

DRAFT RCHCA Spring Meeting Minutes – Silver Creek Middle School – May 22, 2019 DRAFT

RCHCA President Peter Chatfield began the meeting by introducing himself as President, by noting the presence of a quorum, and by outlining the agenda for the meeting. Chatfield introduced some of the speakers for the evening, including Eriko Kennedy on behalf of Villages of Kensington; and Maryland State Delegate Jared Solomon, Barbara Coufal, and Citizens Against Beltway Expansion (CABE) member Brad German to discuss the proposed beltway expansion. A motion to approve the minutes of the Fall 2018 Meeting, held on November 27, 2018, was seconded and accepted without objection.

RULES OF ORDER. President Chatfield encouraged all participants to try to keep their comments brief and to the point so that everyone who wanted to had the opportunity to speak. Chatfield noted that RCHCA members had to be current on their dues if they wanted to vote, and pointed out John Robinson, Treasurer, who was collecting dues.

COVENANTS UPDATE. President Chatfield led a discussion on restrictive covenants in RCH. Chatfield said that addressing the RCH restrictive racial covenants was one of his primary concerns. Chatfield believed that such covenants, even if completely unenforceable, were nevertheless insulting to all of our values and could potentially discourage buyers. Chatfield said that he had initially believed that removing such covenants was extremely difficult, but that he had looked at Maryland law, and had become convinced that the covenants could be addressed. There are 10-15 versions of these covenants in RCH. They are all listed on the web site: <https://rchca.org/resources/covenants/>. Chatfield said that covenants could be removed on a block-by-block basis, if all landowners on the same street agreed, and that this might be a lot easier than trying to get consents from all owners affected by a particular covenant. Jim Pekar clarified that we were only concerned with the offensive racial covenants. Chatfield said that insurers and lenders could not block such an amendment. Chatfield thought the issue should be addressed, because that's not who we are anymore. Chatfield said that Maryland law makes it clear that such covenants are purely a matter of contract law among the affected landowners. A request was made that a template be placed on the listserv and the RCHCA website, and Chatfield stated that he would be glad to share any forms he came up with.. Chatfield noted that not all owners were RCHCA members. Chatfield encouraged everyone who wanted to get involved to try to discuss this with their neighbors face-to-face. It was noted that both joint tenants, if applicable, would have to sign such an agreement.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

RCHCA Treasurer John Robinson provided a report on RCH finances. Robinson said there was a disputed item of \$400, but that RCHCA had a positive cash flow and was comfortably solvent.

Robinson said that the total amount in RCH Accounts (updated as of May 27, to take in May 22 contributions) would be \$5,526.90.

SPRING PARTY REPORT. The RCHCA Spring Party was held at Kensington Cabin Park on May 5th, and all participants reported that the party was wonderful and very actively supported, even though it had to be held in the log cabin because of torrential rains.

VILLAGES OF KENSINGTON PRESENTATION. Eriko Kennedy gave a presentation on the Villages of Kensington, which is a volunteer organization providing social services to all residents of the 20895 zip code. Villages of Kensington is a small, non-profit 501(c)(3) organized two years ago. The “Villages” movement was started in 2001. There are 71 Villages in the DC area, 39 of which are in Maryland, mostly in Montgomery County. Each Village operates differently, and they have independent funding. Villages of Kensington is just getting started but is very exciting. Villages of Kensington can provide transportation services to residents in need, monthly lunches, seasonal gatherings, and, in partnership with Villages of Garrett Park, group walks, museum visits, theatre, and birdwatching. Villages of Kensington also serves its volunteers, by helping them make more connections. Villages of Kensington is looking for volunteers, and for support. More information can be found on the website, www.VillagesofKensingtonMD.org.

AREA DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

School Redistricting. President Chatfield asked if anyone had an update on school redistricting. Karen Miller reported that the Montgomery County Board of Education (BOE) is going to do a boundary study to help assess whether redistricting makes sense, and that the BOE may be changing the rules to take diversity into account. Part of the problem is that some schools are overcrowded and some schools are underutilized. BOE is in the process of hiring a consultant to study the issue. The ultimate decisions are still a couple of years away, and may not affect Silver Creek Middle School. Some hearings have already been held, and diversity issues have made some of the hearings contentious, as some residents opposed to change have been accused of being racist. Karen Miller (karenseelig@yahoo.com) and Brennan Veys (brennan.veys@gmail.com) volunteered to keep an eye on the issue and to report back to RCHCA. (See <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/publicinfo/boundary-analysis/>)

Kensington Redevelopment. Chatfield briefly discussed the plans for development at Connecticut and Knowles Ave, across from the Safeway, and mentioned that such development, together with the new Purple Line station at Connecticut Ave. and Manor Road, could have significant impacts on RCH. Evan Durbin offered to keep an eye on the project and get back to the RCHCA board. Treasurer John Robinson described how to access information on

the project on the Montgomery Planning Board website, and promised to put something together for the RCH web site.

(See <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/320180210-Kensington-Manor-Staff-Report-FINAL.pdf>)

Beltway Expansion. There was an extended discussion about the proposed beltway expansion project, which could have a significant impact on RCH. Delegate Solomon explained that a bill to require legislative oversight of the project passed in the Maryland House, but was blocked in the Senate. Barbara Coufal said that on June 5, a vote would be held by the Board of Public Works (BPW) to allow the Department of Transportation (MDOT) to start soliciting contracts, even though no financial analysis or environmental studies had been done. A number of public workshops have been held, but many believe these are just window dressing for a project Gov. Hogan is already committed to. Rock Creek Park will lose land and trees, and Rock Creek itself would have to be moved. The project is expected to increase traffic on Connecticut Ave, East-West Highway, and University Ave. Coufal explained that a number of studies have shown that expanding highways does not reduce congestion, but lead to increased demand. The expansion would result in a dirtier environment, increased CO2, and worse traffic, especially on Connecticut Ave. The Public-Private Partnership (“P3”) structure actually increases costs, because private developers have to raise prices to compensate for the unknown risk element. The BPW members voting on June 5 will be Gov. Larry Hogan, Comptroller Peter Franchot, and Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp. Hogan is pushing the project through; Kopp has concerns and is likely opposed; Franchot will be the swing vote. Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich has asked the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission not to allow the state to give up parkland for the project.

Chatfield said that he had prepared form letters from RCHCA residents to Comptroller Franchot and Treasurer Kopp, and signature pages were circulated for a group letter, which received a lot of support. Delegate Solomon explained that the P3 law was originally intended only for the Purple Line, but that Hogan was using P3 to push through the expansion project. Once contracts are awarded, the MD legislature will have to approve. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission may also be a key player. Hogan’s approach has been to call opponents “pro-traffic.” There are no specific plans or environmental studies because the private developers are supposed to come up with plans. An elevated roadway would greatly increase noise problems for RCH. A motion was made, seconded, and accepted without objection for RCHCA to send a letter opposing the project. Chatfield said he would draft a letter which would be posted on the RCHCA website. Brad German suggested neighbors also take a look at the Citizens Against Beltway Expansion (CABE) website, <https://www.cabe495.com/> .

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE. President Chatfield gave a brief report on sidewalks, roadwork for traffic relief, and the ongoing WSSC project to upgrade the neighborhood water supply. The bottom line is that sidewalks and roads will have to wait until the WSSC project is completed, probably around the Fall of 2021.

The meeting was adjourned..