

SSUDAC Meeting Summary July 18, 2013

Members Present: Ernest Bland, Carmen Camacho, Dan Figueroa, Don Hague, Avi Halpert, Ed Levy, Jon Lourie, Melvin Tull

Members Absent: Jessica Evans

Call to Order and Introductions:

- Mr. Ernest Bland, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.
- Committee member Don Hague motioned to approve last month's meeting summary (for the record). Mel Tull seconded and the motion was passed, with seven in favor and one abstention (Carmen Camacho).

Reports:

Police Briefing & Crime Report

Lt. Elizabeth Hattenburg, 3rd Police Precinct

- Lt. Hattenburg reported that the recent evening events celebrating the Ethiopian soccer team resulted in a few minor reports, mainly noise ordinance issues. Police maintained high visibility and assisted with escorting intoxicated people to their homes and across streets.
- A new pedestrian crosswalk has been installed at Colesville Rd. in front of the Silver Spring Metro station. Police will be running a campaign to ensure that drivers and pedestrians are aware of it.
- Mr. Bland and other committee members asked about the status of homelessness, auto theft/break-ins and graffiti. Lt. Hattenburg stated that aside from a slight increase in graffiti in June, there had been no reports of other activity.

Urban District Report

Ms. Yvette Freeman, Chief of Operations, Silver Spring Urban District

- Ms. Freeman mentioned that graffiti removal in downtown Silver Spring has been more challenging this summer, with what she believes are one or two dedicated people vandalizing areas in Fenton Village, around Thayer Ave. and Mayors Ln. The large size of the tags and the need for waivers from private property has hindered removal efforts.
- Ms. Freeman discussed the recent grease spills in the alley near Kefa Café at Bonifant St. and Wayne Ave. The SSUD is working with code enforcement to identify the businesses spilling the grease along with applying "absorbent" and power washing to clean the alley.
- The Urban District and others have received complaints about the removal of trees along Georgia Ave. for the Fenton Village streetscape improvement project. Ms. Freeman mentioned efforts by the Department of Housing & Community Affairs (DHCA) to better communicate information about tree removal.

- With input from several arborists, a decision was made to remove the trees due to root systems creating a “girdling” effect around tree trunks.
- A new landscaping contractor is installing new soil panels before replacing the trees, with DHCA monitoring the work.
- The State Highway Administration is continuing work on their ADA ramp project.
- Committee member Mel Tull asked about the parking meters that have been covered along Georgia Ave. while construction vehicles utilize the spaces. Ms. Freeman replied that the vehicles are there to prevent people from parking in the spaces while workers do utility drilling work in the area.
- The Silver Spring gateway sign located at 16th St. was damaged and has been sent to Richmond, VA for repair. Committee members discussed the logistics of the sign repair, including if it would be an appropriate use of funds to repair and reinstall the sign, as well as if the damaged sign should be used as an opportunity to reexamine and possibly update the design of the gateway signs.
- “Big Belly” solar trash compactors have been installed at Veterans Plaza and at Colesville Rd. & Wayne Ave near the Silver Spring Transit Center. The Urban District purchased two units and the Department of General Services purchased others, including compactors for recycling trash.
- Victor Stanley recycling receptacles have been installed at Veterans Plaza and at United Therapeutics. An additional 10 have been ordered and will be installed in the near future.
- Committee member Jon Lourie asked about the long lines for Fillmore events that wrap around the block. Ms. Freeman replied that the SSUD has been working with Fillmore staff to communicate about the event schedule in advance as well as Red Shirts working to keep walkways clear during large events.
- Committee member Mel Tull asked about reseeding of grass near the Silver Spring Transit Center. Committee members discussed which agency involved in the Transit Center construction owns that portion of land and would be responsible for landscaping upkeep of the area. Ms. Freeman and Mr. Rodriguez said that they would find out who owns the land and inform the committee.

Silver Spring Regional Area Director’s Report

Mr. Reemberto Rodriguez, Director, Silver Spring Regional Center

- The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board will be hosting a public forum on July 22nd at 7:00 p.m to discuss the Capital Improvement Project. The forum is geared towards advisory groups and the County Executive will be in attendance. Presentations will be given by key departments in each of the County’s 5 regional areas.
- The Conference Investment Bureau is putting together a map for hotel visitors showing major destinations in the downtown area.
- Cars To Go, a car sharing service, is working to install kiosks in Silver Spring, with wayfinding and electronic smart kiosks. The design of the kiosks is still in the planning phase. Touchscreen and solar powered options are being considered.

- The Silver Spring Summer concert series is running for three Thursdays in the month of July, with the last one on August 1st.
- The Nighttime Economy Taskforce is studying the impact of the Ethiopian soccer tournament events. Initial findings show a positive impact on the economy and a low rate of disorderly incidents.
- An audiophile convention will take place in Silver Spring during the last weekend in July. The Sheraton and Hilton hotels are fully booked for that weekend.

New Business

- The current SSUDAC composition was discussed. Jon Lourie motioned for Don Hague to be nominated as the new Vice Chair of the advisory committee. Carmen Camacho seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Mr. Bland briefly reviewed what he accomplished in his year as SSUDAC chair, including discussions with Park & Planning, presentations on the Silver Spring Transit Center, the Purple Line, Capital Bikeshare, issues relating to the budget, the homeless, developments including Fenton Village and guests such as Valerie Ervin, David Dise, Rick Siebert, Jane Reddicker and others.
- Mr. Bland emphasized the importance of Silver Spring staying vibrant and relevant as the years pass.

Capital Bikeshare Presentation

Anne Root, Department of Transportation
Paul DeMaio, Metrobike LLC

- Montgomery County DOT is working with Capital Bikeshare to identify potential locations for 11 bikesharing stations within Silver Spring.
- The target month for installation is September.
- The bikes are designed for short point-to-point trips rather than long excursions.
- Montgomery County Government is the owner of Bikeshare, with the bikes and stations themselves provided by Alta bikeshare.
- The Bikeshare utilizes a “balancing van” to balance out stations that have too few or too many bikes. Excess bikes are monitored and moved 20 hours/day.
- Pricing is based on an initial membership fee as well as a per trip usage fee, with various tiers based on time spent using the bike. Trips under 30 minutes are free.
- Bikes are unlocked by swiping a credit card at a kiosk or by using a keyfob. The keyfob may be used in any jurisdiction. A bike may be picked up in any area (Silver Spring, DC, Alexandria) and returned to any other area.
- The bikes have 3 gear speeds, front and rear lights, a front basket and a bell.
- The bike docks are completely modular and solar powered. Each station has a map at its kiosk showing all other stations in the area.

- Committee members asked about incidents of people forgetting bikes. The incidence of forgotten bikes is minimal, and Capital Bikeshare runs a call center to handle any billing issues, with forgiveness refunds for the first time someone accidentally keeps a bike out too long.
- Committee member Mel Tull asked about the cost recovery rate for operating costs. Ms. Root replied that approximately 40% of costs are recovered, and that the bikesharing program was included in the FY 14 budget. The Bikeshare is funded by General Fund and government grant monies.
- Committee members asked about reserving bikes and checking online for bike availability. Bikes are not reserved but each station may be checked via website or smartphone app for a real time listing of how many bikes are available.
- Mr. Bland asked if bike helmets were required. Mr. DeMaio replied that helmets are not required, but when people sign up for a membership they are offered a helmet that can be mailed to them for \$16. Local bike shops have also partnered with Capital Bikeshare to offer discounts when shown a Bikeshare keyfob.
- Safety messages about helmets and other aspects of bike safety are displayed on individual bikes when they are removed from racks.
- Committee members had numerous questions and comments about the tentative placement of Bikeshare stations in Silver Spring. An informal agreement was made to arrange for a separate meeting concerning the bikeshare locations.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:41 p.m.