

MINUTES
THE ASPEN HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
10 December 2014

The meeting was called to order by President Melissa Ryan at 7:02 PM.

President Ryan introduced herself to the assembled board.

Present at the meeting were board members: Jamison Adcock, Steven Becker, Joan Cohen, Steven, Cohen, Sheila Convery, Gail Cooper, Sharon Dean, Susan Eisendrath, Judy Fink, Jiri Malek, JoAnna Nasios, Sam Nasios, Linda NeCastro-Pastel, Carol Petzold, Walter Petzold, Monica Reyes-Dame, Selene Robinson, Melissa Ryan, Michael Salay, Jane Salzano, Bill Shelton, Carla Steinborn, Judy Tankersley, Kris Vaitkus.

Those members absent were: Don Becker, Marna Cary, Pat Clarke, Robert Clarke, Marguerite Eimer, Rusty Embrey, Dick Goodwin, Patricia King, Sol Levy, Suzy Levy, Alexandra Minckler, Roselia Rodriguez.

The minutes of the November 10, 2014 meeting (as amended) were approved. (Joan Cohen has resigned from the Newsletter committee.)

Treasurer Steven Cohen presented the financial and membership reports that are summarized as follows:

Balance as of 1 November, 2014: \$5042.22
Income, 11/1/14 to 11/30/14: \$0.00
Expenses, 11/1/14 to 11/30/14: \$147.95
Petty Cash: \$78.00
Total Money Available, 11/30/14: \$4,972.27

Membership as of December 1 stood at a total of 123 members.

Treasurer Stephen Cohen has obtained the library meeting room permit for the next six (6) months. The Association has reserved the meeting room at the Aspen Hill Public Library for its meetings on the following dates (all dates are Wednesdays at 7:00 PM except May 15th which is at 7:30 pm):

January 14, 2015
February 11, 2015
March 11, 2015
April 8, 2015
May 13, 2015 (the AHCA General Membership meeting)
June 10, 2015

Treasurer Cohen also extended his thanks to past Treasurer Rusty Embrey for helping him with his transition.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Code Enforcement: Sharon Dean received a report from a neighbor about an animal in their yard.

Environmental Issues: Susan Eisendrath reported on a pesticide bill that the Montgomery County Council will be considering soon. There was discussion about how to inform the community about this bill and the method by which the AHCA Board could formulate a position on it.

Fire & EMS: Judy Tankersley reported that due to revenue shortfalls, Capital Budget funds that had been set aside for the Glenmont Fire & EMS Station refurbishment have been taken out and given to the troubled Silver Spring Transit Center project. She also reported that the status of Station 21 on Viers Mill Road was always being monitored by the Association.

Community Outreach: Monica Dame reported that the committee will schedule a meeting of its members.

Library: Carol Petzold reported that circulation at the Aspen Hill Public Library has dropped since the opening of the Olney Public Library. She encouraged membership to use the Library frequently and check out books, making sure to use the upstairs front doors as that is the entrance with a people-counter on it. She also reported that the Twinbrook Library is closing for rehabilitation in 2015.

Aspen Hill Library is due for rehabilitation in 2016. The Friends of the Library are hoping for more than a simple rehab (which is not extensive); they have begun a campaign to push for a renovation or rebuilding of the facility. There is ample land available to expand the library. Friends of the Library will be sending out orange postcards to raise awareness and encourage attendance at the Council hearings on the Capital Improvement Program.

Membership: Sheila Convery reported that the committee will schedule a meeting of its members – at least two but hopefully three meetings before the General Membership meeting in May 2015.

Newsletter and Website: Carla Steinborn has requested past copies of the newsletter. There was discussion regarding how many people requested the paper copy of the newsletter versus an electronic copy. Regarding the website, free hosting is available from the Montgomery County Federation of Civic Associations if AHCA were to join that organization. Discussion regarding an approval process for content on both the newsletter and the website was tabled to the New Business section of the agenda. President Ryan tasked the website committee to determine whether MCFCA hosting would be appropriate for our needs.

Policing and Crime: Sam Nasios reported that the committee will schedule a meeting of its members. There was discussion about the recent drug related deaths of two young people at a house on Woodcrest Drive. There was also discussion about possible non-permitted structures being built and inhabited near the creek.

Recycling and Trash: Carla Steinborn reported no news.

Schools: Jamison Adcock attended a meeting at Lucy Barnsley Elementary related to their plans to expand the school building by 12 classrooms to deal with their over-enrollment. The expansion is due to be complete by August 2017, yet the project itself is not funded. It is expected to cost \$12.5 million.

The Board of Education is hoping to be granted bonding authority by the State of Maryland in order to raise capital improvement funds. There is a widespread issue of over-enrollment in the Aspen Hill area schools (Wheaton Woods Elementary has 10 portables; similar situations exist at other schools). Jiri Malek also requested assistance determining interest from schools or parents about a "Walking School Bus" program to make it safer for kids to walk to and from school.

Senior Services: Judy Fink reported on an "Aging in Place" session she attended and suggested that such a seminar would be of interest to many in the Aspen Hill community. A motion was made, and passed, for the AHCA to sponsor a workshop by the same speaker, [Richard Gottfried, CPA], at the Aspen Hill Public Library and to pay the cost of the room rental for the session, up to \$50. Judy will coordinate scheduling the session, to be held on January 14th, 2015.

Traffic and Streets: Melissa Ryan announced that the Association has appointed two members to be the AHCA's representatives on the BRT Community Advisory Committee: Steven Becker and Sharon Dean. President Ryan has established communication with the President of the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) on this and other topics. GOCA is strongly opposed to the BRT project. A BRT Bus depot site is proposed near the Georgia Avenue Kmart. Sharon Dean reported that she has been keeping track of accidents on Aspen Hill Road. There have been 8 reported accidents since July 2014. Sharon Dean requested that neighbors keep her aware of any accidents, as many of them go unreported – particularly single-car accidents. There was discussion about alternate ways to obtain accident reports or statistics, as the MPD only gives reports for free to the parties involved in the accident. The last count for Average Daily Traffic on Aspen Hill Road was 17,400 cars a day. The similar statistic for Parkland Drive was 5,800 cars a day.

Utilities: Joan Cohen reported that WSSC subcontractors will be finishing repaving streets that have been milled before winter weather sets in. The remaining streets on their program will be started up again in the Spring of 2015. Carol Petzold requested help in getting Chadwick Lane's bump taken care of. Judy Fink thanked Joan Cohen for her assistance in getting great service from Donnie Barrett.

Website. No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Report on English Manor school: Jamison Adcock reported that in 2006 the County Council approved the Shady Grove Sector Plan which directly affected the status of the school transportation depot. However, the School Board made no plan regarding its relocation up until the recent present; the depot will be closing no later than January 2017. The School Board is now proposing that the Blair Ewing Alternative Education Center (formerly Mark Twain school) site be used for the transportation depot, and that the Blair Ewing students be re-housed at the former English Manor school on Bestor Drive. The student population consists of middle and high school students, some with serious behavioral issues including a number who are legally banned from returning to their home schools. One effect of the proposed move will be 40 bus trips per day (20 buses, morning and afternoon) as the school draws students from all over the County. On very short (72 hours) notice, Jamison Adcock testified at a Board of Education hearing in November, on his own behalf. A neighbor, David Rowden, has taken the lead on organizing concerned residents

about this issue, including developing an appeal of this decision, circulating a petition and creating a website about it (www.saveenglishmanor.org). The Board of Education had previously designated \$16.6 million to upgrade the current Blair Ewing site for continued instructional use, but have decided they no longer want to go forward with that plan because of the configuration of the classrooms in that building. Instead they have taken \$400,000 of that funding (\$200,000 each) to spend on two feasibility studies: (1) The feasibility of tearing down the Blair Ewing buildings, and (2) the feasibility of moving the Alternative Education program to the former English Manor school. The Board of Education claims that they want community input on this process; despite the history of providing very short notice to the community on these issues, the Board of Education did receive 80 letters on this plan. The County Council is expected to take up the School Board's proposal at its January 13 meeting. Jamison Adcock will continue to work closely on this issue. Melissa Ryan has also reached out to the leadership at Manor Lake and Flower Valley Elementary Schools to make them aware of the situation. Carol Petzold made a motion that the AHCA support the re-opening of the former English Manor Elementary School to relieve overcrowding at other nearby neighborhood schools, and to strongly oppose the relocation of the Blair Ewing Center to the English Manor building. The motion passed, with 17 ayes, 7 nays and 1 abstention.

Welcome to Aspen Hill signs: The issue was tabled to the January 14, 2015 meeting as it was unclear exactly which signs were meant to be discussed, and what the issue surrounding them might be.

Vitro/BAE Update: At their last meeting, the Planning Board voted to recommend classifying the site as an "NR" zone. The NR classification has fewer restrictions than the CRT category originally proposed by Planning staff. A 10-foot setback from residential property lines was recommended.

Planning Commissioner Dreyfus requested that the developer maintain a 100 foot buffer from homes. Because of the NR classification, the developer will not need as many County approvals in the future as their own development process moves forward.

Montgomery County Federation of Civic Associations: Sheila Convery and Judy Fink attended a workshop given by MCFCA on November 16. There was a lot of good information gained from that session; however in the interest of time further discussion will be tabled to the January 14 Board meeting. Jamison Adcock made a motion that the Aspen Hill Civic Association join the Montgomery

County Federation of Civic Associations at the cost of \$35. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Content Approval: There was discussion pertaining to developing an approval process for all content being posted on the Association website and published in the newsletter. The purpose of this was to ensure that information being presented to the membership accurately reflected the actions and positions of the Board. Jane Salzano moved that all information posted onto the website or in the Association's newsletter be approved by the President of the Association; in the absence of the President, approval would be granted by the Vice President; and in the absence of the Vice President, approval would be granted by the Corresponding Secretary. The motion was passed unanimously.

Membership Feedback: Several members of the Board proposed that the AHCA Board develop a process by which it could poll or request feedback from Association members regarding any current or future issue that the AHCA should take a formal, public position on, as a way to ensure that the Board's position reflects the wishes and opinions of its membership. President Ryan proposed that she send out a letter to the membership introducing herself, and with that letter provide a link to a SurveyMonkey (or similar) polling site to gather data on the concerns of the community. Past members who had not yet renewed would also be included as recipients. There was discussion regarding which topics would be covered, and how they would be framed with background information such that they were presented in the most neutral way possible. The board determined that the issues we want feedback on are the English Manor proposal and the Planning Board's NR zoning recommendation. Carla Steinborn made a motion that the President send out information on what NR zoning is, and inform the membership that the Planning Board has recommended NR zoning for the Vitro Site. Jamison Adcock amended the motion to direct the President to explain what each element of the zoning classification means. The motion passed with 23 ayes and 1 nay. A second motion was made that the President will present both PRO and CON positions on the rezoning, and survey member's concerns about it. The motion passed with 23 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Convery
Corresponding Secretary