

Approved by the Board Nov. 4, 2021

Admiral Heights Improvement Association's Fall General Membership Meeting at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium & on Zoom Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Call to order: 7:30 p.m. by President Shivaughn Ahern

Attendance: AHIA Board members –Ahern, Scott Gibson, Cindy Radulovich, Maggie Rogers, Tonya McGinnis, Grant Garcia, Cat Marucci, & Liz Uehlinger attended in person. John Leupold attended via Zoom. Alderman Fred Paone attended in person. More than 40 other residents attended either via Zoom (about 14) or in-person (about 27). Total attendance was about 51.

Absent: Bo Conroy, Lauren Heier & Joe Flasher.

Treasurer's Report - John Leupold via Zoom: Membership stands at about 240, down from about 260. About 40 percent of the neighborhood are AHIA members.

Social events costs are down due to COVID. Property expenses are up due to landscaping and investing in AHIA properties, including re-decking Dewey Dock and redoing the Sampson-Porter Circle.

Two budgets were presented – base and better case scenarios. The base case ensures the mowing and properties are cared for. It takes into consideration that lights, mowing, landscaping and insurance continue to go up. The \$750 for the dock replacement fund is planning for the future. The insurance covers liability for the properties and the directors and officers (D&O) insurance. Other costs include administrative, web, membership to the Severn River Association, postcard mailing, post office box, and newsletter (if ad income goes down). After nondiscretionary items are budgeted for, there's only \$51 left for social events. This doesn't mean the events won't happen. It just means there may be more potlucks or asking for donations.

The better case scenario is dependent upon membership, ads, fundraisers and donations.

The treasurer made the following motion, "Be it hereby resolved that the Board of Directors is authorized to proceed with the "Non-Discretionary Base Budget"; and Be it further resolved that the Board be authorized to increase spending as outlined in the "Better Case Budget" if revenue received is sufficient to cover additional discretionary expenses."

Grounds: In addition to the projects mentioned in the treasurer's report, wood chips have been spread at Dewey Dock and Halsey Park. Board members Joe Flasher and Grant Garcia coordinated the chip spreading at Dewey Dock.

Two loads of wood chips have been spread down to the water at Halsey Park. They were also spread at a flat portion of the park where there's no grass and underneath a picnic table. Plans are to get a second table.

During the renovation of the circle, plants were moved to other properties. They were moved because they were difficult to maintain in the circle and they were growing above the 18-inch minimum. The hope is that the new plants will be low maintenance and will save money over time.

Nina Fisher, who was instrumental in choosing the original plants for the circle, was dismayed that she wasn't consulted before the plants were relocated. She was concerned that native plants were replaced by invasive ones. She was also concerned about the cost of \$2,900 which she could have contracted for \$300 for the plants and a half day of labor. She was also upset about the "rehoming" of the plants. Some that needed shade were placed in the sun and vice versa. The hollies weren't planted at all. The original plants also attracted pollinators.

Sarah Holden will be oyster gardening.

Newsletter: The advertising revenue from the newsletter has increased from \$250 to \$750.

Questions and Answers (Qs & As): Q: What is the budget based on?

A: It's based on the assumption that 50 percent of the community will join AHIA. This seems like a reasonable assumption since 40 percent of the residents have already joined.

It's also based on the assumption that next year will be similar to this year. The only difference from last year's budget is that we predict a slight increase in revenue based on the increase in newsletter advertising this year.

Q: Why don't people join AHIA?

A: We're not sure whether it has to do with money or whether they fail to see the value of the association.

Q: What can we do to increase membership?

A: Suggestions included (1) posting a sign to join the association every six months. (2) sending out postcards (has been done in the past) (3) using a QR Code (was done on the postcards) (4) do an end of year mailing (we have \$200 in the budget for this, has been done before) (5) have an automatic renewal (we do) (6) have a membership list on the

website (can't because of privacy issues) (7) have a directory of residents (idea worth exploring) (8) increase number of newsletters from two to four (definitely see the value of this, has been done in the past but was decreased to three and then two because of lack of advertising, content and volunteers).

Q: What happened to the proposal to make Admiral Heights a special community benefit district (SCBD)?

A: Originally it was tabled so more research could be done. Then, COVID happened, and we couldn't meet in person to have an open discussion about the pros and cons.

Since then, the law has changed and the threshold for becoming a SCBD is now higher. Before a simple majority was needed to become a SCBD. Now a super majority or two-thirds of the residents is needed.

We would have to work hard to build support. After a full discussion, maybe momentum can be regained.

Q: Why are there no fundraisers?

A: There have been. When AHIA replaced the dock at Williams Drive, there was a GoFundMe page. The reason that there are so few fundraisers is because additional volunteers would be needed for more fundraisers and membership drives.

Q: Why can't you raise dues?

A: There was discussion of raising the dues, but then COVID happened. Not everyone has recovered from the pandemic. We only have 40 percent of the residents as members and we're not sure if it's because of the dollar amount or they don't see the value of joining.

Updates from City Hall: Alderman Fred Paone

A motion came up about ADUs (accessory dwelling unit), which are secondary buildings on one's property that are used by someone else. The Council voted to allow these, including using Airbnbs (a company that primarily operates an online marketplace for vacation rentals in homes). Paone voted against ADUs, primarily because of the possibility of creating parking problems, but also because it might create problems with water usage, trash and other environmental issues.

Paone notes that the buildings must still meet zoning and building requirements.

Paone did vote for the Airbnbs although he admitted that he wished that they would only operate on weekends. He said some of the requirements were that they couldn't be more than 850 square feet. They also could only house one or two people at the most.

He said the City doesn't do a very good job of enforcing the regulations. They just don't have the people to enforce them.

He said the ADUs are grandfathered in. If people are doing it already, they get licensed. Paone doesn't like the idea of any more ADUs cropping up, but he's OK with them as long as there's space for them. He just doesn't think Admiral Heights has room for them.

In response to Paone's comments, one attendee noted the clearcutting and development occurring by Quiet Waters Park. The attendee noted how fast it was happening and how it was being done with no fines or permits. The attendee agreed about the City's inability to enforce the laws and said if anything did happen, it would be a little after-the-fact fine for the developer.

Paone said this sort of thing shouldn't happen at all, and the fact that it does is a foreshadowing of what he sees for the future of ADUs.

Another attendee noted that some developers who clear trees have plans to replace them. Some attendees didn't think this sounded like a realistic plan. They questioned how a sapling could replace a 100-year-old tree.

They also agree with Paone that the rapid increase of ADUs could result in parking issues.

Paone also talked about the proposed sidewalk for Cedar Park Road. He said he had been asking for a sidewalk for 10 years for the safety of children walking along Cedar Park.

That said, he didn't necessarily agree with the how and where of the sidewalk project.

Nevertheless, Public Works planned to do a mockup extension of the entire length of the sidewalk within the next few weeks. Then residents could see how it works and give their feedback in a public meeting. The mockup of the extension would give everyone a chance to experience how the Public Works proposal would work and give everyone the opportunity to be heard.

One option might be that Cedar Park Road will stay just the way it is – without sidewalks. “We want sidewalks,” Paone said, “because we believe it would be safer for walkers.” However, he says the current Public Works proposal isn't what he had in mind. He wants sidewalks but he doesn't want to lose parking.

One idea behind the proposal is to help slow down traffic. Proponents believe that if drivers perceive that the road is narrower, they'll slow down and drive more carefully.

Residents objected to narrowing the street even more, saying that the roadway at the bottom of the hill was already a “choke point” and “blind curve.”

They also objected to the sidewalk taking people's front yards and/or taking parking places.

According to proponents of the idea, the width of the road would remain the same. It's just that the sidewalk would replace parking on one side of the street.

Attendees were assured that the project manager was interested in all comments, both for and against. They were also assured that no permanent changes would be made without consulting Admiral Heights residents.

One resident said it took four years to complete the Sampson-Porter Circle, so there would be plenty of opportunities to speak up.

After the trial period is over, a public hearing will be held before anything is finalized. A sidewalk is a major expense. It's in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) but not for any particular year. If the sidewalk is put on an individual's property, a major part of the homeowner's yard might be destroyed. Another issue might involve relocating water lines, sewer lines and meters. This seemed to be an expensive option.

Residents complained of drivers playing chicken as they drove down the hill and around the curve. They also cited cars passing on the driver's side while the driver was attempting to make a left-hand turn.

The residents said they would like the input of a traffic engineer as opposed to a civil or city engineer. Paone said the city has just got a traffic engineer on contract.

The mockup trial is expected to last six months.

Fred was thanked for his 14 years of service as alderman.

President's comments: Ahern promised to keep residents informed about the status of the sidewalks, including presentations before and after the installation of the mockups. Residents will be informed via Facebook postings, emails and the newsletter.

She urged residents to email their comments to the city's project manager, Jennifer Feight. She also urged the residents to come to the presentations, hear the justifications from a traffic engineer, and consider all the options.

She noted that AHIA will be bringing back the block party in November, and that there wasn't time to plan a tailgater for this year but we'd like for it to happen next year.

Joe Flasher will do another survey to see what residents want and don't want. The survey will be used to determine how AHIA spends its discretionary income.

Minutes: The March 2 general membership minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm

Submitted by Cindy Radulovich, Secretary and Martha Thorn, AHIA member