

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Meetings Minutes
March 9, 2009

Members: Darian Unger, Alan Bowser, Kathy Stevens, Lucinda Lessley, Megan Moriarty, Victor Weissberg, Deborah Linn, Evan Glass, Phil Olivetti, Mark Woodard, Mitch Warren, Tiffany Graham-Golden and Mary Pat Spon

Members Absence: Cassandra Ford, Fran Rothstein and Marilyn Seitz

Guest: Jennifer Nettles, Bob Colvin, Jennifer Desco, Leslie Downey, Lynn Hughes, Jurg Siegenthaler, Anne Andonian, Stephanie Subramanian, Peter Johnson, Benjamin Stutz, Tiffany Ward, Nesreen Khashan

Call to Order and Introduction: Darian Unger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. members and attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board approved the January and February 2009 minutes.

Community Comments:

- Bob Colvin distributed the ESSCA newsletter. Park and Planning has announced the acquisition of property that had been the Moose Lodge site at Fenton and Philadelphia Avenue for park land. We would like for it to remain green space.
- Leslie Downey distributed a letter sent to the County Executive regarding a petition to name Silver Spring Civic Building after former County Executive Doug Duncan because of his work and effort in the revitalization and redevelopment of downtown Silver Spring. There is an on line petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/DDuncan/petition.html> It is my understanding that there is a rule that elected official must be out of office for five years in order to name a building after him/her so I asked that County Executive Leggett and County Council waive that rule.

Chairs Report

Darian Unger reported that:

- Roylene Roberts, DHCA has been assigned Acting Director for the Silver Spring Regional Center and will be in that position until a permanent new Regional Center Director has been appointed.
- We have discussed naming of the Civic Building with the community and discussed it in some of our committees. The response to the County Executive proposal has been lukewarm. There is no rush on this and community groups are just beginning to get organized. I suggest committees continue to discuss and send to our listserv because we want as much community input as possible.
- Under new business Nesreen Khashan will give a presentation on 2010 U.S. Census and the full Board will discuss the draft library letter.

Director Report

Roylene Roberts reported that:

- **“Stop the Violence Concert”** An incident occurred at the concert event held, March 7, on Ellsworth Drive. The 3rd District Police responded, 18 people were arrested and there were no injuries. The consensus is we learn from these experiences and next time we need to do it better.
 - Jennifer Nettles, Manager, Downtown Silver Spring stated that Mixed Unity, a collaborative of local youth-based non-profits held a “Stop the Violence Concert” kicked off with a speech from Councilmember Levental at the Downtown Silver Spring Plaza along Ellsworth. Approximately 7,000 people attended the event as the last performers were on stage an incident occurred and the police arrested local and non-local people. Downtown Silver Spring remains committed to bring events and programming to the property that support and celebrate our diverse community. We have created two groups the first police and security to look at what can be done in the future to making suggestions. We are looking forward to feedback from both groups. We hold numerous events and do not restrict people on the plaza because we are a community based place. *(For complete detail refer to the News Release distributed at the meeting)*
 - Kathy Stevens commented that she has worked for the past year with youth issues in Downtown Silver Spring. Richard Jaeggi and I have discussed the press releases sent out and hope this information can be sent to local listserv’s. This is an opportunity for a continuous honest conversation about things happening in our community and what we want in our community.
- **Brick Pavers in the Central Business District Streetscape.** Members of the T& E Committee expressed concern with ADA accessibility of brick pavers. They requested an opinion from the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). M-NCPPC responded that they believe the pavers installed in concrete are stable. The Commission on Disabilities however disagreed with that position and requested Council consider banning pavers from the public-right-way. Six County Council members supported a resolution that essentially prohibits pavers from the right-a-way. This includes pavers in streetscaping. The County Executive position is to keep the pavers within all Central Business Districts and approved Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). The Council T&E Committee considered these positions and decided to personally investigate. Council members will travel to Bethesda in April with wheelchairs to examine what it would be like to roll over the pavement in a wheelchair. The T&E Committee will render a decision after the Bethesda visit. The Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee wrote a letter in favor of the pavers in the CBD streetscape.
- **The Elizabeth Stickly Auditorium Renovation - “Old Blair Auditorium”**– a feasibility study for the renovation of the Elizabeth Stickly Auditorium will be conducted by Montgomery County Public Schools over the next few months. A series of five community meetings are tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 1, April 15, April 29, May 13 and May 27, 7 p.m. at the Silver Spring International School, Media Room.
- **Georgia Avenue Pedestrian Safety Audit** - The Department of Transportation will conduct a pedestrian safety audit of Georgia Avenue from Sligo Avenue north to Spring Street on March 17 and 18. *(For full details refer to Director reports distributed at meeting).*

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Silver Spring Library Update

Rita Gale reported that:

- **Arts and Entertainment Organization RFP.** County received two responses to the Request for Proposal for an arts and entertainment organization that would occupy space in the new Silver Spring Library Building. A committee of four including Director of the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, the Public Services Administrator for Facilities and Strategic Management for the Department of Public Libraries, the acting chief of the Building, Design, and Construction Division of the Department General Services and the CEO of the Montgomery County Arts and Humanities Council evaluated the proposals at a meeting the end of February. A decision memo is now being circulated asking the County Executive for permission to negotiate a contract with one of the two responding organizations.
- **Mid Block Crossing Evaluation.** HHS Committee of the County Council asked the County Executive's Office to investigate the feasibility of that mid-block crossing on Wayne Avenue. The Department of Transportation (DOT) completed the analysis and reviewed the results of the report at a public meeting on February 5, 2009. DOT report did not recommend installation of a mid-block crossing on Wayne Avenue (the study did not evaluate the feasibility of a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Avenue). February 6, Rollin Stanley M-NCPPC wrote a letter to Councilmember Leventhal, Chair of the County Council's HHS Committee in which M-NCPPC recommended pedestrian safety improvements for the Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street intersection instead of either a mid-block crossing or a pedestrian bridge. There was extensive discussion on February 12 at the HHS Committee meeting about the pros and cons of a pedestrian Bridge. Council legal staff indicated that the 1999 Urban Renewal Plan prohibits a bridge crossing on Wayne Avenue and the plan would need to be amended to permit the bridge if that option was to be pursued. In order to begin that process a draft resolution amending the renewal plan is being prepared by the County Executive for transmittal to the Council.
- **Library Planning Process.** The architect, Lukmire Partnership, has begun looking at possible organizational concepts for the floors of the new Silver Spring Library Building. A meeting has been scheduled with representative from the Maryland Transit Administration on March 17th to discuss specifics of the proposed Purple Line Station on the Silver Spring Library Site.
- The Purple Line is above ground with a station and the actual layout is coming up from Bonifant and across Wayne as far as we know at this point and if anything is going to change we will hear on March 17.
- We tried to look at the various ways to access the building and one proposal is to do an escalator along Fenton that would take folks up to the third floor because the anticipation right now is that the Library will start on the third floor. We have talked about a stairwell in addition to the escalators so there would be stairs going up and down in the same location and are tentatively talking about potential elevator in the same location to provide disability access but this is not a firm decision at this point.
- Jon Lourie stated his concern was the relationship between community with the design and development process for the library. The Civic Building had a Task Force appointed by the County Executive that included Round House, Regional Center and community. This process was very productive in evaluating on-going issues and a series of public meetings were held. The library is a very prominent site and an important architectural building to downtown Silver Spring. There needs to be a dialogue between the County Planners, Library Department, Department General Services, architect and community. This is an issue that the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board and Urban District Advisory Committee need to tactical whether it is a series of public meetings or a more hands-on approach since there are many interested parties.
- Rita Gale responded the public meetings will occur because there is intense interest in the interior design for the facility and how it all fits. We do understand the need to go through the

process of exterior design with the community and we plan to. We have discussed public presentations similar to what was done with RTKL on the site option. Normally there would be a schedule from schematic through construction documents and that has not occurred yet but. The public meetings will be a part of this.

- Kathy Stevens stated we they need to revisit the idea of having a Task Force to help coordinate and centralize things with so many diverse and interested parties. This project consist of building the library, art center and having a really ambiguous major transportation piece and it seems central coordination would be helpful to the community and not just giving presentations to the community but a model that anticipates much more vigorous dialogue and input on the front end as things are being developed and we can take that up as a Board at a later date.

Darian Unger announced that the Board will discuss the proposed draft letter initiated by Mitch Warren and several others regarding the bridge. Deborah Linn moved to discuss the draft letter (2nd Stevens)

Discussion

- Evan Glass stated after discussion of the concept of the bridge and access for all to get to the library the members of Board voiced their opinion in a way that was not recognized because there was no actual vote. A few members wanted to discuss this issue and thus drafted the letter. Main points of the letter we wanted to capture is easy access for everyone to get to the library and that is the number one goal we are trying to achieve but there are some problems with how to go about it. One issue is the plan states the bridge should not be there and some architects and city planners believe bridges are outdated. My strong position is if the streets are unsafe let's address the streets let's not go build a bridge for access to some while all the other pedestrians find their own way to reach the library. I feel this would be giving up on pedestrian safety and the progress we have made if we built the bridge and do little to protect those on the street.
- Mary Pat Spon stated she is in opposition of the letter and wanted to know what source of material was used for the first two sentences in the second paragraph of the letter.
- Mitch Warren responded the information was taken from web searches, and an AP story on what happened with pedestrian skywalk over the past 20 years and how they are spending money to remove them.
- Mary Pat Spon stated that she is strongly in support of the pedestrian bridge. In the past I stated that we want the library accessible to the entire community and one of the major library collections is the collection on disabilities. It seems a library that is going to serve a major disabilities community should take the opportunity to provide easy access to the facility. We heard earlier that the new library is going to have an escalator going up to the third floor. The American with Disabilities Act is going to require that the library provide an elevator and this is what the County Executive supports.
- Alan Bowser stated that he is in support of the bridge. We heard from many voices the disability community, seniors, Library Committee, and County Executive who are all in favor of the bridge. We know the Department of Transportation is not in favor of a mid-block crossing. Any letter we send should talk about doing both and that these things are not mutually exclusive. We can have a bridge across Wayne Avenue providing ready access for people with disabilities, seniors and parents with tots to get from the garage to the library and still have an activated streetscape. We need to fix the intersection at Wayne and Fenton which is going to be a dangerous intersection with the purple line coming across and are hoping there is going to be a new project where First Baptist Church is. With more people and no parking for library patrons anything other than a pedestrian bridge is going to put a large expanse of territory between parking and the facility. I cautioned the Board at the last meeting not to take a position that was in opposition of County Government, and the majority of the community. I hope the letter can be

amended to acknowledge that this is a difficult site and we should have both the pedestrian bridge and intersection improvements at Wayne Avenue and Fenton.

- Mitch Warren commented that if there are no other options available for elderly and disabled people to get to the library we need to rethink the issue. Generally understood in the planning community is pedestrian skywalks do not work and kept people off the streets. It seems the County decided the intersection is not safe and has opted to build a bridge versus looking at other alternatives. The letter states the first alternative should not be a bridge but to address other ways for library access for the elderly and disabled. If you build a bridge it seems like the County is not worried about the dangerous intersection and pedestrian traffic. You could do both but the preferred alternative is to find a safe way to the library without the bridge. The Board's recommendation should be for them to look at other options to have easy safe access to the library and does not necessarily involved a pedestrian bridge.
- Phil Olivetti stated he strongly supports the letter. Why would the County build roadway, walkways and pedestrian walkways any place that is not accessible to all citizens are we saying, as a County that we don't have the technology and technical skills to build a road than why are we building a library when we should be rethinking access in terms of parking.
- Deborah Linn commented for the record that we have not heard from the majority. At the last meeting it was the majority of Board members not in favor of building the bridge. In terms of the letter I am not in favor of building a bridge but remain somewhat confused with our role as a Board and whether we should take a position that has clearly split the community. We need to send a letter that stresses to them that they should really consider the street and not just look at the bridge as a solution. I think if they build a bridge that would end the repairs to the street.
- Mary Pat Spon commented that the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee voted for both. The County should create a safe passage way and access for pedestrian to the library. We received the report that mid-block crossing is not a safe option. I am not viewing the bridge for only the disable but potentially something anyone can use and certainly the elevator should be reserved for the disabled. On the other hand both need to be a part of the whole plan, as the community grows and the crossing at Fenton and Wayne increases in the number of people with another access point off of Wayne being the bridge. The bridge is an opportunity to relieve some pedestrian safety issues at that intersection and besides it being unclear what the purple line is going to do but it would help pedestrian on the street and people that want and need to get to the library in a more direct fashion.
- Kathy Stevens stated the problem goes back to the original design and the library site location. This letter should be supported because it is stating that there are other things that need to be considered in terms of access to the library for everyone.
- Megan Morarity stated for the record that she is not in support of building a bridge. I have not talk to enough people in the community to understand all of the needs. If we are going to approve a letter we should focus on a pedestrian safety issue and push the County to address the intersection first and deal with the bridge later.
- Victor Weissberg stated paramount is pedestrian safety and supports the letter. The letter expresses urban environment and there is ample source material in terms of the lack of success of pedestrian bridge throughout the Country they are now being removed because they are public safety hazards and do keep people off the streets.

Mary Pat Spon moved to close debate (2nd Linn - The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory voted to close debate on the proposed draft letter.

- Rita Gale commented that the Library Program of Requirements included parking. We discuss the site development and where asked how many parking spaces we wanted for the library and normally parking is associated with libraries. We asked for 120 spaces when the options where presented and the option of building underground parking if that option was selected. All of the

options had parking but the decision of the Director was if we used an existing parking structure that supplied parking to get to the library and include the pedestrian bridge in the plan if we were going to use the Wayne Avenue Garage. We feel the library is more than just a library for Silver Spring but one for the County and our expectation is that people will come from all over and we want them to have easy access.

Motion: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board voted to send the letter to the County Executive, County Council opposing the pedestrian bridge, *7 in favor, 2 opposed, (Mary Pat Spon and Alan Bowser) with 1 abstention (Darian Unger) (See informational materials for finalized letter)*

Outreach Working Group

Kathy Stevens reported that:

The Outreach working group is proceeding with the three point plan outlined at our February meeting. We have mock templates for website redesign; Vicki and Dwayne are meeting with County web person on March 18 for the purpose of making the website more users friendly and interactive on the pages related to the Advisory Board. Lucinda Lessley has drafted a brochure, Marilyn Seitz assisted with the formatting and we want to send a draft to members prior to the April meeting for review. The last part of our three point plan is to work with area community groups more proactively whether it is inviting them to our meetings or us going to make personal visits to their group. We have tentatively scheduled the next outreach meeting for March 26.

Neighborhoods Committee

Megan Moriarty reported that:

- The last meeting notes are on page 10 of the packet. We focused mainly on how to connect rental community and civic associations better. We have numerous ideas and came up with next steps that Dwayne and I will follow-up on. We are going to try and work with Southern Management's, Property Manager more to connect with their e-mail list and we expect this to continue over the next several months. The hope is that the Neighborhoods Committee will be a place where renters and civic associations can communicate more effectively because it clearly is not happening.
- Alan Bowser stated that the main issue of the Neighborhoods Committee was connecting rental community and civic associations. I attended the meeting and don't see a big gap between civic associations, homeowners and tenants. In the notes it talks about the exclusion of renters from certain civic associations and my experience over the last five or six years is that I have not seen civic associations excluding the people that live in those buildings. For the purple line issue we did see disagreements between neighbors along possible routes and tenants in various parts of town but I don't see a real gap between tenants as a group and homeowner's as a group. Everybody wants public safety, availability of transit, restaurant, and place's to shop so there is more community of interest rather than any kind of dissonance and personally I see no evidence at all that civic associations of homeowner's have been discriminating against tenants.
- Megan Moriarty commented the issue was not dissonance what we are trying to improve is communication, have more renters involved in these types of meetings. We are talking about getting renters involved and be more connected to their views.
- Alan Bowser I agreed that we could reach out to renters and get more information but did not see there was any kind of disconnect between the two. In the Neighborhoods Committee we have tried to represent the views of both.
- Evan Glass commented for the record at that meeting one civic association does discriminate against renters.

Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee

Darian Unger reported that:

- At the meeting we pushed for shared car spaces and talked with Sandy Brecher and two other representatives from DOT to see how we can get more shared cars in downtown Silver Spring. We met with DOT regarding bike paths and discuss the road safety audit and got two local people that are available in the middle of the day to do the road safety audit safety on Georgia Avenue. We are trying to get more people to make suggestions to state, and county officials.
The next meeting is on March 25, 7:30 p.m. and we will talk about funding the pedestrian safety initiative, reviewing 2008 events with the police and discussing possible changes on Sligo with Department transportation.

Alan Brower requested that the Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee meeting summary be amended by deleting the phase Indian guy and replace it with person proper name Kris Jagarapu.

CED Committee

Phil Olivetti reported that:

- The notes are on page 17 of the packet. We heard from Emily Adelman about the Buy Local Silver Spring Guide and the Regional Center has the brochure.
- Deborah Linn stated discussion was held on Fenton Village and whether we should start with the Hillersons Project and their design was not approved due to some issues but there will be a project and we know certain aspects of the project but what does that mean for the area directly around it and how will the project tie in to what surrounds it. The next Fenton Village Forum sponsored by the Community Economic Development and Neighborhoods subcommittees, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board will be held on April 22nd at 7:00-9:00 pm at the Nora School, 955 Sligo Avenue, Silver Spring. We will be discussing what we want our Fenton Village to be. Prior to that time we are asking that you send your ideas to us. Do you want banners on the streets? New lighting? A park? Are you concerned about crime and have a proposal? Do you have a suggestion for special Fenton Village Streetscapes? All ideas and thoughts are invited. Please email fentonvillageforum@gmail.com.
- Takoma Park Football and Softball Leagues are having a family fun event on March 28, 12:00 pm-3:00 pm. This is a 15 year old community base program where we have 500 children every year from 6 -14 years old that play baseball in an organized fashion with adult supervision
Next CED Committee meeting March 18, 7:30 pm. Silver Spring Regional Center

2010 Census

Nesreen Khashan, from the Census Bureau gave a brief overview of the 2010 Census and distributed materials. The U. S. Census Bureau want s to ensure everyone is counted. They have developed partnerships with state, local and tribal governments; community based organizations, faith based groups; schools, the media and others. Through these collaborative relationships we can reach the goal of counting all residents in 2010. We need to start mobilizing the community now and get the message out of how important census participation is. If you know of other groups interested in learning more about the upcoming April 1, 2010 census please invite us or agree to distribute the information.

New Business

- Ben Stutz announced that a public hearing on the designation of the Falkland Apartment is on Tuesday, March 10, at 7:30 p.m. The Planning Housing and Economic Development Committee will take up issue on Monday, March 23 at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the issue and make its recommendations. Thereafter, Council will consider all facts and opinions in the record before making its decision.
- Alan Bowser asked the Board to consider several letters at the April meeting as follows:
Thank you letter to Gary Stith for his service to Silver Spring and the Board, letter of accommodation for the youth organizers of the Mixed Unity event and a Resolution for Earth Day.

9:00 p.m. Meeting adjourned