

Minutes of Parkwood Residents Association Meeting, October 29, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Kira Lueders, president. Thirty-three members were present. Kira invited attendees to introduce themselves and tell their street name and how long they've lived in Parkwood. Time of residency ranged from two months to 52 years.

The minutes from the June 11 meeting were accepted.

Program

Kensington Parkwood Elementary School, Presented by: Natalie Hambrecht, Assistant Principal, KPES

Mrs. Hambrecht presented an overview of KPES and the school's new construction. Improvements included doubling of cafeteria space, additional classrooms to replace the portables, and the attractive loop stairwell leading to the front of the school. Classroom enhancements include automatic on/off lights and flexible seating—optional stand-up desks and bean bag chairs. The upper grades, 3rd, 4th, and 5th are in the new space but enhancements have also been made in the primary classrooms.

Six hundred-sixty students attend KPES. There are 25 to 30 students in K, 1st and 2nd grade classes; grades 3, 4 and 5 have 27 to 30 students. Projections for future enrollment are expected to remain about the same, although the school's capacity could absorb about 200 more kids. Mrs. Hambrecht said that they are pushing to have the portables removed; they are no longer used by students.

Mrs. Hambrecht praised the school's PTA and said the community resources are phenomenal. The KPES PTA has an informative website at <https://www.kppta.org>.

Attendees raised the issue of traffic safety, particularly motorists speeding and ignoring crosswalks on Saul and Parkwood. Mrs. Hambrecht said the crossing guard, Deborah, works at Franklin and Saul. School staff also help with safety, but not past Franklin. Mrs. Hambrecht agreed that police presence at arrival and dismissal times would be helpful. She urged PRA members to address this with the non-emergency police number and to speak with the crossing guard.

Kira detailed her interactions with MCDOT requesting crosswalks without a positive response. However, she received an email from Del. Jeff Waldstreicher stating that a crosswalk has been approved for the Westbrook/Parkwood intersection in response to his request.

An attendee who lives on the other side of the fence from KPES expressed concern that rocks are sometimes thrown into her yard. Mrs. Hambrecht assured her that the staff would address this. She also thanked the neighbor for returning the balls that ended up in her yard.

Proposed Developments in Kensington

A committee has been formed to keep track of proposed developments that will affect Parkwood. Current members are Gail Condrey, Clare Murphy, Gerald Sharp, and Jeff Griffith (chair). MD Delegate Al Carr, who attended tonight's meeting, has been providing useful information and support. Contact Jeff if you would like to join the committee.

The following proposed projects were discussed:

Knowles Station (originally called Kensington Station)

This structure at Knowles and Detrich, adjacent to Strosniders, is nearing completion. Plans include a craft beer and wine bar restaurant, several smaller retail shops, an outdoor patio and parking.

Knowles Manor (originally called Kensington Manor)

A 5-story residence with 94 units designed to provide affordable housing for low-income seniors has been proposed for Knowles Avenue across the street from Strosniders. While no one is opposed to the concept of providing much-needed affordable senior housing, concerns have been raised about parking and traffic issues. Parking spaces will be available for only one-half of the units—an improvement to the original design that called for 6 stories with the same amount of parking. There will be a pull-off area in front for drop-offs, emergency vehicles, etc.

Town Houses

Nineteen town homes have been proposed for the northeast corner of Summit and Knowles. The developer is providing parking for residents.

Solera Reserve Kensington

A 5-level, 135 unit senior residence has been proposed for the intersection of Metropolitan and St. Paul, in the location of the old Mizell lumber building. It will provide for independent and assisted living as well as memory care.

Self-Storage Facility

A six-story self-storage facility has been proposed for the southeast corner of Connecticut and Plyers Mill in the lot formerly occupied by a gas station. The Town of Kensington has not given its approval for this project.

Approval Process

Clare pointed out that when a proposed project is within the borders of the Town of Kensington, the town council has the first say. Before anything happens, the builder/developer must present a proposal to Kensington. Although Kensington can usually stop a project that it rejects, the county is in charge. The town is a stakeholder, but the county controls zoning. The MC Park and Planning Commission also plays a critical role of review and approval. Clare outlined the steps of the approval process: 1) investigation of natural resources, 2) preliminary plan, 3) input from planning board, transportation, and environment development review committees, 4) staff recommendations, 5) revision by the applicant, 6) approval by planning board (and County Council if county funds are involved), 7) staff certification.

Summit Avenue Extension

Due to congestion on Connecticut Ave., particularly between Knowles and Plyers Mill, MCDOT is

considering several options to alleviate congestion. These include rerouting some Connecticut Ave. traffic by extending Summit to Farragut or Dupont. Work could start in 2021-2026 if a plan is approved by that time.

Cell Phone Towers (ZTA)

5G small cell antennas are planned for deployment in residential areas. Jeff showed slides of these antennas that have already been installed in Potomac. Some are stand-alone tall towers; others are attached to existing telephone poles. Some photos showed a “rat’s nest” of wires. Federal law prohibits interference with development of cell towers, but citizens have expressed concerns such as set-back from homes, opportunities for public hearings, and post-installation inspection. Additional information about ZTA was presented in a detailed email to the list-serve by Gail Dalferes. She and Bailey Condrey as well as Jeff, are following this issue closely and keeping us aware of new information through the list-serve and PRA web page. As Gail said, “this is one to watch.”

Staying Informed

Jeff said that the PRA website will have a page for each proposed project. The list serve will alert members to new information. If the PRA wants to have a meaningful voice in development decisions, we may want to find a way to speak as an association, rather than as individuals. We also should make sure that our elected officials know who we are, possibly by inviting our newly elected representatives to attend one of our meetings. We may consider joining forces with neighboring residents’ associations to broaden our impact.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Judith Dighe, secretary