

RNA Community Meeting Minutes

April 24, 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 20 (in-person), 24 (on Zoom)

Next meeting: Monday, May 22, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Rich Badmington, Welcome

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

Jackson Fisher, Riverside Park & Construction Updates

Riverside Park Renovation:

- The project is going well; contractors poured concrete steps and pathways, putting up fencing along the borders, basketball court, etc. Working on grading the field soon
- Last week the gazebo roof was completely replaced over three days. In coming weeks there will be concrete work at the base of the gazebo, followed by a complete repainting which we believe will match the current colors that are based on the original colors when it was built.
- There are 25 new trees by the pool house and a big replanting day will take place on Sunday, May 7 (I Love SoBo Day). Information for volunteering will be distributed soon.
- Trees for Riverside Park also arrived and planting began today along Randall St. with help from St. Ignatius 6th grade students.

Other Park News:

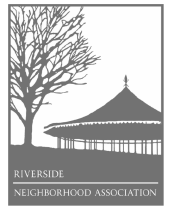
- Planning has begun with the Concert Committee for the Second Sundays Summer Concert Series. They're working on band lineup and food trucks. Tentative dates are June 11, July 9, August 13, and September 10, pending permit approvals. Concerts are family friendly events that usually attract 300-400 people per event.

Officer Owens, Peninsula Sector 4, BPD Southern District

Jeff Dewberry, Public Safety, welcomed Officer Owens and thanked him for attending. Officer Owens provided Year-To-Date crime statistics for the area (broader than our RNA boundaries), including (not a complete list) 5 aggravated assaults, 10 auto thefts, 4 burglaries, 49 larcenies, 12 robberies, and 1 commercial robbery. He noted that larcenies have gone up a bit recently, largely due to people leaving

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belongings in their cars. He reminded people to hide or remove things from their cars as break-ins have happened for as little keys and clothing.

He noted that robberies have gone down overall and provided an update on the latest robbery on Covington St., in which the young man was convicted on all counts. His sentencing will be May 1. Officer Owens thanked the community for working with him and local police, reporting suspicious activity, and sharing video footage and photos to support investigations.

Jeff Dewberry, Public Safety

Jeff shared that more evidence of hate crimes, such as swastikas posted on public and private property, have been found in the area. One resident in attendance reported receiving several anonymous mailed letters to her address that appear to be in direct response to her posted Black Lives Matter sign over the last couple years. She said another neighbor has also received similar letters, though she wondered if she were singled out/targeted specifically. Others present agreed that these letters have been delivered to residences in the neighborhood in the past as well. The recommendation is to contact the police and the postal service and share with RNA to track local activity and try to help identify the individual(s).

Rich mentioned RNA continues to get complaints of off-leash dogs. There are signs posted in the park and we discuss this issue regularly at meetings. Officer Owens offered to patrol areas during the daytime to warn residents; he noted that it tends to be a lesser crime not often enforced. Jackson said this is an issue that comes up multiple times each year. Ultimately, it's illegal at all times per City law, enforceable with a \$250 fine for the first offense. It tends to be more of an issue in spring and early summer when new and old dog owners and more residents and children all converge on the park at the same time. RNA's stance continues to be that there should be no exceptions to the law and we continue to work with long-standing dog owners to share knowledge of City code with others and ask them to maintain control of their dogs, regardless of their dog's behavior. He reminded residents that there are legal off-leash dog parks in Latrobe (Locust Point), Patterson Park, and Canton.

Rachel Wagner, Communications & Social Media

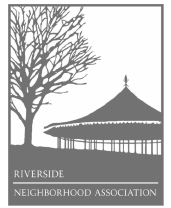
Rachel discussed the importance of knowing your neighbors and engaging with RNA. She recounted a story of a crime that took place on Covington St. on March 3, when a woman coming home was approached by aggressors and had her keys and car stolen. She and her husband moved out of the neighborhood shortly thereafter. They didn't know we even had a neighborhood association, which may or may not have affected their decision to stay, but she reminded residents to engage with neighbors and share information so we can look out for one another.

Rich Badmington, Development

Much of the meeting was spent discussing the 1302 Key Highway development proposal. Rich reminded residents of the two bills requested by the owner/developer and filed by Councilmember Costello that RNA is tracking. The first would rezone the lot from the current Commercial 2 (C2) to Office/Residential 2 (OR-2). This would permit construction of a 100 ft. tall building without requiring a variance from the Baltimore City Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals. The second bill would amend the Urban Renewal Plan (URP) to remove the property from the plan. Joined tonight by Doug Hamilton, the Treasurer of the

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Federal Place Homeowner's Association. A meeting with a small number of community representatives is scheduled with Councilman Costello and the developer on May 1.

Developments since we met last:

- The developer has rented the property to owners of Verde pizza and a shaved ice vendor; ironically, touting the site for its views
- Members of the community met with staff at the Planning Department with the purpose of understanding what rules are in play and the process going forward

What is clear from that meeting:

- The proposal is inconsistent with current zoning and the Urban Renewal Plan for this location based on the height limitations alone, plus other factors:
 - The Urban Renewal Plan, among other things, requires 1.75 parking spaces/unit; the plan is for 1 per unit
 - The URP allows building height of 50 ft., the concept is for nearly twice that.
- As for the change from C-2 to OR-2, it appears that is in order to avoid a BCMZA public hearing in the zoning variance process that would be required if it remains C-2. Residential uses already are permitted in C-2.
- We expect the developer will make the case that conditions around the site have changed in such a way that the zoning should be revised.
 - Using the legislative process to change zoning effectively prohibits community input on any specific project at the zoning stage.
 - If the developer cannot make the case and the Planning Commission cannot agree to a finding of fact that conditions have changed or an error was made in earlier zoning, then this action would constitute spot zoning, which is prohibited by state law.
- Planning Dept. staff are very unlikely to oppose removal of the property from the URP because they believe zoning codes are sufficient to manage development and find the URP burdensome.
 - Rich asserted that the URP has been amended exactly 3 times since 2004. This would be the 4th. However much the Planning Dept. may believe the URP is not an optimal way to manage development, this random and unusual step to modify it to the benefit of a single developer is effectively spot zoning.
 - Based on their comments, the 2008 Key Highway Waterfront Plan, developed by the Planning Department, appears largely irrelevant in the eyes of staff.

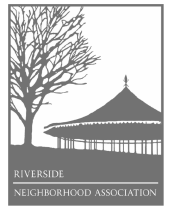
Proposed next steps included:

- A neighborhood petition with as many resident names and addresses as possible opposing both pieces of legislation because they exclude community input on the substance of the project;
- A community impact letter that would be shared with and support requested from other community associations objecting to the use of the legislative process, including the "courtesy" votes of Councilmembers, for this change, for changes of this kind, and protecting community associations' ability to protect the interests of communities on the merits of proposed projects and the capricious amendment of the URP.
- Organize testimony for the planning commission meeting that will ultimately be scheduled.

Rich opened the floor for comments and questions:

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Doug Hamilton mentioned the next planning commission meeting expected to be around May 20 and will only be posted 10 days in advance of the meeting.

Q: Any update on the planning commission meeting?

A: Councilman Costello said he expected meaningful engagement with the developer. We don't have a specific date with the planning commission.

Q: A number of residents reached out to Councilman Costello after our last meeting. Wondering about the potential impact of similarly reaching out to the Planning Department staff. Also reminder to send your thoughts to the Councilman, whatever they are.

A: Anything that comes into the Planning Department staff will be included in the file that goes for review by the Planning Commission.

Q: Wasn't RNA going to wait to take a stand until the project details came out?

A: Yes, however, the developer is pushing for a zoning change with no further updates on the project. If the zoning change were to be granted, the developer would not be required to come back to the neighborhood with details or for engagement around the project. Therefore, RNA had no choice but to oppose, without any additional information.

Q: Did RNA oppose the recent development at Key Hwy. and Cross St.?

A: RNA did not take a stand since that development was not within or along RNA's boundary.

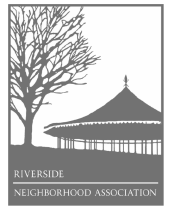
Q: Any other information about the other 3 changes to the Urban Renewal Plan?

A: Not at the moment, but they were substantial changes that took as long as a year just for development of proposals and included lots of community engagement ahead of the changes.

There was a recommendation to call for a vote regarding RNA's stance on this development in the near future so that the Board could have formal guidance in the event hearings were scheduled prior to our next meeting. The question was raised if there needs to be specific community notice of such a motion in advance of a general RNA membership vote. Rich noted that the bylaws require notice of a meeting (which was provided by email and Facebook postings as usual), but notice of a particular matter or motion.

A motion was proposed, and seconded, to oppose the legislation for rezoning as written. Rich asked for approval by unanimous consent. There were no objections, and the motion passed.

Attendees agreed to suspend discussion of the project itself until the time when we have details to make that conversation more meaningful. The recommendation remains to contact Councilman Costello's office if you want to express your concern. There was a request for some bullets residents might use to address the issue directly in such a letter. Rich stated that RNA will provide these.



Other Announcements or New Business

Delegate Luke Clippinger, District 46

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Maryland House of Delegates, was present to provide an update on the recent legislative session. Del. Clippinger is a neighbor and RNA member who lives on Webster St. He is the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee which works on civil, criminal, juvenile, and family law. He provided the following report on the recent 90-day session just ended:

- House Bill 1 passed, dealing with victims of child sex abuse and expanding victims' ability to bring claims against people accused of committing or being aware of such abuse. A form of this legislation passed 4 years ago and just was passed by the Senate this year and signed into law by the Governor.
- 2015 saw the start of a pilot program for community solar. If you can't put panels on your house, you can purchase part of a solar array somewhere else and use the power that comes from your part of the array against your energy bill. The bill extending this program, following the 8-year pilot, is now sitting on the Governor's desk for signature.
- We set a goal to increase supply of offshore wind energy. A company in Dundalk and now in Curtis Bay (46th district) will be contributing to the blade production and cabling/attachments, respectively, adding sustainable energy jobs in our area.

He then opened the floor for questions:

Q: I read about legislation that says you can't take a firearm into a restaurant. What's the purpose since it seems it won't really affect the number of shootings. Why the time/energy?

A: There have been 3 bills passed lately. Jaylen's had to do with proper storage, restricting access to minors, and resulted in prohibition from ownership. Breun addressed Supreme Court issues on concealed carry, and specifically set clear guidelines consistent with other states. It changed the process, restrictions on, and costs for concealed carry in MD (and other states) sought to close gaps in current law. Senate Bill 1 sets clear guidelines about where you can/cannot wear and carry (e.g. not at schools, polling places, amusement parks, hospitals, stadiums, and bars/restaurants).

Q: Are private security staff at bars allowed to have weapons?

A: There are some exceptions allowing certain people to carry even in restricted areas. You can contact Luke with specific questions.

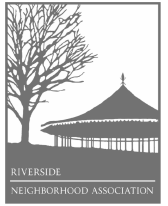
Q: With a new administration, can you comment on the atmosphere across the state?

A: In my committee I get to meet with HR, public safety, and other agency staff. Previously administration staff didn't come to testify often, if ever. There's definitely more constructive engagement with the Governor's office and administration now.

Lastly, Luke shared a few additional thoughts. He was very happy to see the changes, funded in part by the State with help from Team 46, at Riverside park such as all the construction and renovations underway. He looks forward to eventually completing pool house renovations in the next couple years. Also, just today, the governor signed legislation funding maintenance on the *Pride of Baltimore*.

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Liz Van Oeveren, SBGP Community Grants Manager

Liz Van Oeveren reminded attendees that there are Clean & Green grants up to \$5,000 available with an open rolling application window which will remain open until available funds for this cycle are exhausted. These grants can be used for things such as waste reduction, trash removal, capital improvements, or training. SBGP expects to award grants within 4 weeks of application and funds must be used within 12 months.

Rich mentioned that RNA is willing to be a fiscal sponsor for anyone wishing to apply.

Q: What makes a good grant application?

A: A good application explains clearly what exactly you want to do, how much it will cost, timeline and milestones, who will be involved/responsible for the project, clear picture of everything that will be needed (supplies, budget, etc.), and what outcomes you expect to benefit the community.

Steve Cole, Publisher of Peninsula Post and Creator of I Love SoBo Day

Steve Cole invited everyone to please join us on Sunday, May 7 for I Love SoBo Day. It will be 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and be bigger and longer than last year, with triple the number of local vendors. It's a free fun day and "we've ordered perfect weather!"

Jen McLaughlin also noted it's also free day at BMI, with a great exhibit celebrating all the food service workers who helped get local students through COVID.

Rich concluded the meeting, mentioning that next month Delegate Robbyn Lewis will join us and speak on the recent legislative session.

He accepted a motion to adjourn.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Charlton
April 24, 2023*