



AHCA Community Meeting
April 10, 2018 - 7:30 PM
AcademyHeightsMD.org

Called to Order at 7:33pm with President Joe Shinault presiding.

Board members in attendance (7): Linda Barnes, Jeannette Bonomo-Thomas, Beth McSweeney, John O’Ferrall, Joe Shinault, Becky Stoll, Seth Wheeler

Members absent (5): Mischa Bowen-Kreiner, Chris Burk, Nikki Green, Chris Waterman, Patrick Young

Minutes from March 6, 2018 were approved.

Sheila Ruth, candidate for County Council, and Rick Powell from Christian Temple were welcomed. Several association members were also welcomed; see sign-in sheet.

Royal Farms Presentation – An attorney, a representative from Royal Farms, and two engineering firm representatives attended. The plan that has been approved by the county was shared. It includes fuel pumps. Ingress and egress points, parking, and circulation were addressed.

The existing Royal Farms will close its operations. Royal Farms currently leases that property and will repurpose it. Approximately 16-18 years remain on the property lease. Royal Farms will continue to maintain the property, but they are seeking a new tenant.

There will be downtime. Construction will take 6-8 months after Royal Farms closes on the property. The engineers are hoping to have final approval by the end of the year. It will be about a full year before the new Royal Farms would open.

Concerns were shared regarding the current lessees, the proposal to install a new fuel station next to an existing one, the scale of the commercial property, and the environmental, traffic, and parking impacts. There was additional conversation regarding zoning, lighting, and variances. In response to a question about notice, the attorney indicated that the letter of the law with respect to past posting requirements was followed; Councilman Quirk’s bill to increase notice requirements has been passed. The attorney will provide a picture of the notice certification. A member asked what Royal Farms looks for in potential property and why the particular site was chosen. The existing store is successful despite challenges of the property’s location. The new acquisition will allow Royal Farms to expand offerings and continue to serve this community.

One resident expressed appreciation for the impending change.

A member asked whether another commercial business subleasing the current location would have the same problems. There was discussion of “quick trips” businesses, such as Royal Farms, as compared to others. It was suggested that Royal Farms carefully consider what would be the right business for that location.

In response to a question about parking, the representatives indicated that the plan includes more parking spaces than the number required by the county.

A member requested that a traffic engineer visit us, as well.

Royal Farms did try to acquire the existing gas station property, but they could not agree to terms with the owner. A member asked about the possibility of one of the fuel stations going out of business and becoming blight. A Royal Farms representative responded that since the existing property is a full-service station and the proposed Royal Farms will offer more food options but no vehicle service, the two businesses will not be direct competitors.

A member asked if a comparable location exists with fuel pumps on a one-acre property. There is a site in the city of a similar size and occupancy. According to the attorney, it is typical for commercial property to back to residential when facing a roadway zoned for commercial use. The representatives shared that in an effort to mitigate traffic impacts, trucks will be scheduled to deliver at nonpeak times.

Cathy Engers shared that the next Comprehensive Zoning Map Process will be in 2020.

Sheila Ruth asked whether the installation of 7 gas pumps would be necessary and wise, given efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The Royal Farms representative anticipates that demand for fuel will continue. Electric charging stations have been installed in other locations, with grants from the state, but decisions are based on supply and demand.

Community Outreach – Officer Boone was unable to attend, but it was shared that community vigilance has contributed to local arrests and is appreciated.

A Town Hall with Councilman Quirk and community leaders is scheduled for Thursday, April 12. Flyers were provided; the meeting will start at 7:00 at St. Tim's. School safety will be the focus.

Vehicle issues, i.e. commercial vehicles, vehicles impeding sight lines, and potentially abandoned cars, have been passed along to Officer Boone.

Treasurer's Report – Dues have come in from many households. A backlog of checks was deposited today. Joe estimated 24% of households have paid. Last year we were at 16% for the full year. Last year our balance was \$6100 as compared to \$8000 currently, which does not yet include electronic transfers. Joe and Chris paid a visit to SunTrust to remove outdated information, secure online banking and debit card. Personal property tax form, which must be submitted yearly for nonprofits, will be filed soon. The day that Venmo went up on Facebook, 20 households paid.

Committees

Architectural – Help is needed to enforce covenants in community. The committee has a current membership of 3.

A Community Sweep was scheduled for January 29, but never occurred, so John has opened up another ticket. Holes indicating potential rodent activity have been observed in front yards on the 400 Block of Stratford.

The county has a new system to track complaints. Anyone can anonymously lodge a complaint with Baltimore County Code Enforcement and can see what has been done on a case.

Pat is working to get us funding for Dumpster weekend, but it will probably have to be pushed into July rather than occurring June 2 as scheduled.

There was discussion of ongoing issues including a bricked up kitchen window and multiple properties that had installed PVC railings. The previously discussed PVC railings which have since been painted black railings have not been removed, indicative of a pervasive issue with residents asking forgiveness rather than permission.

Communication regarding the necessity of applications needs to be improved. Guidelines have been updated to accept applications via email or board member; we must publicize this change.

There was discussion of the need for an attorney on retainer.

John O'Ferrall proposed scheduling a Board meeting to map out a strategy.

A fence application, which meets guidelines, was submitted to the Board for approval.

A member asked whether copies of the architectural guidelines are still provided. They are as part of the welcome packet. In the past, restrictions were provided with almost every newsletter. A member advocated speaking and providing copies to neighbors (and especially flippers!) who are not meeting restrictions. This strategy is not always effective as a copy was provided to the resident who bricked up the kitchen window.

Communication – 341 people now on Facebook page; about 40-50 users represent the same household as another member. There was a suggestion to consider providing copies of the newly updated restrictions with the forthcoming newsletter.

Welcome – Only one house was sold this past month. One remains for sale. Five are about to go to settlement. Homes are generally moving quickly.

Dues – see above. Keep momentum going. Volunteers will go door-to-door soon.

Old Business

Citizens on Patrol – haven't been able to reschedule the meeting that was snowed out yet.

Easter Egg Hunt – was a success. Beth thanks all volunteers.

BGE Gas Pipeline – Work has begun on Academy and Whitfield. Brickwork in intersections has been torn up. It is supposed to be restored. Cathy Engers will follow up. Properties have been marked because new lines will go up to the house. Residents will be contacted in advance. A homeowner shared that she has been awakened 3 times before 7:30 in the morning to move her car, which had already been moved from Academy and asked whether notice can be improved. Joe will reach out to the representatives to see what can be done.

Dumpster Day – will be postponed. New date TBA.

Block Party – There has been a lukewarm reception to helping with the Block Party, but there are strong feelings that it should occur. Joe will try to schedule a meeting in May, probably just prior to the 7:30 community meeting. A member proposed that two people co-chair the event.

New Business

Spring Yard Sale – May 12. Ads will go in the paper. It will also be advertised via Facebook pages.

Primary Candidates – will speak at the May and June meetings. Names will be posted on the website.

Open Discussion

Code Enforcement – Previous rat eradication made a significant difference for about a year.

Harlem & Old Frederick – Parking/work impeding traffic and dumpster concerns were shared.

Next Meeting: May 1.

Adjourned at 8:39pm. Recorded by Jeannette Bonomo-Thomas.