

**Meeting Minutes: Northridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) Monthly Meeting
February 14, 2022 — Zoom Virtual Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by President John Fehrenbach.

Board Members in Attendance

- John Fehrenbach, President
- Chuck Kent, Past President
- Tack Richardson, Treasurer
- Russ Bailey, Parliamentarian
- Sunny Yoder
- Mimi Saunders
- Ashley Berrang
- Bob Miller
- Bruce Snapp
- Jeanne Snapp
- Chris Gay
- Jackie Coleburn
- Lyn Gubser
- Moira Buzby

ACP Neighborhood Crime Report

ACP Sgt. Tommy Ground was not available to present a neighborhood crime report. He distributed a short update via email the following day (*attached*). His update indicated that several (4) crimes involved unlocked vehicles, and that there was a notable number (3) of stolen catalytic converters. (Note that the one stolen vehicle was not in North Ridge, but near the Braddock Rd. Metro.)

Presentation - Alexandria's Carbon Emissions Reduction Goals (David Peabody)

Mr. Peabody, an Alexandria architect and Northridge neighbor, was invited to make a presentation titled "Meeting Alexandria's 2030 Climate Goals." The purpose of his presentation was to explain the city's 2030 climate goals, where we are now, and what his group (Build Our Future) is doing to move the goals forward.

Mr. Peabody's presentation touched on the following points:

- The definition of "Net Zero Buildings" whereby a building puts as much energy into the grid as it takes out, and "Passive House" which uses design features to reduce energy use to a minimum for a building.

- An overview of the current existing energy grid versus microgrids which represent the emerging energy economy.
- The City of Alexandria’s “Eco-City Proclamation” from June 2008, which pledged to make a number of environmental changes, but wasn’t effective due to a lack of financial and political backing.
- The City of Alexandria’s “Unanimous Declaration of Climate Emergency” from October 2012, which recommitted to halving the city’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, but again committed no funds to put the plan into action.
- The City’s “Task Force on the Environment” designed to help enact this ambitious goal from 2012, but created no connection between policies and actions.
- The City started work on flood mitigation, but no other environmental issues, and developers continue to advance projects with only basic building code requirements under the old “Green Building Policy” (with no advanced energy-saving requirement).
- The City hasn’t updated Special Use Permits (SUPs) to conform with its energy commitments, and developers won’t do it voluntarily.
- Mr. Peabody initiated conversations with a representative from the Environmental Policy Commission and from the Planning Commission to motivate the City to transform their policies into concrete action.
- The new energy economy is already moving quickly in other communities due to breakthroughs in technology, declining costs, and the ongoing transformation of the market.
- City leaders are concerned about environmental issues, but there is no coordination between departments, and staff doesn’t have a mandate from the City Council (where it’s often listed as a lower priority than more tangible issues).
- Build Our Future is encouraging citizens to speak up to City Council members, who in turn, can give a mandate to city staff regarding these concerns.
- Build our Future has a website at www.BuildOurFuture.org.
- Build Our Future has two goals: 1.) to educate the public on the role of buildings in achieving 2030 climate goals (both challenges and opportunities), and 2.) to announce key votes in the City relating to buildings.
- Their focus is on buildings because 57% of greenhouse gases come from buildings.
- They will host a series of webinars designed to: 1.) inspire through knowledge, 2.) show what other cities are doing, and 3.) demonstrate that this is a win/win for the City.
- There are several success stories including: 1.) a healthcare system’s conversion to all renewable energy in Wisconsin, 2.) a Passive House Certified multi-family housing development system in Kansas City, Missouri, and 3.) a program to achieve total decarbonization by 2030 in Ithaca, New York.
- Upcoming webinars are scheduled to address: 1.) the ability to build Passive Houses affordably, 2.) retrofitting houses/large buildings efficiently, 3.) electrification, 4.) passive and net zero energy design, and 5.) success stories such as MacArthur Elementary School and Alexandria High School.
- Citizens in the North Ridge community can help by contacting the Mayor and City Council Members, attending critical meetings, and talking to neighbors.

- Neighbors can join the email list at info@buildourfuture.org or visit the website at www.buildourfuture.org. Neighbors can reach Mr. Peabody at david@greenhaus.org.

Q: The City is built out, yet the City increases density and uses the goal of affordable housing as justification and to deflect criticism. Won't increasing density (and people) adversely affect any effort to become more climate neutral?

A: Absolutely, especially if we aren't making new construction zero energy construction. If you are trying to cut emissions by half, it's crazy not to build zero-energy buildings when building new construction. The City has the power to make it policy.

Q: How is economics driving the trend, making projects more affordable?

A: It's a large-scale trend. Pricing is coming down on renewable energy. In 2030, the cost of transporting energy will be higher than producing it locally. It will drive people who want to build as many renewables as possible to keep costs down, and to build very energy efficient buildings. Part of that economic change comes from microgrids that will be buying and selling energy in real time.

Q: Do we have a chance to impact the development in Arlandria?

A: Yes, if we speak up and let it be known we care. Again, it's an SUP. The City is starting to look at affordable housing with AHRA, and they are interested in doing this by retro-fitting old buildings and constructing new buildings. DC is already requiring this.

Q: Knowing what North Ridge is like, how we have a mature tree canopy we want to protect, what options are there for renewable energy for our homes?

A: Trees are a factor. We don't have to make zero-energy homes, we just need to make them better. Every building is different; there is no one solution. Mr. Peabody cut energy usage by 50% through small tweaks in his home. He installed solar panels despite less-than-ideal conditions.

Q: What are the chances we can have an impact on the new INOVA development?

A: There is no way to change anything by law. That train left the station last spring when developers refused all requests to make voluntary contributions. The only way to make changes would be through community action.

Q: How do we get information about upcoming meetings?

A: Through the website and email address (listed above).

Q: Should NRCA put together a position to support and advocate for these initiatives?

A: Yes, Jeanne Snapp will lead the effort to frame the issue to consider at a later meeting. Chuck Kent offered to help.

Approval of January 10 Meeting Minutes

There was a motion to approve minutes, then seconded. Meeting minutes approved by unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer's Report — Tack Richardson

The financial report (*attached*) was circulated prior to the meeting. NRCA is in a very good financial position.

There are two recent large deposits relating to the Christmas tree sales (\$4,290.26) and membership (\$320.62). There should be more membership dues coming in next month. We are heading into budget season scheduled for March or April.

Planning and Zoning — Sunny Yoder

Sunny included a written report (*attached*) prior to the meeting. The SUP to demolish and rebuild 3312 Circle Hill Road was approved, and the conditions addressed some concerns that NRCA outlined in a recent letter. Others may be address at a later stage relating to grading. City has been approving many development projects, including the Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan, the Safeway redevelopment, and the Minnie Howard Modernization Project. The Co-living policy was also approved. We will keep a close eye on this issue, as it will probably return in regards to Single Family Zones.

The City is holding a zoom call regarding the Minnie Howard Modernization Project on February 23 at 6:00 pm. John will forward the details. NRCA members can visit the Alexandria City Public School site to sign up for email updates on each of the modernization plans.

The City recently purchased a property on 1703 N. Beauregard Street to use as swing space for George Mason Elementary and Cora Kelly Elementary students. The swing space will be used to temporarily house students during school construction/modernization projects. Once it's use as swing space is accomplished, it will be turned into a new school for approximately 600 students.

Transportation — Bruce Snapp

The City of Arlington announced it will schedule work soon on the Shirlington Road Bridge that goes across Four Mile Run. It is more than cosmetic work, but it won't result in any major shutdowns. There is no plan to start work on the South Glebe Road Bridge despite traffic cones in place to direct traffic. It is still in the design phase, and likely delayed by the Covid pandemic.

Membership — John Fehrenbach

NRCA is currently halfway to where we were at the end of 2021. We have 60 paid households as of yesterday for a total of \$1,500, as opposed to 125 households for a total of \$3,000 for the end of last

year. Mr. Fehrenbach again asked that Board members confirm which houses received NRCA membership packages at their home last year.

Christmas Tree Sales — Tack Richardson and John Fehrenbach

It was a good year for the Christmas tree sales. Previous sales have varied widely, but this year's profits at \$4,300 was in the middle-upper range. The Association was pleased with the condition of the trees and grateful for members' help.

Taylor Run — Russ Bailey

Alexandria City staff attended the Environmental Policy Commission meeting last month to present a new plan to meet the City's Chesapeake Bay Pollution Reduction obligations. The plan no longer includes Taylor Run or Strawberry Run stream reconstruction. The City will meet its goals without counting on these streams, though infrastructure changes are still planned.

A working group has been established to work on a mediation process. It appears the process will have several steps — information gathering, discussion of alternatives, proposals, etc. — hopefully leading to a consensus.

A mediation firm from UVA, the Institute for Engagement and Negotiation, will develop this effort and attend the next Environmental Policy Commission meeting this month.

NRCA is hopeful that the process will achieve satisfactory results. The initial objectives (that wetlands and tree groves not be touched) seems to have been achieved absence of any backsliding. NRCA will have an opportunity to have input into the proposal.

Comments were made that there is a need for NRCA to develop a plan and not be passive. We need to think of infrastructure repairs and storm water improvements that are needed, as well as other improvements the neighborhood would like to see. North Ridge should organize around this issue and communicate our thoughts to the City.

Annual Meeting — John Fehrenbach

Alexandria's City Manager will appear at the annual meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 17 at 7:30 pm. This meeting should be a big draw for Board members and the community. We will shorten the routine business aspects of the meeting to focus on issues we want to discuss with the City Manager.

We will also have a vote for Officers and Board Members. The Nominating Committee has distributed a slate of candidates. Two members are resigning due to a move, and one member due to

other obligations. Four new members will be considered to join the NRCA Board, including Don Bobby, Julia Byrnes, John Hand, and Katherine Markowski.

It was agreed that the meeting should be virtual so that more people can participate in light of the pandemic. We will work to improve the technical aspects and ask anyone with slides to meet 10 minutes early for a test run. Ashley Berrang offered to assist Mr. Fehrenbach during the meetings to help them run smoothly.

Any Board member with questions for the City Manager should send them to Mr. Fehrenbach by email. He will distill the topics/questions strategically to best reflect the priorities of the Association, and to counter any built-in biases against civic association positions.

It was noted that the Arlington City Manager was interviewed recently regarding development and budget issues that may be of interest to NRCA since the Alexandria Manager will submit a budget in the coming days.

Kay Stimson distributed a document from the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations (AFCA) in which David Brown of the Planning Commission commented on provisions in favor of density inherent in several major documents. Mr. Fehrenbach will distribute a copy to all Board members.

In addition, he will also distribute a letter from AFCA about the ParcView project in Holmes Run. The project allows for increased density by means of a rezoning which is being interpreted by the Planning Commission as a “floating zone” which could be applied anywhere in the City — including SFZs. This directly relates to the assault on SFZs and the push for increased density at all costs, with the addition of affordable housing as a justification.

A new development project on Scroggins Road is on hold at this time due to litigation. A local homeowner on Quincy Street is suing the developer, and the court date is set for September 2022.

New Business

There was no new business.

There was a motion to adjourn, and seconded. The meeting adjourned by Mr. Fehrenbach at 9:09.

Respectfully submitted by MB
February 21, 2022