

Approved by the Board Nov. 12, 2020

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Minutes for Admiral Heights Improvement Association's online meeting (YouTube webinar) hosted by Tonya McGinnis on Oct. 6, 2020

Called to order: 7:03 p.m. by President Scott Gibson

Attendees: Gibson, Cindy Radulovich, Joe Flasher, Maggie Rogers, Tonya McGinnis, Lizzie Coelho, Martha Thorn, John Leupold, Jen Hall, Bo Conroy, Derek Lotfi & Grant Garcia. Alderman Fred Paone also attended.

On the meeting night, 26 residents (including board members) attended the Zoom meeting and an additional 17 on YouTube for a total of 43. Since then, an additional **18 views** have been recorded on YouTube, bringing the total views up to **61**.

If anyone else wants to view the meeting, it's still available on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnAb941D2hQ>.

President's remarks: Gibson welcomed everyone to AHIA's first online general membership meeting. He noted the agenda would include the approval of the minutes, the treasurer's report, and community property updates. He praised a new initiative -- the community input survey. Originated by Joe Flasher, the survey will help AHIA be more responsive to neighborhood interests, concerns and needs.

Gibson said the most important piece of business would be the adoption of a budget. He reminded attendees that at the last general membership meeting AHIA switched from an April 1 fiscal year to a calendar fiscal year to better keep track of dues. Since then, more Admiral Heights residents have paid their dues than ever before, according to Gibson. He said we're going to maintain the status quo in this year's budget, keeping it "purposely flat."

The meeting would conclude with updates from City Hall. Gibson said we were lucky to have our neighbor and city councilman, Alderman Fred Paone, speak to us.

Rather than using AHIA's traditional voting method of handing out cards and taking a vote, voting will be by "unanimous consent." Those objecting to the adoption of the dues or the budget

can insert a comment in the chat function. Include your name and address so we can verify that you're an eligible voter in the Admiral Heights Improvement Association.

To note some accomplishments, membership is at an all-time high, and we're hoping to sustain that. At the last general membership meeting attendees suggested recognizing members in the newsletter. We've done that.

With the building of the new dock on Williams Drive, AHIA has made an historic investment in our properties and has enhanced our community amenities. A couple of issues still need to be resolved with the City, but building the dock has been a step forward in this multi-year project. A special thanks go to Bo Conroy and Jim Golden.

Unfortunately, we've had to cancel many Admiral Heights events because of the pandemic. However, we're making plans for our first family event with social distancing in place.

While tonight we're focusing on maintaining the status quo and proposing flat dues and a flat budget, we're continuing to gather more information from the county about the special community benefits district. We hope to have a more detailed conversation with the neighborhood about that in the spring.

It's important that we have an open and transparent dialogue, and that we collaborate as we decide how to move forward on this issue. It's a big issue that should be talked about in a town hall meeting where we can recognize speakers and have a better facilitated dialogue.

Treasurer's Report: Event expenses were lower this year because of cancellations due to the pandemic. However, property expenses have gone up because of the new dock and new kayak racks (which should actually be revenue neutral). Upcoming big expenses deal with tree and maintenance issues. However, the higher property expenses were kind of offset by the lower social events cost.

Income and membership are both up. Approximately 260 members have paid their dues in 2020, one of the highest numbers AHIA has ever had. With 600 homes in the neighborhood, that's still "fairly low" as membership is less than half of our neighbors, so we still need to find ways to grow our membership

The treasurer's report was updated today. The CD amounts to a little over \$5,000. The dock account is down to about \$500 because we rebuilt the dock. That account has been pretty well emptied at this point. Our checking account has about \$17,000 in it.

So far, we haven't gotten any advertising this year, so there should be more income. That should be coming in soon because we just printed the Mast. The dues in the report are only from April to December. About \$9,000 came in before April as part of the dues for 2020. We should also be receiving income from our kayak racks. We also got a few donations.

The \$13,000 that was moved out of the dock checking account into the business checking account to pay for the dock isn't considered as income.

Property updates: Conroy said that AHIA and the Boat Club are working with Alderman Paone and the city to get a grant to pay for a standpipe, which would make the new Williams Dock fire safety compliant with the latest code. In the meantime, the dock has fire extinguishers.

Gibson clarified that the standpipe would be an issue regardless of whether or not boats used the dock. He spoke with the Fire Marshal, who said even if it was just a stump pier for launching kayaks, the City of Annapolis Fire Department would require a standpipe. So even if we build a six-foot pier sufficient for launching kayaks, we will need a standpipe.

The "triggering" factor about whether a standpipe is needed is whether the pier is owned by the neighborhood. Community-owned piers need standpipes. They are not required if the piers are privately owned.

AHIA has received a couple of quotes to remove some dead trees at Williams Dock. That work should be done in October. Conroy noted that the Boat Club and AHIA have worked together to handle both building Williams Dock and clean-up projects.

The outfall at Williams Dock needs repairing. Conroy has asked the City for an update on its plans to repair it.

Conroy thanked Garcia and Flasher for building the 12 new kayak racks at Dewey Dock. The new additions have almost, if not totally, eliminated the rack waitlist. He also thanked volunteers

who spread a new layer of mulch at Dewey Dock and noted that the light at Dewey has been repaired. The light is to keep nighttime activity at a minimum.

If anyone sees anything that needs to be done to the AHIA Grounds, please email Conroy at the email address in the newsletter.

Survey: Flasher came up with a survey that will enable AHIA to reach a lot of residents at once and hear their concerns. If the survey's useful, Flasher **plans to** conduct one on a regular basis to ensure AHIA projects are aligned with what the community wants it to do.

The survey consists of a few simple questions and only takes a few minutes to fill out. The survey asks residents about their primary concerns and to rank the importance of various projects. It also asks about things that AHIA should start doing, stop doing, or continue doing. This will give AHIA a sense of what is working and what's not working.

The comment section allows residents to put whatever is important to them on the radar of all the board members, not just one. It also saves residents the inconvenience of playing "telephone tag" to try to reach board members.

The link was in the newsletter. The deadline is Oct. 20. Once the results are in, we will share them. If there are questions that you want us to ask, please include them in the comments, and we can ask them in future versions of the survey.

Budget: This was a short financial year. AHIA switched from an April 1 fiscal year to a calendar fiscal year to help AHIA and residents better track the payment of dues. The budget that was approved by the membership in March only ran from April to December. The budget that we approve tonight will run from January to December.

At the March meeting we presented three scenarios that we could pursue, depending on how much AHIA received in dues. The membership voted that the board would be able to decide which case we fell into based on revenue.

We are doing the same thing tonight. A base case assumes 33 percent of the homes join AHIA. That's around 200 members. Historically we've had 200 or fewer members. That assumes about

\$8,000 in income from dues, plus the kayak racks, which we now have a few more kayak racks, so that income goes up. We also get a little bit of advertising income and the money from the Boat Club lease.

The Boat Club contributes to the Dock Fund, but we have to match their contribution. This money is not actually income. It just gets saved.

In the better case scenario, we have 50 percent of the residents paying dues. We aren't quite there yet, but we're getting closer.

After considering these two scenarios, we're proposing "maintaining the status quo" with "flat dues and a flat budget." Dues will remain at \$40 and the kayak rack rentals will stay at \$45.

This means if we have fewer members, we will cut spending. If we have more members, we can spend more. That's why the survey is so important. If money is tight, we want to spend it on priorities – whether they be extra improvements to our properties, more social events, etc. We want to put any extra money we might have into initiatives that the residents want.

If we have low membership like we've had some years in the past, we will have to rein in spending and focus more on the essentials like maintaining our properties, mowing, cutting down trees, and other stuff that we have to do.

That being said, just because we don't fund an event doesn't mean we have to cancel it. It just means we might ask for more volunteers to help or to make donations or to bring food, etc. We can still have the event. It just won't be supported financially by the neighborhood.

Power, mowing, our contribution to the dock replacement funds, insurance – these are the essentials that take about 83 percent of the budget. They maintain our properties. Then, we have administrative costs like the internet, web page, membership to the Seven River Society, a post office box, office supplies, newsletter printing, and membership mailings. Those are about 14 percent of the budget, so that leaves only three percent of the budget for social gatherings or other initiatives. This is the base case with about a third of the neighborhood joining AHIA.

If half the neighborhood joins the association, the facilities maintenance stuff remains the same, but now it's only about 61 percent of the budget. It's a smaller piece of the pie, so then we have about an extra \$4,000 to spend on whatever the community wants -- whether that's more social gatherings, some work at Halsey Park, or anything else that the neighborhood needs or wants.

All that being said, the treasurer made a motion: "Be it hereby resolved that the board of directors is authorized to proceed with the 'base case budget;' and be it further resolved that the board be authorized to increase spending as outlined in the 'better case budget' if revenue is strong enough to support doing so." No objections came in, so the budget was approved by unanimous consent.

Updates from City Hall: Paone said that in June a shooting occurred near the Porter-Sampson-Cedar Park intersection. He said it was gang-related and didn't have anything to do with Admiral Heights. The shooter had followed these people here from West Street.

Paone said, "That's not to excuse or minimize the violence. It's frightening, but the average person in our community wasn't in particular danger, because the shooting was targeted. Nevertheless, it's a real eye opener and we all have to be vigilant and careful what we do."

As a result of the shooting, Gibson, Paone and Bob Waldman (president of the Germantown-Homewood Association) set up a town hall with Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley and Annapolis Police Chief Edward Jackson. Public safety issues were discussed and questions were answered. Patrols are being stepped up.

Paone said that, relatively speaking, Admiral Heights is a very low crime area. Nevertheless, he takes solace from the fact that the police know we're here, and they're keeping their eyes on the area.

Paone thinks that we have an excellent chance of getting a grant to help the city pay for sidewalks for Cedar Park Road. He said if we get the grant, the sidewalks will happen much more quickly. If we don't get the grant, he believes we'll still get the sidewalks, just not as quickly. Paone congratulated Gibson and the community for their efforts, which led to the sidewalks being included in the budget for the first time.

Paone will attend a retreat where the budget and budget process will be discussed. Paone said the City is about \$3 million over budget, and he expects it to get worse. One suggestion that they'll

be looking at is to ask the county to take over some duplicated services. They're not necessarily talking about police, fire and public works, but other, smaller services. Paone says while the county can split the cost up to 600,000 ways, the City can only split the cost 40,000 ways.

He says we've saved a lot of money over the last six or seven years with trash collection. He admits that the service may not be as good as it used to be, but most of the time, it's good enough, and we're paying a lot less money for it.

Part of the budget is to remodel the Tucker Street boat ramp in West Annapolis. It's open to everybody that lives in the city. If anybody uses it a lot and has any particular thoughts or ideas, Paone would like to hear from them. Another upcoming issue he would like to hear from his constituents about is making the elections in the City of Annapolis nonpartisan.

He's began putting out a newsletter before City Council meetings. He discusses the issues and how he intends to vote. To get on his mailing list, ask questions, or voice your opinions, email aldpaone@annapolis.gov or call 410-267-7604.

Events: Residents have expressed an interest in having more family events, but this has been hard to do because of the pandemic. In fact, most Admiral Heights events were canceled. However, plans are in the works for "our first family event with social distancing in place."

It's a scarecrow making event organized by board member, Lizzie Coelho, and her neighbor, Keren Lotfi. It's going to take place on Cedar Park Road near the Admiral Heights sign. AHIA will supply the straw, string and stakes. There'll be a contest where you can vote on your favorite scarecrows.

If you want to participate but aren't comfortable with a socially distant community gathering, you can email Lizzie at the address on the screen. She'll get the supplies to you.

Sidewalks: Gibson is trying to get some public dialogue going on the traffic issues. He is trying to push the City along and back up Paone's efforts to get the sidewalk built by creating a Facebook page that residents can follow. Just go to Facebook and search for Walkable Ward Two.

Gibson is also going to ask for volunteer families and school children to read Shel Silverstein's book, "Where the Sidewalk Ends." Taking and compiling videos might also help to make this discussion go viral.

Gibson's email address is on the Admiral Heights website. Feel free to reach out to him about issues affecting Admiral Heights.

Questions: Attendees asked questions by going to the chat function on the toolbar. They typed questions in the chat function. Panelists made sure questions were asked and answered on the webinar for everybody to hear.

- Are there any new boat slips at Williams Dock? No. It was a replacement in kind, so it did not result in additional boat slips. We're still at the same capacity. I believe there is a water level issue there as well. Over time, we've lost one or two slips due to silting.
- How can we get on the kayak waitlist? There are two waitlists. The one at Dewey Dock is run by AHIA. The one on Williams Drive is run by the Boat Club. Emails for the Boat Club and the Dewey Dock Boat Racks are in the Mast newsletter.
- What about the public lot at the intersection of Halsey and McDonough? That is not well kept these days, you cannot get to the water very easily. One neighbor says that the people mowing just give it a bit of a swipe. Trimming and shaping doesn't seem to happen. She has to do the trimming to get to her hedge. Conroy requested Margaret Drake's email and phone number and made a note to follow up on this.

Gibson said that not a lot of thought has been given to the purpose of Halsey Park. It's not the same as the other waterfront properties (Williams and Dewey). It's a little bit more open. Some neighbors have been interested in a playground there. Gibson said if people have thoughts about this property, please include them in the survey.

Leupold said that at one time a path was cleared down to the water. Around the time the City fixed the outfall there, AHIA added timbers to make a little walkway down to the water. He said that at some point it was deemed that nobody was using it, so it wasn't maintained beyond that. "It basically just led to a mud flat at the bottom." Other people explored trying to build some sort of a dock or a kayak launch there, and it was deemed not usable at the time.

- Does the newsletter printing cost \$600? Is that for everyone to get a copy of The Mast? Yes. We print it twice a year, so it's \$300 a pop. Everybody gets a copy. It's printed late February (before the March general membership meeting) and late September (before the October general membership meeting).
- Are the dues definitely moving to being paid via property taxes or other venue? We have talked about creating a special community benefits district which would allow the dues to be paid as part of your property taxes.

However, that conversation is on hold. We're waiting for a time when we can all get together and have a town hall meeting and a more interactive public dialogue about it.

There are definitely some pros to doing it that way. It's easier for administration, but there are some concerns that we need to address. The county code outlines the process by which we would become a special community benefits district. It's through a petition which isn't easy to do in a time of social distancing.

- What about a setup so we can do an electronic debit from our checking account? Leupold said he would look into that.

Gibson said that setting up an easier subscription for paying the dues through PayPal might be an interim step before we consider a property tax setup that makes it easier for folks. He said it would automate the process and make it like any bill that you can set up on auto pay.

- What's the City's position on traffic calming devices such as speed bumps? Paone says speed bumps aren't going to happen. The City doesn't put them in because of potential damage to police vehicles, ambulances, fire trucks and privately owned vehicles. No one wants to replace the undercarriage of your car every year.

Putting in a circle might be a more realistic possibility, but as anybody that has worked on trying to get stop signs or other traffic devices in the community knows, it's very difficult to do. It's obviously been done, but it's not easy. Paone says, "The City goes by the book, following the national standards. If you don't meet those standards, you're not going to get whatever it is you're asking for."

- Why is it the speed limit at the back of the community (Halsey) 20, and in the front of the community (near the stadium) 25? Paone said he didn't know, but he would find out. He did, however, give attendees some historical perspective. He said the speed limit was dropped to 20 on Farragut Road. Even though people were given 14 miles an hour over the limit before they were written up, there were still an overwhelming avalanche of tickets which were accompanied by an overwhelming avalanche of complaints. The problem is people don't obey the speed limit.
- Once the decision has been made to begin the sidewalk projects, when would it commence? Paone said we don't know the answer to that yet. It depends on a number of factors. One is whether we get the grant from the state. Another is what other projects we're working on. We're a relatively small city, so we usually only work on four or five projects at one time.

We need to get it done before major work is started on the Hillman Garage and the City Dock. Once that work starts, I think most of our efforts are going to be devoted to that. At least that's my concern. That's why I would like to get it done sooner not later.

We have the mayor's support. It's a question of getting the money when we're already \$3.3 million in the hole. It's an important project, but you know they're going to be looking at the city's money purse, very, very, very closely. But it's approved. It's part of the budget and part of the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

- How else could we address the concerns about speeding in the neighborhood? We could ask about putting the speed camera back on Farragut or maybe on parts of Cedar Park, but we had the city engineer go out and take speed measurements. She's telling us that people don't really go that fast. I get the city's attention. They come out and say there's not as big a problem as you think there is.
- Can you remind everybody that motorists are supposed to stop whenever there's someone in the crosswalk? Yes. We need to be mindful of pedestrians throughout our neighborhood. Maggie Rogers, a member of our board and neighbor, shared a great personal commentary in the newsletter about her observations on driving through the neighborhood.

Thanks: Gibson thanked everyone, including board members, community volunteers, association members, and meeting attendees, for taking an interest in the community and helping with the community's properties, finances, social events, and special issues.

To do list: Status of the outfall at Williams Dock - Conroy

Results of survey – Flasher

Special project(s) to promote the sidewalk issue – Gibson

Follow up on status of Halsey Park with Margaret Drake - Conroy

More info about the special community benefits district from the county – Gibson

Approved minutes to John for posting – Cindy/Martha

Post minutes to web - Leupold.

Look into electronic debit from checking accounts - Leupold.

Check out why there's a difference in speed limits between the front and back of the community (20 in the back and 25 in the front) – Paone

Remind people to stop at crosswalks and slow down – All

Find out what time the meeting ended - Martha

The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

Submitted by Martha Thorn

Backup Secretary