

Minutes

Sandy Spring Civic Association
Ross Body Community Center*, Sandy Spring, MD 20860
(Meeting Virtually During Covid-19 Pandemic) *

February 8, 2021

Attendance: Board Members – Dr. Daryl Thorne, President; Basile “Whit” Whitaker, Vice President; Christine Wilson, Treasurer; Audrey Dutton, Parliamentarian (Absent); Douglas Farquhar, Recording and Correspondence Secretary

Attendance: General body – Approximately 16

Guest(s): Nia Zagami, President, Sherwood High School Student Council; Terry Franklin and Walt Fennel, area residents

Attendance Total (approximate): 21

Meeting called to order: 6:31 p.m. by Daryl

Agenda

New Business:

The agenda was rearranged to permit our guest speaker, Nia Zagami, President of the Sherwood High School Student Council, to speak before we turned to our routine business. Nia was present to talk about possible areas of collaboration and support between the Civic Association and students at SHS. She began by saying the current school year has been very tough because of COVID, with fundraisers and pep rallies canceled because students are not in school and gatherings are restricted or prohibited. But the student government has an active Facebook page with lots of activities and events, which she showed us. These included naming a “Teacher of the Week,” a toy drive, and a food drive. In terms of additional community service ideas, she suggested a used jeans drive, a canned food drive (the last one was set up at a neighborhood pool), and some restaurant fundraisers. In response to questions, she said that collected canned goods were donated to Olney HELP and toys were donated to the Salvation Army. The student government sponsor is Miss Katherine Jaffe. Ideas were suggested for additional potential community service efforts that could be considered for collaboration: Christmas cards for and other communications with residents of senior living communities, offering donated food to residents who are at County locations for COVID tests, voter registration drives, blood drives. Nia also mentioned that she thinks that members of the Civic Association could offer SHS students virtual classes on “adulting;” she suggested topics like how and when you pay bills, how you handle taxes, etc.

Minutes:

The January 2021 Minutes were summarized and approved without amendments.

Committee Reports:

Christine delivered the Treasurer's report, which is attached.

Christine said, on behalf of the Scholarship Committee, that the application forms for college assistance grants for the 2021-22 school year had been delivered to local churches and schools.

Marie Slater, on behalf of the Transportation Committee, said that nothing has happened on the Brooke Road/Route 108 intersection improvements, and she will follow up with transportation officials. She said that the Route 108 bike path is in the design and cost-estimating phase, and that the Heritage Triangle Trail (which will link Norwood Road from Woodlawn to Route 108 and Dr. Bird Road from the Olney Ale House to its intersection with Norwood Road) is moving along, with a public hearing scheduled for Thursday, February 26.

Old Business:

The remainder of the meeting involved a discussion of the proposed Ashton Village Center Sector Plan, which has been approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board and transmitted to the County Council for its consideration. Doug delivered a PowerPoint (attached) which summarized the key aspects of the Plan, and noted that controversy is center on the Southeast Corner of the Ashton intersection, a 9 acre site that currently houses only a branch of Sandy Spring Bank, a single-family home, and a BG&E substation. He noted that the Planning Board proposes a density of .5 FAR (a calculation explained in the PowerPoint) and height limits of 45', which would accommodate four story buildings. The Plan would permit commercial space, apartments over commercial spaces, single-family homes, townhouses, and small apartment buildings. Doug noted that the Plan included design guidelines that he and other residents support, but the guidelines are only recommendations. He also noted that the County planning staff calculate that the increased density would permit as many as 159 additional residential units on the corner. Walt Fennell then presented a PowerPoint he had compiled showing how apartments could be gathered in small, attractive buildings which look like single-family homes or duplexes, as opposed to large, block-like buildings such as those in graphics submitted by the developer of the Southeast Corner. After lots of questions and much discussion, the SSCA membership unanimously approved the SSCA taking the following positions:

- The SSCA asks the County Council to reduce the FAR to .25 on SE Corner lots not currently zoned with a commercial density FAR of .75, rather than .5 FAR (Doug explained that this would mean about half the property would be zoned at .25 FAR, and the remainder would be zoned at .5 FAR).
- Asks that the building height maximum for the Southeast Corner be reduced by 5' to 40' for interior and landmark building (leaving 35' maximum for other street-facing buildings).
- Asks the County Council to strengthen design guidelines so they are mandatory.
- Asks the County Council to instruct the Planning Board that the Implementation Advisory Committee, which will be commissioned to review developer's building plans, must be involved early in the plan development process (at the conceptual design phase,

well before submission of developer plans to the Planning Department), and that IAC input must be considered by Planning Staff.

It was agreed that Doug, as Correspondence Secretary, would draft a letter to be submitted to the County Council advocating these positions, and would submit the draft to the Executive Committee for approval. After clearing the letter with the Executive Committee, the letter will be submitted before the next SSCA meeting, inasmuch the County Council Public Hearing is scheduled on March 2, 2021. Members of the SSCA urged all members to send their own letters to the County Council as well, or to testify, and agreed that links to the two presentations and to the announcement of the County Council public hearing would be circulated to the SSCA membership.

On motion of Daryl, seconded by Paula Glendenning, the meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Farquhar
Recording Secretary