area, but he did not know the exact cause of the flooding. He said stormwater/sewer overflows “may be” a cause of flooding in basements. The main thing the City can do is to make sure the available stormwater system is “clean and clear.” He added that he had not heard from residents in this area “for awhile.”
- Q: How can City be more prepared for the next “superstorm” event like the one last year?**

A: Not much we can do. Let’s hope we don’t have another event like that. Hard to know with climate change. City now has a rain gauge at George Mason, and we can learn more.
- Q: We know that climate change is real. Is it not time for your office to start looking forward to developing a more resilient infrastructure for the City?**

A: Yes, it’s a “tough challenge.” The City is certainly taking the input.
- Q: Do we ever ask developers to do upgrades to our wastewater/stormwater infrastructure as part of the deal for being able to build in this City (e.g., W. Braddock and Scroggins)?**

A: There is a balance that we’re trying to strike there. If City staff feel that it’s something a developer can take on, we start having those discussions (citing development deal near Braddock Metro with sanitary sewer accommodations). It’s a tricky thing. We do try to get a developer that’s bringing more [density to a site] without overwhelming the infrastructure. Sometimes they are being asked to hold back more on a site because of the existing infrastructure.
- Q: How big is the line that runs near W. Braddock and Scroggins?**

A: The pipe across Scroggins is 12”. It runs to the W. Braddock pipe which is 18”.
- Q: What is the formula for reducing right (up to 10%) based on infrastructure/hardscape, etc. if you see adverse effects to wastewater management?**

A: Peak flow runoff is key; can be no more than existing.
- Q: How long has it been since the City looked at its formula?**

A: IDF curve for design instituted by the City back in the 1980s is pretty conservative and has been, until now. It’s why the City added more rain gauges. We’re sticking to what we’ve had since the 1980’s, which has been conservative. Matches closely with predictions for climate change. Still need to catch up, but will be part of our next iteration for design.
- Q: Can you explain the Tennessee Avenue situation with water?**

A: Not fully prepared to talk about this area. Mr. Rahal offered to follow up after the meeting.

Approval of November 8th Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve November meeting minutes, then seconded. Approved by unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer's Report – Tack Richardson

Balance:

- Wells Fargo = \$9,353.56 (as of 11/24/21)
- Burke and Herbert = \$7,693.96 (as of 12/10/21)
- PayPal = \$376.20 (as of 12/10/21)

Transactions:

- Revenues o \$40.00 – Membership Checks
 - \$300.96 – PayPal (Electronic Membership Dues and Donations, Minus Fees)
 - Expenses of \$25.00 – Virginia State Corporation Commission Annual Fee
 - \$748.80 – Digital Phenom – Website Upgrades and Maintenance
 - \$1,960.00 – Taylor Run Watershed Monitoring Reimbursement

Other:

- Wells Fargo checking account will be closed by end of 2021, with all remaining funds to be transferred to Burke & Herbert Bank.
- Virginia State Corporation Registered Agent changed, Annual Report filed, Annual Dues paid.
- Met with NRCA President John Fehrenbach to discuss modernizing/aligning the budget for FY22.

Still waiting for results from Tree Sale 2021. Thanks to Jay Friedman and all NRCA volunteers.

Planning & Zoning Update, Including Noise Ordinance – Sunny Yoder

A summary of land use issues impacting North Ridge was provided.

SUP Application for 401 High Street

The Planning Commission approved the SUP application for 401 High Street. A property neighbor, Mr. Chad Stackhouse, spoke in opposition to the project. NRCA submitted a letter with questions about the bulk/compatibility of the proposed house with neighboring properties and stormwater runoff. SUP is likely to be approved by Council. Increasingly clear that the size of new basements is contributing to issues.

Noise Ordinance Revision

City Council will take up the revised proposal for the City Noise Ordinance on Dec. 14, 2021 (see [staff presentation](#)). A draft NRCA letter sent to the Board has been circulated for addition to the meeting docket. Residents urged to weigh in with Council. More noise ordinance info: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Noise>.

Small Area Plan for Arlandria-Chirilagua

The Planning Commission unanimously approved the Plan on November 8, 2021. It has been revised to accommodate up to double the existing height and much greater density, with bonus density allowances for developers. The current zoning plan has maximum heights of fifty feet along Mt. Vernon Avenue, with up to 65 feet by-right. The Small Area Plan is now docketed for Council vote on December 18.

During the Planning Commission hearing, there was notable opposition to the Plan from Tenants & Workers United, local business owners, and residents concerned about being driven out of the community, but it still passed. The parcel at West Glebe and Mt. Vernon Avenue that includes the old Safeway store and a large,

asphalt parking lot – plus the parking lot across from the Birchmere entrance – are among the sites being proposed for major redevelopment. Alexandria Housing Development Corporation has purchased these properties and is looking to build two large, residential buildings with hundreds of new multi-family units. One is a ten-story building and the other is a seven-story building with ground floor commercial. The proposed goal is currently 450 affordable residential units, with 80% affordable at 80% AMI and 20% at 40% AMI.

NRCA communicated several concerns through a comments letter, including:

- The Plan indicates residential/commercial zoning for the Cora Kelly School Site (the Planning Commission indicated that this showed existing zoning for the site)
- Added traffic along Mount Vernon and W. Glebe (Commission said don't worry, changes are minor)
- Changes that do not adequately reflect neighborhood character/design and would greatly change the streetscape and dramatically increase density—and the detrimental effects of increased density — along Mt. Vernon Avenue and surrounding areas like North Ridge. Loss of tree canopy/green space, school capacity, flooding and traffic are all issues.

Brief discussion followed on the Plan's mention of future rezoning for the area approximately from W. Glebe Road Bridge to Dominion Power site (900 block of W. Glebe Rd). Planning Commission said no vision for the area now, and Dominion Power isn't going anywhere soon.

Board Member Jeanne Snapp made a comment that the NRCA Board has heard from neighbors concerned about the massive new amounts of density. Would they like to comment?

From Jim and Anne-Marie Minnis: Safeway site decision (Docket Item #4) was deferred to December 18th. Concern for two buildings of extensive height beyond the existing four floors. Height density bonus to developers for affordable housing seems sensible, but this is a lot of additional height. More than 80 percent of units will be able to accommodate more than three people (multi-family). Supportive of more affordable housing, but scale is out of step with Arlandria, and no real plan to accommodate so many additional people.

From Bill Corin: Feedback reflects my own thinking and comments made before the Planning Commission. Seems like there is a siloed approach between planning, schools, and water/sewer. We all agree that affordable housing is a problem – it's a major issue in every city. New York rejected Amazon facility due to concerns. Housing is a regional problem, and if Alexandria decided to put up fifty buildings of 100 ft. height, we would fill up our City and still not be able to address the problem in the DC Metro region. We cannot as one city fix this problem. Seems like our leaders are hell bent to try and fix it on their own.

Brief discussion of other civic associations/organizations that may be concerned. Board Member Moira Buzby wondered if some kind of grassroots coalition could be formed to propose reasonable solutions. Board Member Lyn Gubser said there appears to be little concern for displacement of current Arlandria residents and questioned whether it made sense for the City to be proposing density with a road diet for W. Glebe Road. Mr. Gubser also said that NRCA should continue to fight for school children and the preservation of school space solely for educational uses.

Board Member Bob Miller commented that Arlington County recently broke ground on renovation of a church building with affordable housing units added to the new structure.

President John Fehrenbach said he would like to know what NRCA should comment on regarding the Plan. Board Member Jeanne Snapp said NRCA should write a letter and include school and traffic concerns.

Board Member Kay Stimson said that the proposed road diet for W. Glebe Road should be a future meeting topic unto itself due to existing concerns from neighbors on Tennessee and Old Dominion regarding cut-through traffic and parking problems.

General discussion on getting residents to speak at the Council meeting, including a NRCA speaker.

Dec. 9th Virtual Alexandria Public Forum on Housing

See enclosed summary report from Board Members Lyn Gubser and Mimi Saunders (Page 6).

Transportation Update – Bruce Snapp

W Glebe Road Bridge Reconstruction Project

Construction on the bridge set to begin in April 2022. Projected to take about a year. Won't help with traffic. Also a brief discussion that Metro is at peak capacity.

Membership Update – John Fehrenbach

NRCA is starting to collect membership fees and donations. No exact figures now, but “care packages” have been delivered to volunteers who have offered to help promote the association to neighbors. Contact info@northridgecitizens.org if interested in volunteering/helping.

Taylor Run Update – John Fehrenbach

Russ Bailey not able to join, but sent a brief report. The City has not begun mediated discussions that it agreed to regarding Taylor Run. The NRCA monitoring team is wrapping up its reporting and will have an update for membership at the January 2022 monthly meeting.

Holiday Events – John Fehrenbach

Thanks to Jay Friedman for his leadership on the tree sale and to all volunteers. It went very well. Also thanks to Rachel Colangelo for her leadership on the Tree Lighting at the Pit. Lots of happy families.

New Business

No new business was introduced. Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by KS
December 14, 2021

ADDENDUM: Summary Report on the City of Alexandria Fair Housing Public Forum

December 9, 2021

By Lyn Gubser & Mimi Saunders

The Alexandria Fair Housing Public Forum was more a product of the Council of Governments (COG) than the City of Alexandria, and the template for this forum and its online structure were even prepared by the COG. Advertised as an opportunity for Alexandria citizens to have their say and input into policymaking for public housing in Alexandria, there was absolutely no opportunity for this to occur. That was not surprising, as the forum was conducted at 6:30 Thursday during rush hour, only through a cumbersome and technically flawed registration process that saw many unable to register and others that were unintentionally dropped during the presentations. At no point were there more than 58 people online, including staff and persons from public housing authorities from Maryland and Pennsylvania, as well as Arlington and other Virginia locations.

Of the two-hour forum, only 26 minutes were allowed for questioning through online breakout rooms. The first one and one-half hours were taken up by a discussion of the history of public housing going back to the Housing Act of 1964 and discussing its impact on the Greater Washington Area.

Then followed the breakout sessions, which covered housing deficits, present developments, and services for the disabled. During the presentation on the public housing deficit the question was asked as to why so few of the thousands of new units being built throughout Alexandria are affordable and those that are “get snapped up immediately so that it doesn’t even make a dent in the affordable housing problem?” Mimi commented that it would make more sense for the City to itself contract with developers to build attractive, mid-size buildings having a high percentage of units dedicated to affordable housing. The moderator responded that this was not possible because “it would be discriminatory.” Are Lloyd’s and Presidential Greens considered discriminatory, she asked? There was no response. What IS Alexandria’s housing deficit? moderator Diane Glauber of the Housing Office was asked. When she could not answer the question, City Councilman Canek Aguirre stepped in to say that Alexandria “is still builder-friendly, but we are trying to change that.” (*Huh?*)

Helen McIlvaine, director of the Alexandria Office of Housing spent most of the allotted 26 minutes of the forum on present developments discussing the financial needs of public housing in Alexandria and the size and scope of present and planned projects to reduce the perceived deficit for affordable housing. Through the restricted chat box Lyn was able to ask but one question of McIlvaine, which was as follows:

Last night the Planning Commission approved the construction of 1,000 housing units in Arlandria, less than 100 will be public housing and not necessarily affordable. What is the City doing to help the families of literally hundreds of displaced Hispanics find homes elsewhere in the City? Will Arlington be able to provide housing for our Hispanic working poor?

McIlvaine replied that the City has promised to protect the cultural character of Arlandria and will provide the necessary money to keep in their homes the present Hispanic population. She said that everything possible will be done to minimize the effect of the Arlandria Development on its Hispanic citizens. She acknowledged a need to preserve the special culture of the families there. [As it did not involve housing, McIlvaine did not comment on the many Hispanic stores and shops in Arlandria, the owners of which fear for their economic lives and had begged the Planning Commission to reject the project that the Commission then passed.]

###