

Seminary Hill Association
Board Meeting
January 11, 2006

7:35 PM called to order by Jack Sullivan

In Attendance

Jack Sullivan, President and Treasurer
Joanne Lepanto, Vice-President
Laura Vetter, Secretary and Episcopal High School
Lillian Patterson, Area 1
Cindy Gurne, Communications Director and Area 4
Dick, Hobson, Area 3
Dick Hayes, Area 5
Pat Lidy, Area 7
John Nottingham, Area 8
Joe Fischer, At-Large
Charles Ablard, At-Large
Carter Fleming, At-Large

Treasurer's Report

Jack Sullivan reported a balance of \$21,991.59.
Jack Sullivan read letter from Reverend Wade of Immanuel on the Hill Church thanking SHA for its \$100 donation to compensate for loss of toys in fire.

Police Report

Dick Hayes reported that on January 19th at the George Washington Masonic Temple there will be an identity theft seminar. Information will be posted on SHA website

Area reports suspended due to the full agenda for tonight's meeting

All Sports Facility

Jack Sullivan introduced the panelists for the forum on the proposed All Sports Facility. Mel Miller explained that his group's task was to identify a need and assist with raising private funds. The need developed, because there was time when the only recreational activities were football, basketball and baseball. Now many more sports are played in the city and there is a need for a field to support the athletic activities of TC Williams High School. There will be artificial turf and lights. There will be softball and baseball field. The facility will accommodate youth and adult sports activities and TC Williams High School. Only sites currently owned by the city were considered for the All Sports Facility, due to the cost of acquiring land. The group decided upon Hensley Park in Eisenhower Valley. An eight lane track was removed from the plan. The funding is a private public partnership. \$5 million will be raised privately. The stadium will have a seating capacity of 4000. The fields will be artificial turf and Mel explained the advantages of artificial turf including longer times use times to accommodate more events and can played on 20 minutes after rain. The All Sports Facility will enable Friday night football for TC Williams. Mel described the advantages of Friday night football. The City Council has appropriated \$500,000 to complete

the design process, but no contracts for construction until 75% of the private funds have been raised. \$10-11 million is the estimated construction cost.

David Speck spoke on the efforts to raise private funds. David Speck will begin raising funds in the Spring. Speck anticipates foundation funding. He believes that the movie *Remember the Titans* can help with fund raising.

Bill Dickinson, former SHA President, explained the concerns with the TC Williams High School renovation and the potential for a lit field. He believes that SHA has direct impact on the need for the All Sports facility, because, as an organization, we did not want a lit stadium in our neighborhood. Bill is chairman of the Northern Virginia Regional Park authority, which was established in 1958, because the Virginia House of Delegates was concerned about the loss of open space. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority currently owns about 10,000 acres and 20 parks (2 of which are in Alexandria: the Carlyle House and the water park on Eisenhower Avenue.) Bill explained that there are some issues to be worked out. Offering background on the Park Authority, the water park is seasonal in use and offers many young people their first jobs. He praised the staff. A batting cage and miniature golf are in the area. Bill said that he believes that it is an ideal location for a stadium and will be used for more the four or five TC Williams Home games per years, thus could potentially bring in revenue. Bill told everyone present about the Paper and Stone film about the Colonial History of

Alexandria. On Jan 18th and 25th on WETA the film *The War that Made America* about the French and Indian War, which started at the Carlyle House in Alexandria. This film gives Alexandria and its history visibility. Bill distributed flyers.

Julie Crenshaw, who publishes an online bi-weekly *In My Opinion*, was introduced. Julie raised concerns about the All Sports Facility. In the past public private partnerships have proven to be more public than private. The requirement for 75% in private funds does not mean money in hand, but pledges. She raised concerns about the cost. She stated that the minimum to maintain the facility will be \$160,000 per year and does not include the additional cost of police to work the large events. According to Julie Crenshaw the All Sports Facility will require an ongoing management staff. She questioned whether the facility offers any benefits for the city's children. Additionally, she raised the issue of violence at Friday night football games. According to Julie Crenshaw, Friday night football was stopped in Alexandria due to violence. She wants to know what is the business plan and how will the facility be marketed to the outside. She sees this as another expense to Alexandria taxpayers. She believes that the city has failed to address the concerns, which have been raised. She would also like to know what impact an All Sports facility will have on the animal shelter. She challenged the claim there are currently inadequate fields in the city stating that there are currently 59 fields in the city in various states of disarray and perhaps we should take care of our current fields. Julie objects to the process. She says that SHA is the first civic association to have this subject as a topic for discussion. Julie Crenshaw believes that this issue needs to include more of the citizens in the process. According to Julie, the initial memos talked only about football.

David Speck responded that pledges are a serious commitment and the 75% standard is a common practice. He stated that this is a city project and falls under the city's capital budget. He refuted that Friday night football was stopped, because of violence.

Mel explained that Friday night football was stopped, because when the Alexandria public high schools were consolidated the games were played at TC Williams where there are no lights in the stadium and therefore there are no night games.

Jack Sullivan opened the floor for questions from the board. Dick Hayes praised Julie for raising her concerns and the cost, particularly to maintain the facility. David Speck responded that any capital project requires evaluation of operating cost. Dick Hayes does not believe that the operating costs have been adequately addressed. Mel believes that there is a need for this facility for the city, specifically for the schools. Mel reminded everyone that the facility is needed by the larger community, as well. Cindy Gurne asked Julie to raise her 3 priority concerns and get responses from the supporting panelists.

Cindy asked about the maintenance of the existing parks. Mel explained that he does not see this as an either/or proposition. He believes that the city cannot adequately maintain its fields, because overuse impedes maintenance. Mel raised Title 9 concerns, because the girls in the Alexandria schools are provided with inadequate facilities. Speck explained that it is more expensive to maintain natural fields than artificial fields.

Cindy asked about operating expenses including staff, etc. Mel responded that such a study is premature, because we do not know exactly what will be built on the site. Cindy responded that money is being raised based on certain assumptions. Speck responded that a facility such as this one is not reinventing the wheel, because there are similar facilities in other jurisdictions and some of the functions are currently provided elsewhere in the city i.e. TC Williams High School. Joanne Lepanto asked if \$5mil will be raised privately but if the facility will cost \$11 million who is responsible for the \$1million shortfall. Speck responded that the city would be responsible for the additional \$1million. She also asked about operating expenses. The response was that operating expenses will be borne entirely by the city. Joanne inquired about the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. Bill responded that the site has the wave pool and other facilities. Councilman Smedberg explained that a strong message has been sent by the City Council that if the private funds are not raised the facility will not be built.

Councilman Smedberg believes that there really is a need for the fields. Smedberg believes that this truly is an all-sports stadium, despite the talk about Friday night football. Smedberg explained that many of the current fields in Alexandria are not even regulation size. Lisa Marie Cheney explained that she currently takes her kids to Fairfax and Arlington counties to pursue activities for her young children and suggested that the all-sports facilities should provide programs for young children, as well. Mel responded that any activity that can be accommodated on an outdoor rectangular field could be accommodated at the proposed facility. Clarification was sought regarding the number of fields by an individual, who asked why are we spending \$10 million for one field considering that we could get more use by turfing our existing fields. Mel said that Alexandria is planning to turf many of the fields over a period of time. Councilman Smedberg in response to Lisa Marie Cheney said that there is talk of a multi-purpose room to meet other needs. Anabel raised the concern the proposed facility will affect neighborhoods, because there is no Eisenhower West development plan and she is concerned about the traffic impacts. Anabel believes that the fields should be scattered around the city. She believes that the citizens have not been offered an opportunity to offer input on the proposed facility. Dick Hobson recognized Councilman MacDonald and put this project in the context of the capital improvement budget. Julie was given the

last word by Jack. Julie referenced Lisa Marie Cheney's point, because she believes that the needs recognized by Alexandrians are not being addressed. Julie is surprised that the All Sports Facility has been approved as a city project without a task force. The tennis courts in Alexandria are terrible. Julie believes we need indoor tennis courts. She believes that the city needs have not been addressed. She believes that this facility will draw gangs.

Dick Hobson commended Mel, an SHA member, and his man of the year designation by local paper.

Area Reports

Area 5

Dick Hayes reported on the cabs parked at 4555 Seminary Road. Joanne Lepanto reported that Code Enforcement referred her to planning and zoning. Inspectors went to the property and found possible evidence of overcrowding and a second kitchen, which is a zoning violation. Code Enforcement vehicles have been seen on the property. Lisa Marie Cheney reported that workers were on the site. Bill Dickinson remarked that there were eight cabs parked in the driveway and there are limits on the number of cars which can be parked in a driveway

Area 4

Cindy organized a block meeting for her section of Area 4 and several concerns were expressed. Mr. Cheney will plant bulbs in the median of Fort Williams Parkway. Trash collection concerns were raised. Strawberry Run Park problems, such as trash and public urination. Councilman Andrew MacDonald commented on the trash issue and he said that only the recycling has been outsourced. Cindy and other neighbors want an Area 4 social event. It is believed that there is a multi-family house in their neighborhood. Cindy suggested a welcome to the neighborhood document with guidelines.

Episcopal High School

Laura Vetter announced fundraiser benefiting Katrina recovery, which will be held at Episcopal High School in February. Laura also announced that she is organizing a group to address the problem of speeding on Seminary Road.

Area 7

Pat Lidy reported that the Seminary Forest Apartments are undergoing massive renovations, which the intention of becoming high-end rental units. The first building will be ready April 1st. The renovations are starting with the Seminary Road side. The gas station at Seminary Plaza has been closed. Pat distributed a flyer with a floor plan. She believes that the renovation should have a positive impact on the local parking problems. Seminary Forest has put in a bid to buy the INOVA office building. The bowling alley at the shopping center has been closed. Bill Dickinson said that the property owner has refused to sell the restaurant building.

At-Large

Carter Fleming shared an update on the TC Williams renovation requests for 6AM start times and lights and heating which are impacting Bishop Lane and the surrounding

neighborhood. The neighbors are trying to be understanding, but their patience is being tested. There are plans to double the size of Chinguapin adding another pool, childcare, and facilities for additional children's activities.

Historical Project

Charles reported there will be a meeting on Friday at 4:00pm of the volunteers. He brought to everyone's attention the plaque at Forest Park and Chinguapin at the East end of Chinguapin with historical interpretation.

Connector Update

Jack Sullivan reported on efforts to reallocate the \$15 million connector funds. Jack testified. There will be a meeting on this subject in March when the Transportation Task Force publishes their report. Dick Hobson shared that the purpose of the effort is to get the process going.

Outreach Activities

Jack distributed a letter for review to send to lapsed SHA members. The letter will be mailed out in February

Jack raised the directory issue. Cindy raised the issue of exactly what information to include. Bill asked how many people want their names listed in the directory.

Jack suggested identifying names with issues to form sub-committees. Jack requested the areas of interest and their names.

Term Limits

Jack introduced the issue of term limits and Bill Dickinson. Bill is concerned that the board of SHA does not reflect the change and turnover of the neighborhood. Bill believes that term limits bring in more people from the community and force us to find others to take leadership roles in the organization. Bill believes that the by-laws should include term limits of 3 years. Jack said we can either discuss term limits tonight or take this issue up at the next meeting. It was decided to discuss this issue at the next meeting. Dick Hobson as Chairman of the Nominating Committee made the point that he often has a hard time filling certain positions. Dick believes that our problem is filling vacancies, rather than getting people off the board. Joanne believes that if we did a concerted outreach effort we would not have this problem filling vacancies. Lisa Marie Cheney suggested sending out a map with Area Representative information and potential Area Representatives could campaign for the positions. Cindy Gurne believes that we need to establish and communicate expectations for leadership roles in the neighborhood associations. Bill believes that the ultimate goal is a more dynamic organization. Term Limits will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Topics for future meetings:

Landmark Center development (Don Fullerton and Duncan Blair) to attend.

Candidate Forum for School Board in District 2: Dick Hobson explained why he believes this is important, including: the issue of an elected school board and only 1 or 2 incumbents from all the school board districts will be running. SHA is the largest

neighborhood association in district 2, which includes Rosemont , Clover College Park, Beverly Hills, Park Fairfax, Wakefield Tarleton, which is one of the most contested areas according to Bill Dickinson). The forum will be held in March after the filing date of March 7th. Dick believes the forum should be held in conjunction with other civic associations. Jack will invite the other civic associations.

John Nottingham introduced himself as the Area 8 representative

Other Communication Activities

Good Neighbor Brochure: Jack asked Cindy to draw something up.

Balanced Scorecard: Cindy suggested that we share our expectations with City Council members.

Seminary Plaza: Jack talked to the Mayor and was told that the redevelopment and that the INOVA building has been sold but will remain a medical building. SHA should keep an eye on what the new owner has in mind.

Dick Hobson introduced Scott Johnson as resident of Cameron Station, who is running for City Council. Scott Johnson complimented SHA.

Councilman Andrew MacDonald announced the Democratic caucus for City Council at the Lee Center in Old Town. A Kick off party will be held at the Athenaeum in Old Town on Jan 22nd.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Vetter
Secretary