Sandy Spring Civic Association

Ross Body Community Center, Sandy Spring, MD 20860

(Meeting Virtually by Zoom during Covid-19 Pandemic)

October 10, 2022 (by Zoom, for 27th meeting in a row)

**Attendance**:

Board Members – Dr. Daryl Thorne, President; Basile “Whit” Whitaker, Vice President; Christine Hill Wilson, Treasurer; Douglas Farquhar, Recording and Correspondence Secretary

General body – approximately 5

Attendance Total (approximate): 9

**Meeting called to order**: 6:33 p.m. by Daryl

Minutes for the September 2022 meeting were approved.

The Treasurer’s Report (attached) was read and accepted. Christine mentioned that she is working to see if SSCA can accept Paypal for membership dues.

The Transportation Committee (Marie Slater) reported in writing that there is a new project manager for the improvements needed at the intersection of Brooke Road and Route 108, who reported to her that the design work for the intersection should be complete by July 2023, and that some additional rights of way must be acquired for the work to go forward. Marie learned that the project would be put to bid as part of an “area-wide” contract, and it was not certain that there would be sufficient funds for all the projects included. Marie emphasized the importance of the project especially in light of the new housing units approved for Sandy Spring Meadows, and the 56 units of Senior Housing opening at the old Montgomery Insurance building. Whit asked if it might help to get the state legislators involved. Liza Smith, an SSCA member, said she would get word to them.

In terms of possible revisions to the bylaws of the SSCA, there was more discussion about the pros and cons of granting membership to Homeowners Associations in our area. There was some concern about potentially diluting the impact of the Ashton Alliance. It was also suggested that the name be changed to the Greater Sandy Spring Civic Association. No decisions were reached.

Member Kay Junghans noted that the so-called “Green Cemetery” has been approved, despite her community’s opposition. She also noted that the Reddemeade Equestrian Center, on New Hampshire Avenue above Ashton, has applied to develop the property and build “McMansions” on its 60 acres.

There was discussion about SSCA taking positions on countywide issues. It was agreed that there are serious issues with the Montgomery County Planning Board: Whit made a presentation based on talking points that are attached. It was agreed that the SSCA would ask the County Council to ask for Board Chairman Casey Anderson’s resignation. As the letter from the SSCA was being drafted several days later, Mr. Anderson resigned. The Executive Committee of SSCA decided, at that point, to ask the County Council to defer action on the Thrive 2050 plan (letter attached). Marie Slater wanted to ensure that a letter on this point would not affect SSCA’s nonprofit status. Doug opined that SSCA should not support political candidates, but taking a position on County policy should not create an issue.

Daryl mentioned that she would like to raise, again, the possibility of SSCA getting involved in service projects, and it was discussed that maybe SSCA should partner with the Sharp Street Pantry or Olney HELP.

It was agreed that our next meeting on November 14, would return to in-person availability, but there will be a hybrid Zoom link for those who would like to participate remotely.

Doug said that he is very concerned about the rise in traffic fatalities and speeding, and wanted to suggest that SSCA consider asking the County and the State for more speed cameras in our community. All present agreed it would be best to let our neighbors know we are considering such a motion, so that people can weigh in. Doug called Judy Hruz, as agreed at the meeting, and Judy ran a brief article that prompted only one written response to the SSCA email address. It was opposed to the idea.

It was announced that the Ross Boddy Fall Festival would take place on October 22, and the Empty Bowl Super on November 6.

Whit said he is conversation with State Senator Craig Zucker about a potential government grant for SSCA, and Whit said we should decide on specific uses that grant money would be put to.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Farquhar,

Recording and Correspondence Secretary

Approved:



Sandy Spring Civic Association

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***Meeting the second Monday of each month, 6:30pm at the Ross Boddy Community Center located on Brooke Road in Sandy Spring, Maryland***

October 17, 2022

**By email**

Members of the Montgomery County Council

County Executive Marc Elrich

Re: Postponement of County Council Vote on Thrive 2050 Plan

On behalf of the Sandy Spring Civic Association, the oldest racially integrated Civic Association in Montgomery County, we write to strongly encourage the Council to postpone a vote on the proposed Thrive 2050 plan currently scheduled for October 25, 2022, in consideration of recent disclosures about serious dysfunction at the Montgomery County Planning Division and Planning Board. The County Council has clearly lost confidence in the Planning Board, and although there have been investigations into violations of open meeting laws and County regulations on consumption of alcohol in county offices committed by Casey Anderson, Planning Board Chair, and two other Planning Board Commissioners, the sanctions have been insufficient. The Council should have insisted on Casey Anderson’s resignation long ago. Given the poor decision-making exhibited by the Planning Board Chair and the questionable handling of the situation by the County Council, the SSCA has serious concerns about the planning process.

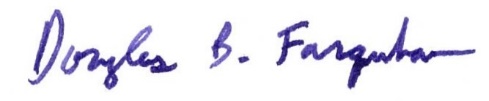
The Sandy Spring and Ashton areas have been subjected to three major zoning recommendations by the Planning Board that have impacted the rural character of our community despite widespread community opposition: the Thomas Village townhouses, the Ashton Market development, and the Ashton Village Sector Plan. The heights and densities of these recent constructions were challenged by the community, but the community’s objections were ignored by the Planning Board, under Anderson’s leadership, and by the County Council. We understand that it may be difficult to undo the damage that has been done to our community through these decisions. It would be far worse if this grievous deliberate overdevelopment in rural areas is expanded to the entire County based on reports from a Planning Board that was not listening to County residents, and voters.

The County Council should postpone its vote on the Thrive 2050 Plan until a newly appointed Planning Board has been seated, the midterm elections have been concluded, and new County Council members and the County Executive are installed. The long-term, post COVID-19 implications of Thrive 2050 for County development, housing, and quality of life are too important to permit it to be approved based on a seriously flawed planning process and limited community input.

In closing, the SSCA is supportive of the actions recently asking for the resignation of the Planning Board commissioners; however, in order to ensure confidence and trust in this important body of government, we also strongly recommend the postponement of the October 25, Thrive 2050 vote to restore some semblance of a fair and open government oversight. This is far too important to rush considering the recent concerns of numerous allegations involving the Planning Board.

This letter is sent with the approval of the Executive Committee of the Sandy Spring Civic Association, consistent with a motion passed at our last membership meeting.

Sincerely,



Douglas B. Farquhar,

Correspondence Secretary,

Sandy Spring Civic Association

(cell 202 263 9951, office 202 737 9624, email dbf@hpm.com)