

Minutes of Parkwood Residents Association, March 15, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Kira Lueders, president. Nineteen persons were present.

The minutes from the September 29, PRA meeting were accepted.

PRA Business, Reports, and Discussion

Kira announced that Jeff Griffith volunteered to be PRA's vice president. He is currently our liaison to the Montgomery County Civic Association, a post he will continue to hold along with Bailey Condrey. Jeff could not be confirmed as vice president at this time since there were not enough PRA members present for a quorum. (Note: After the close of the PRA meeting, the PRA executive committee met and voted to confirm Jeff Griffith as interim vice president.)

Kira announced that Bailey Condrey would continue in his role of maintaining Parkwood's PRA gardens. This position was put out to bid last season. Bailey was chosen as he had the lowest bid last year, and also because he had ably constructed, planted, and maintained the gardens as a volunteer for several years. This year he was asked to continue in this role by unanimous vote of the PRA executive committee (without Gail Dalferes) along with Clare Murphy of the beautification committee.

The proposed rain garden at Saul and Parkwood is awaiting permission from the county. Liz suggested that the beautification committee seek Eagle Scouts who might be interested in the project. Other possible sites for gardens, such as the triangle at Roxbury and Parkwood Drives, were suggested.

Gerald Sharp, PRA treasurer, distributed and reviewed the treasurer's report. The PRA has a healthy balance. Donations to beautification are higher than dues (which remain only \$10.) The budget could not be approved at this time due to lack of quorum at this meeting.

There was discussion about posting names of paid-up members on the list-serve with an option for members to opt out if they want to remain anonymous. Gerald spoke in favor of including members' email addresses, but this suggestion was deferred due to concerns about scamming.

The PRA puts out 3 newsletters each year. The one printed newsletter per year will continue to be distributed by volunteers, rather than mailed, due to the cost savings and the need to include a membership form and envelope. The other 2 issues will be published online. Some members have asked for a mailed rather than online copy. These requests will be honored.

Liz Brennan, representing Friends of the Library, announced that the Kensington Park Library would reopen Monday, March 28, at 10:00 a.m. The formal ribbon-cutting will be Saturday April 2. The library floor plan has been reconfigured and there are numerous enhancements, including an attractively renovated meeting room.

Jeff Griffith and Bailey Condrey represented the PRA at the recent meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, a coordinating organization of neighborhood groups. Jeff reported on the presentation made by The Sunshine Foundation at this meeting. This outside group praised the sources of information that the county has made available and encouraged citizens to continue to press county leaders to make information accessible. Contact Jeff if you have information to share or want to access.

Guest Speaker

State Delegate, Jeff Waldstreicher, (D-Montgomery, District 18) was introduced along with his Chief of Staff, Duwane Rager.

Delegate Waldstreicher spoke briefly of the legislative process and requested questions and items of interest from meeting participants. There followed a wide-ranging and informative discussion.

Questions were asked about the proposed 5% cap on property assessments. Mr. Waldstreicher reported that although he voted in favor of the bill, it failed to pass. Property tax revenue primarily goes to the county and the county opposed the cap.

Liz asked about a bill to prosecute adults who provide alcohol to teens who are not family members. Mr. Waldstreicher replied that the bill has moved through the MD House but not the Senate.

Kira asked the status of the state bill to ban plastic bags. Mr. Waldstreicher said that he doubted that it would pass. The state often waits for big counties to act first. For example, a bill for mandatory earned sick leave has gained momentum as Montgomery County has already passed such a requirement.

Montgomery County is unique in that all delegates sit on one committee and act in concert on economic matters. For example in 2014 they were able to legislate a raise in the minimum wage to \$8.25 and thereby give permission for the state to go from \$8.25 to \$10.10 per hour, and rise to approximately \$12.10 per hour over the next several years. Politics is always involved in the relations between legislators and the Governor. Both chambers are controlled by Democrats, but it is impossible to separate politics and power.

In response to a question, Mr. Waldstreicher discussed the state legislature's response to a possible ban on certain pesticides. No resolution has been reached.

Asked if he foresees new taxes, Mr. Waldstreicher said that there would be no new sales taxes, income tax or property tax. The State Senate is debating income tax relief. He believes that rather than rising, the state income tax will be coming down.

Participants asked about bicycle-policy and requested help in putting forward an appeal to reshape the shoulders on Beach Drive. At the county level, a master plan for bicycles in roadways is being debated.

A participant asked what Maryland is doing to be more attractive to businesses. At the state level, a reorganization of the state agency is being finalized.

Concern was expressed over the MCPS school budget, installation of artificial turf on its playing fields, and the fact that the school system, in effect, audits itself. Mr. Waldstreicher believes that a bill requiring the state to do periodic audits of school systems is likely to fail. Class sizes rose by an average of one this past year. The County wants to give money to lower class size, but it cannot dictate to the school system how to spend its money.

A question was asked regarding of reduction of greenhouse gases. Mr. Waldstreicher detailed a number of initiatives to speed up renewable energy. Residential solar energy is sold back into the grid, introducing clean sources into the grid.

In regard to an expressed concern about a possible Pepco-Exelon merger: This is the responsibility of the Public Sector Commission rather than the legislature. The Governor appoints this commission, but

because its members are rotating, not all commission members have been appointed by the current governor. Current MD law requires the State to buy power at agreed-upon rates.

Mr. Waldstreicher urged Parkwood residents to get in touch with him regarding their concerns. He too lives in the neighborhood.

Kira thanked Mr. Waldstreicher and Mr. Rager.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Dighe, Secretary