

RNA Community Meeting Minutes

February 27, 2023

7:00 p.m. at Salem Lutheran/Riverside Third Space and on Zoom

Board Members in attendance: Rich Badmington (President), *Jen McLaughlin (Vice President)*, Becca Charlton (Secretary), Joelle Woolston (Treasurer), and General Members Jackson Fisher, Rachel Wagner, Jeff Dewberry, John Pare (immediate past president)

Number of Attendees: approximately 12 (in-person), 24 (on Zoom)

Next meeting: Monday, March 27, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Rich Badmington, Welcome

At 7:00 p.m., Rich called the meeting to order and welcomed residents and Nancy Mead from Councilman Costello's office, introduced the RNA Board members, ran through the evening's agenda, and then welcomed updates from RNA committees.

Jackson Fisher, Riverside Park & Construction Updates

Jackson reported that with the favorable (for construction) winter weather, the project is progressing well. Lots of concrete work is underway now and for the next six weeks, to include pathways, stairs, sidewalks. Project managers are hoping to have most of the infrastructure done by the May timeframe, at which point they'll transition to grass and other features.

This afternoon, middle schoolers from St. Ignatius came to help mulch trees in the park, east of the gazebo. A different class comes each month to help out.

SBGP is finalizing the contract to replace the gazebo roof and we hope to hear in the next six weeks or so and have work start when the weather warms up.

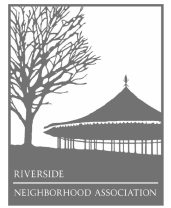
Reminder that no dogs are allowed in the park playground. Really, the whole park is a leashed area, but if you choose to let your dogs off leash, please remember not to allow dogs in the playground, which is reserved only for children.

Jeff Dewberry, Public Safety

Regarding the public safety grant RNA received from the State of MD, all projects are shovel-ready, but funds have not yet been disbursed, so implementation has not started. See last month's minutes for more information on this grant.

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Officer Owens, Peninsula Sector 4, BPD Southern District

Officer Owens announced that next month's Community Relations Council (CRC) meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, March 8 at 7:00 p.m., will also be attended by new State's Attorney Ivan Bates. The public is welcome to attend and ask questions.

He also reported year-to-date reported crimes in Riverside, including but not limited to, 1 auto theft, 1 aggravated assault, larceny from autos, and 1 carjacking. Discussion with other residents in attendance revealed that the perpetrators of an attempted robbery on Stack St. have been identified and that there was an attempted robbery outside Shotti's Point on Feb. 15 around 12:30 a.m.

He reminded residents to be aware of your surroundings and keep valuable belongings out of your car. There has been a string catalytic converter thefts as well. If you see people checking out cars, you can always discretely snap a photo and send it to Officer Owens and the police to help with investigations. There have also been some thefts of airbags, especially in Hondas, either via unlocked doors or forced entry and broken windows. You may want to check for security patches if you have a Hyundai or Kia as those manufacturers have addressed a vulnerability allowing people to start cars after plugging into the USB drive.

Rachel Wagner noted that another in a series of anti-semitic, racist, hate-related incidents (defacing pride symbols, distributing hate-oriented pamphlets, posting swastikas, etc.) has come to our attention. Nearby Salem Lutheran Church, a concerned neighbor reported a Celtic Cross sticker posted on a light pole and noted that, while it does have non-hate related associations/origins, the Celtic Cross is a popular symbol among white supremacists and neo-Nazis. Church members have removed the material. As a reminder, always call 911 first if you need to report something, and take photos and share them with the BPD.

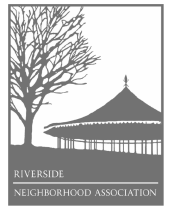
Officer Smith was also present and introduced herself. She works Sector 4 but usually in the Leadenhall to Russell St. corridor.

Rachel Wagner, Communications & Social Media

Rachel shared that there are a couple upcoming Easter events in the local area, though none currently planned in Riverside, specifically. On Saturday, April 8th there is an Easter Egg Hunt at Federal Hill Park. There is also a Ravens' Roost event on Saturday, April 1st at Coke Field. More details will be available on social media.

Rich Badmington, Development

1302 Key Highway 7-story Multi-family Residential Concept Proposed by Southern Land Company



Rich shared some updates:

- As residents may see on facebook, RNA submitted a letter opposing a Costello-sponsored City Council bill that would rezone the 1302 property from the current C2 to OR2. The letter is attached to these minutes.
- The developer has communicated that it continues to move forward with plans for what it says is a 70 ft.-, 70 unit-, 70 parking space-multifamily building on the site and are attempting to rezone from C2 to OR2 via a City Council bill.
- While this is one way to rezone, allowed under the City charter, it is not the usual way. We have registered our concern because the request is independent from any context of the specific proposed development and the only community engagement has been the October meeting at which the developer showed renderings and offered very general comments in response to many questions. Most answers were assertions that those details had yet to be worked out.
- The site is currently zoned C2 (small-medium scale commercial use, designed to accommodate pedestrians with some car usage. Mixed use development is also appropriate), which matches the zoning of other buildings in the general vicinity
- The developer's request is to change it to OR2 (office-residential zoning accommodating a mix of office and residential uses, with a 100' maximum building height).
- Eric Costello informed Rich earlier in the day that he is filing a bill that would remove this property from the Urban Renewal Plan, asserting that he would do this for any constituent.
- Rich noted that, by rezoning through a City Council bill—which considers only the zoning considerations—rather than a zoning variance—which considers the project plan—the developer removes from public discussion the merits and details of the project itself.
- Discussion with the developer has not progressed. While they have expressed a willingness to meet, they have not responded affirmatively to Rich's request that they confirm they are prepared to address specific questions relating to the project. RNA remains opposed to the project until those details are shared and we have the opportunity to consider them.

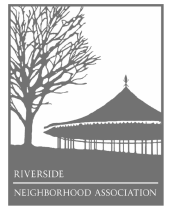
Jeff Dewberry added that the existing Key Highway Master Plan dictates that Key Hwy. should not be a curtain of towering buildings closing off all views of the water. He suggested that it appears that the developer's current attempt to get the site rezoned via Council legislation is an attempt to avoid community input on the merits of the project. He also mentioned a large sinkhole on Clement St. that forced rezoning of the area in the past (1950s). He noted that the petition that many signed recently in opposition to the project is an important indication of the community's will, but it does not have any legal standing based on how it was collected.

Q: Michael S, Belt St - What's the relevance of the sinkhole comment?

A: Jeff D - We want to ensure that past work has been taken into account and the correct process is followed to ensure integrity of any development, especially a 70 ft. multi-story building. The sinkhole is close enough to 1302 such that it may represent an additional barrier to

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the project, which must be addressed. Two other residents added that more sinkholes have appeared as recently as 2021 and there's still concern about areas that are slowly sinking today.

Q: Did members of the board vote to oppose upzoning?

A: The Board voted that RNA is opposed to the Council bill to rezone the property. It is also opposed to the project, until details are provided and the community can discuss.

Q: How can this be approved with the existing Master Plan for development of the area?

A: Eric Costello has stated that he will remove the property from inclusion in the master plan, which will then clear the way to upzone the property. He said he will insist that community engagement take place, but that is to be seen. There will be multiple hearings, such as the planning commission, before coming before the City Council for a vote.

Q: What was the point of the Master Plan?

A: It ends east of Jackson St. All buildings in the area have been kept low and in alignment with the master plan so far. It was intended to maintain the character and feel of the neighborhood by limiting the type and size of development. The only change was the City recommended a parking lot where Anthem House now is. RNA worked hard with the developers on that site and are willing to work with the developers in this case too, though they seem to be trying to avoid community engagement.

Q: What's the timeline for development?

A: The bill could just die. It has to be considered by the Planning Commission, which will offer its recommendation on passage. Originally, a hearing was set for March 2, when RNA requested a delay. It was then rescheduled for March 16, and it is now removed from that agenda. It remains to be scheduled. We believe a 30-day notice also needs to be posted on the site/lot before the hearing can take place. Again, no hearing is currently scheduled.

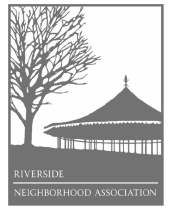
Nancy Mead (Councilman Costello's office) - The Planning Commission recently had a zoning conversation and they are attempting to look at justification for making zoning changes without regard for specific development plans. So the belief is they would consider whether a zoning change would fit and make sense within the specific area, without looking at any site/project plans.

Rich (RNA) - The standard to determine rezoning is a finding of fact that there are material changes to the environment immediately surrounding the area (e.g., a new highway has been built, etc.) OR that a mistake was made in the original zoning. Since this is the only part of our neighborhood that actually goes down to the water, we'd prefer not to have a 70 ft. building or wall blocking our neighborhood's sightlines and proximity to the water.

Jackson (RNA) - The master plan concept was to preserve sightlines to the water, allowing for detached, tall, narrower buildings that would provide at least partial views of the water.

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Q: Will there be an opportunity to meet with Mr. Costello at an RNA meeting?

A: Rich (RNA) - We will continue to push for a conversation before next steps are taken.

Q: So what's the difference with the variance process the developer is attempting?

A: If zoning changes to OR2 through the Council bill process, there is no opportunity for community input on key elements of the concept, specifically the proposed building height.

Ultimately, there was general agreement from multiple members that it feels like the developer is trying to make use of a backdoor process in order to avoid engagement and dialog with the community. Rich closed discussion saying he will send out a follow-up email to the community and share updates via social media. As always, send questions/concerns/comments to rnabaltimore@gmail.com.

Other Development Updates:

- The final eviction notice is posted at Park Bench Pub with a date of March 20. There is no further update since our last meeting when we reported that the Landlord is exploring a new operator for the pub. We have asked to be informed as early as possible so that we avoid any unnecessary issues. He indicated the building was not for sale
- The Remagine Middle Branch Master Plan has been officially adopted by the City Planning Dept and is shifting to implementation mode, led in a large part by SBGP. Approximately \$50M in grants have already been committed and lots of money will be flowing through. Please get involved, either through community input sessions, volunteering, etc.

Other Announcements or New Business

Ondoria Harmon from the Mayor's Office announced the Mayor's spring cleanup event on April 22. Watch the Mayor's FB page or Charm City channel for more information.

At approximately 8:05 Rich adjourned the meeting. The next RNA Community Meeting will be held on Monday, March 27 at 7:00 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Charlton, Secretary
February 27, 2023*