

RNA Community Meeting Minutes

July 31, 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 Jeff Dewberry, Rachel Wagner, Jeff Brown, and John Pare (immediate past president)

Next meeting: Monday, Sept 25, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome, Jeff Dewberry

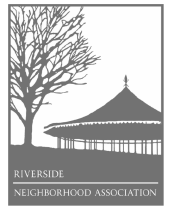
While RNA President, Rich Badmington, joined virtually, Jeff Dewberry led the meeting in-person due to sound difficulties. At 7:05 p.m. Jeff called the meeting to order, welcomed residents, and introduced the RNA Board members.

Crime & Public Safety, Jeff Dewberry

- Kia/Hyundai wheel locks are available for free at the Southern District Police Station, just south of the Hanover Street Bridge, across from the hospital. This is in response to the high incidence of theft of these brands due to manufacturer defects.
- Discussion continued around how to proceed regarding unhoused persons at various locations in the neighborhood:
 - RNA is in direct contact with City agencies including the Mayor's Office on Homeless Services, Homeless Outreach, Downtown Partnership, and Councilman Costello. Homeless Outreach is in the process of making contact and offering services to multiple homeless people who have been seen recently.
 - Residents have reported seeing a specific homeless man around the neighborhood who has been previously involved in incidents at Riverside Park, including exposing himself. He is not believed to be living in the park but RNA has received reports of him visiting.
- *Question* - what is the process when a resident sees something out of the ordinary? What is the appropriate response? At what point should a resident call 311 or 911?
 - *Answer* - RNA's recommendation is always to call 911 if you see something suspicious; let the authorities triage the concern and decide how to react and respond. Please also let RNA know at rnabaltimore@gmail.com for awareness.
- As a reminder to the community, being homeless is not a crime. A homeless individual spending time in a public space is not a crime and is not suspicious or threatening in and of itself. If someone is doing something dangerous or threatening, urinating in public, exposing themselves, behaving in lewd or disturbing ways, etc., then residents should call 911 immediately and let

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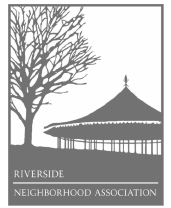
1501 Covington Street
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police determine how to respond. Calls to 311 will not get immediate or even same-day response and should not be used for these purposes.

Friends of Riverside Park, Jackson Fisher

- Parking
 - There have been a lot of cars driving through the park and parking on the grass recently. While vehicles should not be driving through or parking within Riverside Park, it does occasionally happen for special events, for BCRP staff, etc.
 - City rules are that there should be NO unauthorized vehicles in the park. For permit holders at the gazebo or special events, dropping off of equipment is acceptable but parking should be on the street only.
 - Long term, the intent is for additional parking to be available in a new lot being developed as part of the ongoing construction at the south end of Johnson St.
 - Jen McLaughlin raised concern about safety risks and precedent of cars parked on grass, making it appear that this is acceptable. She suggested that the Board revisit this issue.
- Riverside Park Pool
 - Open and well-attended, 7 days/week. Two sessions per day, M-Th 12-3 and 4-7, Fri-Sun 11-3 and 4-8pm. Note: the second session on Wednesdays is for adult swim only.
 - We expect a meeting this fall (Sept/Oct) with BCRP to get community input for the pool design for future renovations. BCRP has received State funding for pool design and RNA looks forward to being part of that conversation.
 - In regards to a question on pool design -- There was a master plan several years ago with an updated design, which included reducing the size of the building itself, which isn't being fully used, and adding shade structures on the ends. The pool itself is currently 2 parts: an old fountain-turned-kiddie pool and the main pool. Modern pools are now often 3 parts: a splash pad, zero entry kid-friendly pool, and then traditional deeper adult pool.
- RNA's next Second Sunday Concert is scheduled for August 13. We hope for good weather!
- Construction project is coming along. Contractors are currently working on irrigation and drainage. Then they will move to seeding the fields and let grass start to grow. While the grass takes root, they will move to renovating the red house which includes updating the floorplan and adding bathrooms. That project is expected to go through the winter. We hope for the big reopening of the fenced area sometime next summer.
- While the gazebo roof was replaced this summer, there is still work in progress to create new concrete footings for the ironwork around the bottom of the gazebo. Once this is complete, repainting of the ironwork will also take place. We expect additional activity on this once the main gazebo rental season has completed, probably starting in September.
- RNA, BCRP, and Nancy Meade from Councilman Costello's office are working to install new signage regarding dog leash laws at the entrances to the park, as off-leash dogs continue to be a nuisance for many residents.



Parking, Jeff Brown

Regarding Riverside's pilot Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program, there has been progress on legislation modifying the hours and expanding the RPP area:

- The ordinance to change our hours passed its third reader in Council and was forwarded for the Mayor's signature on July 17. We hope that will be finalized in another week or two.
- Once complete, other blocks adjacent to the current area will be able to apply for RPP if a majority of residents on the block sign the petition.
- Jeff will continue as liaison with the parking authority to get petitions generated and to process them, but will need a volunteer from each specific block who can collect signatures for that block and return the petitions to him.
- Jeff is working to confirm the current process for applications as it may have changed since COVID.

Special Guest - Delegate Mark Edelson

RNA welcomed Del. Edelson who completed his first legislative session this year. Del. Edelson shared his biggest news, that his family just welcomed their first child 5 weeks ago. He is just ending parental leave and was happy to join the RNA meeting as his first public appearance since becoming a parent.

Del. Edelson shared some information and updates:

- He was elected in 2022, sworn in early in 2023, and is the newest member of Team 46, filling the seat vacated by newly elected MD Comptroller Brooke Lierman.
- He was appointed to the House Appropriations Committee, specifically the Transportation and Environment Subcommittees, which could be a huge benefit to our City.
- He commented on the historical nature of the most recent election cycle and praised the legislature's having protected abortion rights, created regulations allowing for adult use of the cannabis market, extended the child tax credit, extended mental and behavioral health support access, etc. [additional info not captured]
- The City runs on a 10-year financial plan. Current plan expires at the end of this year so planning for the next plan will begin soon. Del. Edelson is one of two representatives for our City who will be appointed to work on the next financial plan.

Del. Edelson shared his contact info with residents for questions and communication:

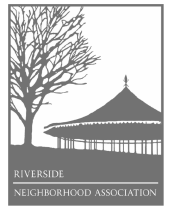
mark.edelson@house.state.md.us

Question - With the new Baltimore Peninsula being developed and Riverside being the closest community, we're concerned about the lack of sufficient linkages between the neighborhoods. Road access is not easy; rather, it's circuitous and has several lights. There's been talk of a pedestrian bridge around the end of Light street over the train tracks and under the highway. How does Riverside get linked in with BP?

Answer - Agreed it's hard to get into South Baltimore no matter where you come in. There are lots of ideas of how to get in, how to link neighborhoods right now to make it more accessible. Conversations are happening now and will need financial planning. Share your ideas and advocate as a community for the things you want to see and continue to bring it up. We all want to see it be an accessible place rather than the island it is right now.

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Rich thanked Del. Edleson for coming to the meeting and congratulated him on an exceptional freshman session.

Other Updates

Jeff Dewberry shared some additional updates on behalf of Rich:

- Placemaking - An ad hoc committee has been formed and met to begin shaping plans to better define and raise the profile of Riverside as something that stands on its own and isn't just that space between Locust Point and Federal Hill. Ideas include producing things like street banners and window signs; potential murals; welcome packages for new neighbors; social media graphics, and more. We imagine events and awards as well. The work is supported by the creative agency Cohere as well as talented neighbors. We initially will look for modest grants for this work and report back on actions. South Baltimore Gateway Partnership grant cycle is open until Aug. 11; we hope to pull together a grant application.
- Key Highway beautification project – Representatives from our community and Board have raised their hands to participate in a new coalition of neighborhood associations and key institutions (AVAM, BMI, etc.) exploring potential beautification and transportation safety improvements along Key Highway. Zac Blanchard, president of the Federal Hill Neighborhood Association is leading the effort.
- Neighbor Pablo Padin has volunteered to take part in the Baltimore Planning Academy, presented by the Planning Department and providing instruction on the basics of land use, development, zoning, community planning, historic preservation, sustainability and more. The Academy will run weekly from September 13 - October 18, and include a mix of in-person and live online instruction.

There was no other new business and Jeff accepted a motion to adjourn and concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Charlton
July 31, 2023