

Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2017

RCHCA President Jim Pekar called the meeting to order and introduced RCHCA officers. The minutes of the RCHCA October 2017 were approved.

Treasurer's Report

RCHCA Treasurer Maria Marzullo provided an updated on RCHCA expenses and dues: \$1,480 in checking account expenses, including \$1,200 for the newsletter and mailings; \$3,000 was collected in dues and \$430 in donations; \$6,096 in savings.

Election of Officers

The RCHCA Board agreed to serve another term and were re-elected. RCHCA officers are also officers of RCHCovenants Inc., and the officers were re-elected to these positions. The Board asked for volunteers for the Nominations Committee for the future officers' slate.

Neighborhood Signage

RCHCA resident Laura Dennis is leading the effort to design and procure "Welcome to Rock Creek Hills" signs for the neighborhood. There is no estimated cost, but neighbors are asked to donate to the project. RCHCA officers support Laura Dennis' vision. Installation will be in a phased approach to accommodate fundraising/budgeting.

Silver Creek Middle School Naming Committee

RCHCA resident Fern Shepherd served as the neighborhood representative on the Naming Committee for the new Silver Creek Middle School. The 14-member committee was given a list of four names by the Board of Education and told they could add two additional names and then put them in priority order. The four names were Harriet Tubman, Paul Vance, Silver Creek and Kensington MS. The community provided feedback and ranked the names as follows: Silver Creek, Katherine Johnson, Kensington MS, Rock Creek Hills MS, Harriet Tubman, Paul L. Vance. The committee was not given info on how they made the original recommendations.

Construction Update

RCHCA resident Rick Bond said the contractor is on schedule to complete by August. There is a warranty on the plants and trees planted on the site: during a 1-year period, they will replace if they die off. They will not resurface Saul Road, despite damage done due to construction vehicle traffic. (After water main replacement, the practice is to resurface roads afterward). They will fix known damage to triangles. There are no plans for sidewalks associated with project except on the property, within the boundaries. RCHCA has asked the County DOT about sidewalks, but has not heard back. There is a mechanism for people to request sidewalks. There are no plans to widen Saul Road between Connecticut and Kensington Pkwy. Any other traffic issues – lights at intersections of Kensington Pkwy and Saul, etc. – have been pointed out, but have not been addressed, nor have we been informed. Bond said they may be waiting to see how bus routes affect the school. Outside school lighting is called "dark lighting" – focused down, supposed not to shine in peoples' homes. Not sure if they are going for a LEED certification.

Earth Day Cleanup of Silver Creek

This is a joint activity of the Environmental Club of new middle school and the Friends of Silver Creek.

Infrastructure Updates

The gas work is done and they've done a nice job of cleaning up. There are two upcoming water main replacement projects: "Kensington" and "Rock Creek Hills." WSSC suggested residents replace lines from street to house, but there is no information on how to do that other than to call your plumber. For those with a galvanized line, there is a limited life expectancy. There have been insurance companies offering protection in case your line fails as a result of the work. RCHCA website contains links to maps of both projects. The work is to start in the fall.

Salt Barn

There is nothing scheduled as far as public meetings. At the June 2016 meeting, RCHCA discussed trying to tie sound-remediation/sound walls into the Salt Barn issue. Neighbor asked for a sound barrier on north side. but

county says Rock Creek Park itself is a sound barrier. Neighbor suggested asking for a reinvestigation because of all of the trucks using the Salt Barn. Neighbor said they would publish any findings to RCHCA net.

Covenants Update

Jim Pekar explained the Association's efforts to enforce the covenants pertaining to Shirley and Carlos Domenech's lot at 9608 Kensington Parkway, which state that "No line fences or walls of any kind shall be erected...except...such fences...as may be approved by the Continental Life Insurance Company, Inc. and "No...structure of any kind...shall be constructed...unless, and until, complete plans and specification...shall first be submitted to and approved by the Continental Life Insurance Company, Inc." In August 2016, Shirley and Carlos Domenech built a fence, including a (partial) front-yard fence, without submitting the required request for authorization. The lack of front-yard fences is a positive aesthetic in Rock Creek Hills and an unauthorized front yard fence could serve as a "slippery slope" precedent leading to the proliferation of more front yard fences and other violations of the covenants, harming property values. Shirley and Carlos Domenech declined repeated requests to reconfigure their fence in order to eliminate the front yard portion. Per the Domenech's request, they were invited to make a presentation to the RCHCA.

Carlos and Shirley Domenech said that this was their first time attending an RCHCA meeting since they moved to RCH in 2007. They said they recently renovated their yard and didn't get to putting together the required neighbor signatures. Carlos and Shirley Domenech said they never received RCH Covenants Chair Vince DeCain's email asking that they cease construction of their fence, and were unaware of all of the notifications. The first letter that Carlos Domenech said he received from the Association was on December 23. The Domenech's said the old metal fence on their property surrounded the entire property. They said they attended the meeting to present to the neighborhood, introduce their family, and request that RCHCA consider grandfathering the fence that was previously there and ask what additional plants they can plant to cover the fence.

Jim Pekar noted that the RCHCA Directory contains the covenants information, including the prohibition of front yard fences. RCH Covenants, Inc. has upheld these covenants for years. The fence that the Domenech's built in their front yard does not replace the old metal fence.

RCHCA Past President John Robinson further clarified that RCH Covenants, Inc. has no obligation to approve replacement of an illegal fence. RCH Resident Tom Sisti said RCHCA members can't vote to amend the covenants at the meeting, as it is another process that must meet a very high threshold. Sisti said he bought his property in part because of the covenants that are attached to the property. He does not wish to abandon the covenants in order to keep this fence. A neighbor asked whether neighbors can vote about this issue, or can the Board decide on its own? It was explained that there was a vote at the last meeting, which asked that the Board litigate if the fence isn't removed.

Listserve Etiquette

RCH does not have a listserve where we moderate and review each posting. If there is something inappropriate, a private message is sent to that person. We haven't had anyone with repeated violations. It's a listserve to serve the community, so we want the community's input. For those who want to discuss certain issues, they can set up another listserve for people who want to discuss issues that may not be able to be discussed on the community listserve. Recommendations for local businesses via the listserve is a gray area.

New Business

RCHCA Vice President Hill Carter said he contacted DOT about parking permits for the neighborhood in preparation for the impact of the new middle school on neighborhood streets. Permits will be issued if two-thirds of the residents on a given block give permission. There is a \$240 filing fee and a charge for permits for those cars that are on the street. It will take 10 months to put parking restrictions in place. We would have to justify the times and days. Initially, the school will not be at full capacity, so there will probably be enough parking (105 parking spots on the site) during school hours. In 2018, the school will go to full capacity of 925 students. At that time, we could start to have a problem. The biggest concern is that they're building the cold, dark shell that will take the school to 1,200 students. RCH hopes to establish a communication mechanism with the new school so we are made aware of events happening at the school.