

MINUTES
THE ASPEN HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
13 April 2016

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by President Jamison Adcock at 7:05 P.M. at the Berman Academy.

CALL OF THE ROLL:

Present at the meeting were board members: Jamison Adcock, Joan Cohen, Steve Cohen, Sheila Convery, Gail Cooper, Susan Eisendrath, Jiri Malek, JoAnna Nasios, Linda NeCastro-Pastel, Carol Petzold, Walter Petzold, Selene Robinson, Melissa Ryan, Michael Salay, Jane Salzano, and Judy Tankersley.

Absent from the meeting were board members: Marna Cary, KC Chronopoulos, Robert Clarke, Sharon Dean, Judy Fink, Patricia King, Sol Levy, Suzy Levy, Sam Nasios, Monica Reyes-Dame, Roselia Rodriguez, Rena Samuel, Carla Steinborn, Kris Vaitkus.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the 16 March 2016 meeting were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

For Treasurer Steven Cohen's financial report for 1 March through 31 March 2016 please see the attached sheet on page _____. He also noted that the Association added the Berman Academy to its Nationwide insurance policy through July 2016. If we continue to use the Berman Academy to hold meetings after that we will have to keep it on our policy.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT:

Sheila Convery reported that membership stands at 135 members.

GREEN STREETS PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Prior to Committee Reports, the Board was given a presentation by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection on the upcoming Green Streets program slated for Manor Woods and Wheaton Woods. They provided a PowerPoint presentation about 20 minutes in length followed by many comments and questions by the members of the board and public who attended.

Briefly, the presentation covered the issue of storm water runoff which in Aspen Hill specifically goes unfiltered to Rock Creek, to the Potomac River and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. Programs such as Green Streets are a response to mandates set by the Clean Water Act (EPA) which permits each jurisdiction to determine how best to achieve the goals of the Act.

Because Aspen Hill is a mature neighborhood there is no space to do a large-scale project such as a storm water retention pond. The Green Streets program is intended to be one strategy to mitigate runoff given smaller spaces. This program would utilize small, planted bioretention areas in the right-of-way, limited by constraints such as utilities, soil types, parking demand, etc. Soil borings are to take place in both Manor Woods and Wheaton Woods within two weeks of this presentation.

The County expects that there will be more public meetings and site walk-throughs continuing through the spring, summer and fall of 2016. The County planners expressed their intention to communicate with the neighborhood throughout the process. A final design will be presented that will be very site-specific (not “cookie-cutter”). Construction would take place in spring and summer 2017, followed by monthly maintenance by the County in perpetuity.

The presenters also discussed ongoing monetary incentive (rebate) programs offered by Montgomery County directly to homeowners to mitigate storm water runoff on their own properties.

Below are the Questions and Answers from the discussion period:

Q: Are other neighborhoods not named within Aspen Hill not going to be treated? Or will this be for the future?

A: The county is probably going to evaluate more areas within the Rock Creek watershed, to assess where future expansion of the program may be beneficial.

Q: There is a stream that goes from Manor CC to Aspen Hill. Is there a plan to daylight that stream (e.g. take it out of the pipe where it is diverted)?

A: That is not likely. Daylighting a stream is very complex with a lot of impacts.

Q: What about neighboring areas that also drain into the Manor Woods or Wheaton Woods neighborhoods?

A: They too will be evaluated. Currently the County DEP is focusing on areas with shared characteristics.

Q: With a bioretention area in the right-of-way, will there be enough room to get out of a car parked at the curb?

A: Yes. The typical plan calls for a “landing zone” of two feet from the back of the curb to the top of the slope of the retention area.

Q: Can a homeowner decline to have a bioretention area in front of their house?

A: Montgomery County will try to work with each homeowner to determine what work-arounds there are. Each one is on a situational and case-by-case basis.

Q: We looked at an area that had these ponds installed, and felt they were unattractive, and not representative of what the County was showing in the presentation. Talking to the homeowners there, they said that there was an increase in rats and that the swales do not drain.

A: The County staff asked that we suspend judgment about the appearance of the bio-areas at least until May when the plants will begin to grow back in. The plants in those areas are new plants; as they get established the roots will be bigger and stronger and come up sooner in the growing season. The soils are still cold too; everything is blooming a bit later this year. The County staff reported that they have gotten positive feedback from Dennis Avenue/Sligo Park Hills residents about the bio-areas that the AHCA board member referred to.

Q: Will the County perform end-of-season maintenance on the plantings in the bio-areas?

A: Yes. Plants will be cut back and pruned.

Q: What about concerns of standing water and mosquitoes?

A: The DEP definitely wants to be informed about any areas that go more than two days without draining.

Q: Can individual homeowners influence the design of the bioretention area that may be in front of their house?

A: DEP's intent is to work with everyone. The design process is integrative. Each bio-area is designed to be site-specific, and they are not using a cookie cutter approach.

Q: (Showing a photo taken of a bio-area filled with water taken in Franklin Knolls) – Is this normal?

A: It is possible that there is a construction issue to be looked into. 48 hours to drain is normal. The county is aware of at least 1 defective bioretention pond in that neighborhood.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Environment Issues - No chair

- No report. Reminder that there is the annual stream cleanup this coming Saturday (April 16) starting at 9:00 am.

Government Relations - No chair

- The Mid County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) will be holding its next meeting at the Aspen Hill Library on April 19 (Tuesday) starting at 7:00 pm. The public is welcome to attend.
- Jane Salzano reported on her effort to have the Wheaton Regional Master Plan integrate “inclusive recreation” for people with disabilities; she does not feel she has successfully gotten through to them so she has sent a letter, cc’ing Nancy Navarro’s legislative aide.

The Library Committee - Marna Cary chair

- Update on Library Closure – the “refresh” scheduled for the library has an ever changing start date. Currently the expectation is that it will begin June or July of this year. The Aspen Hill Library is the last such “refresh” program on the list for this year.

Media - No chair.

- Obsolete information on the website has been purged by Mike Salay. Jamison Adcock stated that he will provide some fresh content.

Membership - No chair

- No report; Sheila Convery stated that she will bring membership forms to the Rock Creek Cleanup to sign up any interested neighbors who are volunteering time at that event.

Neighborhood Relations - Judy Fink chair.

- Jamison Adcock informed the board that Ambor Primm’s appeal to expand her daycare has been granted and thanked the Board for their help and support.

Public Safety - No chair

- Jamison Adcock reported that he plans to arrange another meeting of the Neighborhood Watch.

Schools - No chair

- Jamison Adcock noted that the Carver Education complex is now the area chosen by MCPS to store school buses, and the adjacent neighborhood is opposed to this plan.

Utilities - Joan Cohen chair

- Joan Cohen reported on a query that she sent to the head of Washington Gas regarding a pothole that they left unfilled at Bauer Drive and Briarwood Drive, which has now been handled by a temporary fill.
- Joan Cohen followed up on a question at the previous board meeting regarding lead pipes in our water system. There is no lead pipe in our water distribution system – however, there can be lead solder and piping within homes built 30 years or more ago. Homeowners can order a kit (\$30) and WSSC provides the testing of the kit for free. Faucet filters can be purchased to take lead out of drinking water.

OLD BUSINESS:

Standing Rules of the Board of Directors

- Jamison Adcock will email board members some proposed guidelines for potential “Standing Rules” that the board will follow, absent any specific direction in the Bylaws. He welcomes everybody’s suggestions.

NEW BUSINESS:

General Membership Meeting – May 18

- Preparations are now being made for the meeting which is scheduled to be held at the Berman Academy. Jamison Adcock will be inviting Montgomery County DEP to make its presentation on Green Streets to the membership at the meeting.
- A traffic study is being done on Norbeck Road, between Baltimore Avenue and Bauer Drive.
- There is a proposed property tax increase on the horizon; the County Executive originally asked for an 8.6% increase, which has since been reduced to a 6% increase.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for 18 May at 7:00 p.m. at the Berman Academy Upper Chapel, 13300 Arctic Ave., which will

also be the Aspen Hill Civic Association General Membership Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sheila Convery
Recording Secretary (Acting)