

**SEMINARY HILL ASSOCIATION, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES,**

October 14, 2003

Vice President Joe Gerard called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM in the Parish Hall of Immanuel Church on the Hill and presided until the arrival of President Frank Putzu shortly thereafter.

The following SHA Officers and Directors were present:

Frank Putzu, President
Joe Gerard, Vice President
Jack Sullivan, Treasurer
Cindy Gurne, Communications Officer
Gordon Johnson, Secretary
Lillian S. Patterson, Area 1,
Tom Kerester, Area 2
Richard Hobson, Area 3
Dan Kelly, Area 4
Dick Hayes, Area 5
Pat Lidy, Area 7
Bob Coulter, Area 9
Charles Ablard, At-Large
Joe Fischer, At Large
Laura Vetter (for Maggie Melson) Episcopal High School
Mary Lewis Hix, Virginia Theological Seminary
Bill Dickinson, Past President

MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 16 BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the SHA Board Meeting on September 16, 2003, previously posted on the SHA web site, were approved as amended.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jack Sullivan reported no significant change in the association checking and savings accounts, \$8,098.10 and \$9,126.71 respectively, total \$17,224.81

POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Bartlett provided a brief summary of the police department crime report. There was a brief discussion of an attempted robbery on Janneys Lane, for which the suspect is in custody.

AREA REPORTS

Area 1: Lillian Patterson discussed the landscaping for the new TC Williams High School. Plans for TC Williams will come before the Planning Commission at its December meeting.

Area 2: Tom Kerester reported no new activity.

Area 3: Dick Hobson reported that he, Bob Coulter and Cindy Gurne attended the Alexandria Planning commissions meeting to oppose the Carr rezoning application across from the retirement home on Duke Street. This application would change the zoning from RH to RV and replace 5 present houses with 28 town homes. At about 1:45 AM the Planning Commission deferred a decision and will probably take it up again in November.

Area 4: No representative was present for this area. It is uncertain as to who Dan Kelly's replacement will be. There was some discussion of dead tree replacements on Fort Williams Parkway. It is uncertain whether the City will replace these trees.

Area 5: Dick Hayes reported no new activity.

Area 6: Bill Dickinson reported for Carol Maxwell, Area 6 Representative, that a Special Use Permit for renewal and expansion of Minnie Howard Middle School will come before the Planning Commission on November 6. This action will involve an amendment to the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill Small Area Plan chapter of the City's Master Plan changing the land use designation for the school from Parks and Open Space to Institutional. The adjoining residential properties are zoned R-12. The property directly across Braddock Road belongs to Episcopal High School and is zoned R-20. The existing allowable FAR for the middle school will have to be modified to allow for the expansion. In past meetings with Carol and Bill O'Neill and Early Street neighbors, concern was expressed about the buffers between the school and residences (fences and landscaping) as well as school staff parking on Early Street. Dickinson will contact Carol to determine if these issues have been resolved and if someone will represent SHA before Planning Commission.

Area 7: Pat Lidy reported on discussion with Duncan Blair and sees no problem with Lynn House coming before the Planning Commission on November 7.

Area 9: Bob Coulter reported there was to be a meeting with Paul De Mayo at St. Stephens/St. Agnes School on October 15 to discuss traffic calming measures on St. Stephens Road.

Episcopal High School: Laura Vetter reported on plans for EHS's new science building.

Virginia Theological Seminary: Mary Hix reviewed plans to hold the SHA Annual Meeting at the Seminary on November 18. There was discussion of paying \$100 for the upstairs room, which has a capacity of 100, or \$300 for the auditorium. (*See Annual Meeting discussion item below.*)

She also clarified questions about the Seminary's sale of two existing homes off Duke Street to a developer. These homes are to be renovated, not torn down, and no zoning issues are involved. There are separate plans to use the proceeds from that sale to build either two or three semi-detached residences (probably two, with two living units per residence) across from St. Stephens Road on Seminary land now referred to as "the woodpile." The zoning is R-20, which may require a Special Use Permit.

CONSTRUCTION SIGNS

Bill Dickinson expressed concern at the enormity of signs placed where there is new construction. This has been noted on Seminary road in particular. He suggested that billboard-size signs are not appropriate in residential neighborhoods. We should check on city sign regulations and bring the subject up with the new Planning Director.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Frank Putzu reported that, \$150,000 is now budgeted by the City for traffic calming in our area. He is concerned that we were being by-passed when the City focused first on the Janneys Lane/Taylor Run intersection. Rich Baier advised him that there is \$75,000 budgeted for Clover/College Park and \$75,000 for the Seminary Hill area west of Quaker Lane. There is to be a meeting October 22 to discuss alternative measures which might be used on Janneys Lane between Kingston and Quaker. Joe Gerard, our traffic issues committee chair, will attend.

Several members expressed concern that the City's traffic calming measures on Janneys Lane will push traffic off Janneys onto neighborhood streets, will impact property values and limit parking. Bob Coulter reported that while the City makes an effort to listen to citizens and stay flexible, they do not favor more stop signs or new traffic lights, which are expensive and require surveys to determine whether the situation meets their requirement for a minimum number of cars and a minimum number of speeders. Some residents on and near St. Stephens Road are actively working to get the 65% of signatures needed for support and others are working to get the 35% of signatures needed to oppose.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Cindy Gurne led a discussion of plans for membership renewals and new members. The direct mail campaign will depend on building an accurate mailing list, drawn from our own list of current and past members, plus city directories available in the library and name/address lists from city realtors. Residents will be encouraged to use the SHA web site where they can print out membership applications. A membership opinion survey will go out to identify personal interests, neighborhood interests and community interests, and the same mailing will invite and encourage attendance at the Annual Meeting. Posters and banners will also be posted. Each area rep will be asked to place signs in advantageous places for maximum viewing.

There was further discussion of a social gathering or event other than the Annual Meeting to serve as a community family mixer, perhaps a picnic at Fort Ward, with ponies and other attractions for children.

Judy Durand (1431 Janneys Lane) offered feedback to the board, from her own experience in knocking door to door, that many in the community feel that they are not being heard by the board and that they have little voice in board decisions. Various board members expressed their dismay at these opinions, but felt they should be taken seriously. Joe Gerard felt that the board is always glad to see new faces, does listen to those who come, and goes with them 90% of the time because it is the board's

responsibility to fight their battles for them. Frank Putzu stated that it is his goal to open up the board to hear and act on what is on members' minds. Gail Ledwig (503 Cathedral Drive) suggested we should do more to publicize the names of area representatives.

Dick Hobson moved, and Tom Kerester seconded the motion, that up to \$1,000 be authorized to be expended by Cindy Gurne for the membership drive, and that the President be authorized, at his discretion, to increase this amount by \$500 if needed, without coming back to the board. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

ANNUAL MEETING

Frank Putzu proposed that Eileen Fogarty, Alexandria Director of Planning, be invited to be the keynote speaker for the Annual Meeting. She has been an independent and thoughtful planning director, and very much a friend of the community. We have many issues that involve the Planning Commission. It would be good for the community to hear her priorities on the issues she sees ahead. It was also suggested we should invite every member of the City Council and the Mayor.

Bill Dickinson moved, and Dick Hobson seconded the motion, that Ms. Eileen Fogarty be invited to speak at our Annual Meeting. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

There was further discussion of space for the Annual Meeting. Joe Gerard moved and Bill Dickinson seconded the motion, that we reserve the auditorium, at \$300 for the meeting. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

There was discussion of postage for the direct mail, and there was a consensus that first class mail was worth the cost.

AGENDA ALEXANDRIA

Frank Putzu reported that plans are under way for a meeting on January 26 to present a history of different sections of Alexandria. The organizers would like someone who knows the history of Seminary Hill to make a presentation with visuals, which will be televised. A video photographer will be available to record interviews and old photographs. Resources discussed included Cooper Dawson, old photos in the Seminary library, Bruce McCarthy's photograph collection, archivists at VTS and EHS, the historian at Fort Ward, and a file of information put together by Susan McClellan which may now be in the possession of Charles Ablard. Frank Putzu will attend the next meeting on November 2.

2ND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PROPERTY

Joe Fischer reported that not much new has happened since our last meeting. Consultants have been meeting with the city and discussions have centered on possible use of transferable tax credits for maintaining preserving as much open space on the property as possible. Under recently enacted VA legislation, income tax credits for agreeing to not develop land and leaving it in open space might, under certain other restrictions and conditions, be available to the property owner. If the owner cannot utilize the credits because of their unique circumstances (e.g. being a not for profit

organization), the law now allows tax credits to be transferred (including sale) to other parties to utilize. Alexandria's Open Space Committee is working with the City's Planning Department in an effort to reduce the number of houses to be built on the property, probably 8 or 9, with some sort of tax credit arrangement in exchange for an open space setback at the NW corner of the property. The only road entrance will be on Janneys Lane. Theoretically as many as 11 "by right" residences could be built on this property.

Judy Durand raised a question about the Board's support for many of the neighbors who are opposed to what is going on and said that the board should do more to represent their views. They are opposed to "large incompatible houses towering down on us and water flowing into our properties." Joe Fischer observed that, as the point person for the SHA board, his conversations with the developer have been solely for data-gathering to be able to report back to the board. Joe Gerard commented that the Board has been, and is, in full support of open space and that we did try to get people together to hear their views on the church property. At the same time, the SHA board has to be realistic and recognize that the church is also a property owner, that it has a right to sell the property and that purchase of the property by the SHA or the City is not really an option.

There was further discussion of water problems. Judy Durand reported that many owners in the area already have at least 2 sump pumps to deal with the water. Joe Fischer agreed that water problems should be a red light for the City which he would push in his discussions. Judy Durand suggested that when you count the neighbors off Janneys Lane there are 70 homeowners who may be affected, and with this many perhaps there are other alternatives than simply buying the property.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AFTER HURRICANE ISABEL

Bill Dickinson described many of the power and water problems after Hurricane Isabel and suggested there are many questions that need to be answered to prevent what could be worse occurrences in a future natural or manmade disaster. This could include a terrorist attack. The community would be well advised to document what was learned in the aftermath of the recent hurricane. Clarity is needed as to who sets the priorities on clean up and repair afterwards. It appears that city engineers have little to no influence over decisions by Dominion Virginia Electric. Some SHA neighborhoods in SHA's area were without power for 8 days (Vicar, Bishop, portions of Quaker and key Drive). The problems causing the outage were quickly resolved, however, when a repair crew eventually arrived. Communications with the Power utility and the City left much to be desired. Unlike in many nearby communities, ice was not made available to residents.

Arlington County, on the other hand, created a number of Citizen Emergency Response Teams which undertook a number of tasks that supplemented the activities of the County's first line responders and County staff. Examples of their activities included putting safety tapes around downed power lines and reporting this information back to a central group who in turn relayed that information to the power company. Alexandria has an Emergency Planning Committee composed of two elected officials, two citizen members and other city employees. However it is focused primarily on response to environmental emergencies and incidents. A new Citizen Corps structure could be

established in the City to help respond to a wide variety of types of emergencies and disasters. City Fire and Police professionals could be greatly helped if more citizens were trained, organized and prepared to move into action when so directed by City officials.

Bill Dickinson volunteered to work with others to start a process by which we can better organize ourselves, gather people's stories on experiences with Isabel, identify what is missing, what didn't happen, and report to Council by the end of this year. He felt the first initiative should come from the City Council, given that only they can authorize City staff to work with community groups in developing action plans for future emergencies. SHA can be players within a citywide group but any such initiative should be civilian led. He suggested a city official be invited to speak on this matter at the annual SHA Annual Meeting.

PANHANDLING AT KEY INTERSECTIONS

Bill Dickinson shared a letter he had written to City Council complaining about organized panhandlers on the Braddock, King and Quaker Lane intersection. There are questions of safety and whether the funds are being collected for legitimate charities. Rumor has it the Quaker Lane intersection at King and Braddock is the most lucrative intersection in Northern Virginia. Others commented on the individual panhandlers operating near I-395 on both King and Seminary Road. Although Dickinson sent his letter to the City in August, he had not received any response – verbally or in writing. Should “organized panhandling” activities be noted this fall, SHA may then take a position on this matter. Dickinson did observe that “organized panhandling” has not been noted recently at the Quaker/King/Braddock Road intersection.

PERENNIAL STREAMS

Bill Dickinson reported that pursuant to the Chesapeake Bay Act (CBA), the City is in the process of mapping and delineating intermediate flow and perennial streams throughout the City, even if they have been placed underground or redirected into concrete channels. If so defined, properties bordering such watercourses may be in Resource Protection Areas and thus future development of those properties may be constrained. Strawberry Run, flowing along the back of Trinity is already protected. A hardened drain channel along Key Drive and running to Taylor Run might be defined as an intermediate or perennial stream as a result of this process. A City survey team is now collecting data. Decisions will be made by Council sometime this winter as to what streams will be protected by the CBA.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Gordon O. F. Johnson, Secretary