

Approved by the Board April 2, 2020
Admiral Heights Improvement Association General Membership Meeting
March 3, 2020

Called to order: 7:30 p.m. by President Scott Gibson at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium's Daniel F. Akerson Tower.

Attendance: AHIA Board members – Martha Thorn, Gibson, Tonya McGinnis, Cindy Radulovich, John Leupold, Derek Lotfi, Maggie Rogers, Grant Garcia & Maria Lebow-Little attended. In addition to the board members, about 60 Admiral Heights residents attended, including Alderman Fred Paone.

Not in attendance: Bo Conroy, Norm Crews & Jim Burdick.

President's remarks: Gibson said he was glad the room was full, because we were going to have a conversation about an option for the future. He said the community faces big issues, including Williams Dock, and he hopes we will approach these issues thoughtfully and respectfully. He said the conversation would be about a special benefit district. He said Alderman Paone would also address the meeting.

Minutes: The minutes from the October 2019 general membership meeting were approved.

Williams Dock: It's in the permitting phase. The Fire Department is reviewing the application. The fundraising goal was reached. We are convinced that we have a path to complete the dock.

Kayak rack rentals: Seven of the 32 racks on Dewey Drive turned over. This year we'll be going to a sticker system and looking for squatters and non-payers.

Question: Are we paying for the rack itself? Answer: Yes, it's \$45 per rack rental.

Question: Is it OK to have three boats on one rack? Answer: If they all fit on the rack, it is OK. However, all boats need a sticker.

Question: Are there any plans to expand? Answer: We could put half a rack in two spots. Any more would disturb vegetation that was planted to control run-off. We're encouraging people who don't use their boats to move on.

Question: How long is the wait? Answer: Some have waited 18 months but we've had seven turnovers. The Boat Club on Williams Drive has racks that are built differently. There are no designated spots.

Treasurer's Report: Income is down. The balance sheet shows a \$5,000 CD, which will probably be rolled over. The Dock Rebuild account includes donations.

The current budget goes to March 31. The next budget goes from April 1 – Dec. 31. Next year we will run a January - December budget. That's why you see 2019 and 2020 income in the budget.

Expenses for events came in lower than anticipated. Some events were donated when people lost their receipts. Garcia got the tables and chairs at a cheaper rate and picked them up in his pickup.

We paid a chunk of insurance in the previous year before March. The cost of mowing was lower because we asked the contractor to only mow as needed.

The Dock Rebuild money will go in and out for expenses except for the \$750 that will go into escrow.

We've eliminated Meet the Creek, reduced the fall block party, made sure kayak rack rentals are paid, and sent postcards to increase revenue. We may send out another postcard later to get the membership up more. Membership is about 160 which is low.

Members suggested that those who paid their dues be thanked in the newsletter. The plan is to do this in the fall newsletter.

Question: Can the newsletter come out more frequently? Answer: It was cut back because of cost.

The Treasurer's Report was adopted.

Budget: Where does the \$40 that you pay for dues go? Eighty percent of it goes toward necessities – lawn care, mowing, insurance. Another 10 percent goes toward the web page and the post office box which might be considered necessities. That's 90 percent of the dues. That leaves 10 percent for discretionary spending which goes for everything else, including social events.

Gibson presented three budget scenarios – a worst case scenario which would cover the bare essentials and might operate at a deficit; a better case scenario which would break even or include a small amount for social gatherings; and the best-case scenario which would operate at a surplus.

He said that not funding an event wouldn't necessarily mean canceling an event. It might mean depending on potlucks or the generosity of volunteers to sponsor or contribute more to events. He said the first priority would be to maintain our properties.

A motion was made by the Treasurer: "Be it hereby resolved that the Board of Directors is authorized to proceed with the "Likely Case Budget" and be it further resolved that the Board be authorized to increase spending as outlined in either the "Better Case Budget" or "Best Case Budget" if revenue is strong enough to support doing so." This motion gives the board

the authority to prioritize expenses if revenue doesn't live up to expectations. The motion was passed.

Membership: Gibson asked, "How do we get more people to join AHIA? What issues are people interested in? What approach should we take? If we lowered dues to \$25, would more homes join?"

He said the highest membership occurred when Bozzuto Homes, Inc., tried to develop the WNAV property and carve an access road through Admiral Heights and when the Boat Club lease came up for renewal.

Gibson said something has changed and it's not just in Admiral Heights. He says philanthropy and donations have declined over the last four years. He says ads used to raise more revenue.

How do we drive up membership and target new neighbors? Email? Facebook? Block ambassadors who would deliver welcome packets? Board members talking to residents as they deliver newsletters? Asking neighbors why they're not members or why they're not at meetings? Have an auto-renewal to AHIA unless they opt out?

Question: How many Admiral Heights homes have owners as primary residents? How many have renters as primary residents? How many short-term rentals do we have? Answer: Real estate agents and Paone said these numbers are hard to track because even though the City requires rental permits/licenses, not all absentee owners abide by the law. The City wouldn't know if the information isn't on the tax record.

Election: There are 12 seats on the board. Four officers stay on for an additional year. Five board members -Tonya McGinnis, Cindy Radulovich, Bo Conroy, Derek Lotfi and Maggie Rogers – ran for reelection. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Coelho, Joe Flasher and Jen Hall volunteered to fill the three vacancies. The slate was approved.

Event: Lotfi announced that the Easter egg hunt would start at 10 a.m. instead of 11 a.m.

Remarks by Alderman Paone: He doesn't know what to expect as he begins going over the City budget for next year.

After 11 years of asking for sidewalks, he says there's a chance of getting them from Windell Ave. to Halsey Rd. Mayor Gavin Buckley has visited Admiral Heights and seen the children walking in the road. The City owns a 50 foot right-away. That's five to six feet of people's front yards.

He said speed is deceptive. People may be going 25 mph, but it may seem much faster. Likewise, it's hard to go 30 mph in our neighborhood and still maintain control of the vehicle. Traffic engineers recommend the speed limit based on their testing. They are considering two temporary traffic calming devices. If they work out, they may consider something more permanent. What they're considering is similar to what's in place where 6th Street abuts Bay Ridge Ave.

Paone said unregulated short-term rental properties present a safety issue and contribute to the decline of neighborhoods. He said they're not illegal to operate, but they are illegal if they're not inspected for safety issues. He said the few in Admiral Heights haven't caused any problems.

He said the police chief has noted an uptick in violent crimes, but our ward and our neighborhood haven't been affected. He said there hasn't been much crime in the neighborhood although two cars were "keyed" last summer.

He said Bozzuto Homes, Inc., no longer plan on developing the WNAV property and the threat of it carving an access road through Admiral Heights is gone. However, he said the property is still for sale and he believes it will still be developed. The problem with the egress onto Admiral Drive will probably come up again.

Some residents reported that their roads were in bad condition. Paone said that the City had a four-or five-year schedule for streets to be paved.

Special benefit district: Gibson said creating a special benefit district is one option to consider in overcoming the challenge(s) facing Admiral Heights. He emphasized that we aren't making a decision at this time, just starting a discussion.

The problem is that we have five community areas to maintain, three of which are parks, and two of which offer water access. Another problem is that membership and revenue are declining. Williams Dock represents a significant outlay of money. It was a struggle to come up with the \$14,000 that was AHIA's share of the rebuild. It will be harder to come up with \$40,000 or \$50,000 to rebuild Dewey Dock.

Annapolis Roads, Bay Ridge and Hillsmere have special benefit districts. To establish a special benefit district, a majority of property owners would have to petition for its creation. If two people owned the property, both would have to sign "Yes" on a petition for the petition to count as one "Yes" vote. Two "No" signatures or one "Yes" and one "No" signature would both count as "No" votes.

If each household paid \$22, the community could do everything that we do now plus set aside \$750 for rebuilding docks. The money would be tax deductible, which isn't the case now. Residents would set a yearly budget and remain in control of the spending. Two-thirds or 400 of the 600 homes in the neighborhood would have to vote "Yes" to set up a special benefit district.

The petition must specify how the money will be spent. The purpose would have to be clear. Each district is set up differently. For example, in Hillsmere the money can't be spent on piers or racks.

It would require a grassroots campaign of knocking on doors. It would be an uphill challenge. It would also create a sustainable path to keeping our properties maintained. If something happened to one of the docks, we could get a bank loan to replace it. Currently, we're not eligible to get a loan.

Question: Can the amount residents pay be capped? Answer: We don't know. Gibson will ask the county.

Question: Will we need to pay dues on top of what we pay for the special benefit district?

Answer: It depends on how it's set up. The special benefit district will only pay for the items that it's set up to pay for. Its purpose has to be clearly stated.

Question: How would you pay for such a campaign? Answer: We don't anticipate any costs. Volunteers would do the work at a "grassroots level." We have an attorney willing to donate time, and the county provides technical support.

Question: Will renters get a vote? Answer: No. Only those who are listed on the deeds.

Observation: Some residents indicated that they trusted AHIA's current board, but they weren't so sure about the future. They said "funny things happen when there's a budget surplus" and wondered how the special benefit district would be run long-term.

It was also observed that friction might arise between those that want to contribute and those that don't want to contribute.

Gibson explained that it all depended on how we defined the scope and its purpose. We could define it as building and maintaining the docks. If we wanted to build a Ferris wheel, that would require a new petition. He said if we do this, we would want it to work long-term, and we would depend upon residents to "keep it honest." It would be the residents' responsibility to see that the special benefit district "meets, not exceeds" the needs of Admiral Heights. He also noted that "overhead" would go up because of "bonding" and "county fees."

If not this, what? The special benefit district is one idea. Another idea would be for AHIA to raise its dues. Another scenario would be for AHIA to lose its docks and/or parks or have them, but not maintain them. A floating dock might be a possibility. Maybe the City would consider taking them over? We are looking for ideas. We hope these discussions will lead to a long-term solution.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by Martha Thorn, Secretary