

RNA Community Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2023

7:00 p.m. at Salem Lutheran/Riverside Third Space (in-person only)

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

Next meeting: Monday, October 30, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome (Rich Badmington)

RNA President, Rich Badmington called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., welcomed approximately 28 residents, and introduced the RNA Board members. Rich noted that some others may not have been able to attend due to Yom Kippur. As previously announced online, the meeting was in-person only, with no remote participation available. RNA has been borrowing equipment, and is currently looking into options to procure permanent equipment to continue and improve hybrid meeting capabilities.

Rich welcomed Nancy Meade, Councilman Costello's Chief of Staff. Nancy introduced Heather Bertlinger, also in attendance, who will be the Councilman's lead-representative at future RNA meetings.

Crime & Public Safety (Rich for Rachel Wagner)

Rich announced that Rachel Wagner will now serve as chair of the Public Safety Committee, and thanked Jeff Dewberry for his service in this area. Jeff will assume responsibilities in Development.

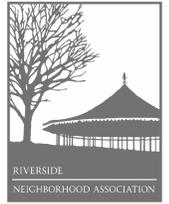
Baltimore Police Department representatives Officer Owens and Sergeant Zovisofski (Officer "Z") were present and shared:

- Year-to-date crime statistics;
- Recent BPD staffing changes, including Sergeant Shetterly's promotion to Lieutenant, meaning that Officer Owen's new superior is to be named.

A resident asked about the status of new license plate readers to be procured with a previously awarded grant. Rich reported that RNA awaits confirmation from the vendor as to when the installation will be completed. BPD representatives explained that they consider these cameras at neighborhood access points very helpful.

Again it was noted that 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.

Officer Zovisofski noted that a homeless individual, Donta (pronounced DON-tay) was in a vacant house and experiencing mental health challenges and therefore was not arrested, but instead taken for evaluation. [NOTE: Since this discussion, the individual has been arrested for trespassing in an unoccupied, on-the-market house.]



Parking (Jeff Brown)

Jeff reported that, on September 17, modifications to Riverside's Area 48 Residential Permit Parking (RPP) became law, opening the door for residents in adjacent blocks to petition to expand the area.

In early 2021, Riverside launched Area 48, which includes both sides of the 1500 blocks of Light, Burd, Williams, and Battery streets, the 100 and 200 blocks of Randall, and the South side of E. Fort Ave. between Light and Battery.

Following a community vote on June 27, 2022, RNA petitioned to modify the rules to improve enforcement. The modifications, which have yet to be posted on the street, will:

1. Remove the two-hour "no permit required" window during RPP hours. This two-hour window allowing parking for non-permitted vehicles created an unmanageable enforcement burden, requiring officers to check vehicles twice, more than two hours apart, to issue a ticket.
2. Start parking restrictions at 6:00 p.m. (rather than 5:00 p.m.) on Monday through Saturday; and at 2:00 p.m. (rather than 1:00 p.m.) on Sunday. This change makes Riverside's hours consistent with adjacent RPP Area 30 (to the West) and makes all RPP hours South of Fort Ave. the same, reducing confusion and easing enforcement.

Now, blocks adjacent to Area 48 (e.g., the South side of the 300 block of E. Fort; both sides of the 300 block of E. Randall; potentially, the 1600 block of Riverside; as well as the 1600 block of Light and Johnson streets) are eligible to apply for RPP if a majority of residents on each block sign the petition. RNA will continue to liaise with the parking authority, but volunteers will be needed from each block to collect signatures.

If you live in the affected area and are interested in expanding RPP to your block, please attend a community meeting or email RPP@RNAparking.org.

Discussion

There was discussion about the merits of expanding RPP. Comments included a desire not to add more signs to our streets for aesthetic reasons; the pressure created on contiguous blocks when a new block is approved; concern that there is virtually no convenient parking in much of the neighborhood after 6:00 p.m., causing at least one resident to spend a considerable amount of money adding a parking pad.

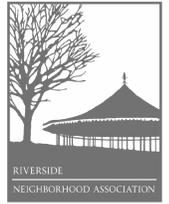
The Association will continue to defer to the preferences of residents in deciding whether they want RPP expanded on their block. RNA will facilitate the process with the Parking Authority, however volunteers will need to step forward to initiate the block-by-block petition process.

Friends of Riverside Park, (Jackson Fisher)

Jackson noted that RNA hosted three concerts in the park over Summer of 2023 (a fourth concert had to be canceled due to weather), and expressed thanks to the many volunteers and participants.

Riverside Neighborhood Association Inc.

1501 Covington Street
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The pool was well attended over Summer 2023. A postseason inventory of the pool furniture that RNA originally secured through a grant revealed that some replacements may be needed for 2024.

Major renovations at the park continue. Fences will remain up over the Winter to protect the fields (including new irrigation and drainage), and allow for the start of work on the “Red Building” (including new restroom facilities).

The project is tentatively expected to be complete mid-2024

BMore Clean’s volunteer project “100 Bags Challenge” successfully removed over 100 bags of trash from our neighborhood over the summer.

Upcoming park events include:

- 10/6 – Baltimore Rec and Parks Rhythm and Reels movie event
- 10/28 – SOBO Halloween Bash
- 10/30 – St. Ignatius student volunteer park improvements monthly event
- 11/4 – Thomas Johnson Elementary/Middle School Festival

There were several questions about dogs in the park. Jackson reiterated City regulations disallowing off-leash dogs and the need for peer pressure to help regulate this. Concerns about the smell of dog waste, especially in the bins at several entrances to the park, were raised and RNA agreed to follow up to try to determine how often Baltimore City empties the trash cans and what actions might be taken.

Placemaking Committee (Rich for Becca)

Rich provided an update (for Committee Chair Becca Charlton) on the work of the ad hoc Placemaking committee. The group has applied for a \$5,000 grant from the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership to underwrite the cost of street banners and a brochure to promote the neighborhood.

The placemaking effort is about raising the profile of Riverside and sharing why it’s a great place to live. We will continue to meet and develop ideas, from refining our graphic identity to creating social events.

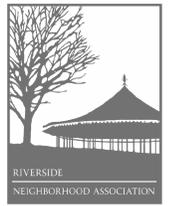
Others are welcome to join the effort.

Special Events/Communication (Rich for Rachel)

Rich reported for Rachel about the upcoming Mom’s night out event. RNA joined with the Baltimore Family Alliance to co-sponsor a mom’s night out event on 9/26 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Local Oyster. A complimentary beer, wine, crush or mocktail are to be provided to the first 20 attendees. Over 100 people expressed interest on Facebook.

Other features are extended happy hour prices, a raffle of 5 FIT4MOM Baltimore City classes, giveaways from Mount Royal Soap Co., and lots of community and conversation.

This event is hosted by Avendui Lacovara of Monument Sotheby’s International Realty, and sponsored by the Riverside Neighborhood Association. This kind of gathering is a core part of the mission of the Family Alliance.



Development (Rich)

1901-02 Light Street – RNA has provided a letter in support of the request by Trademark Properties for Historic Tax Credits for their proposed redevelopment of the former National Enamel & Stamping Company (NESCO) facility located at 1901-1921 Light St. (the Southwest corner of the big brick apartment building opposite Hersh's). The property is badly in need of redevelopment, now serving as a warehouse for DOD's storage of the property of deployed soldiers.

Preliminary discussions with representatives from Trademark Properties (Partner Developer), Ossani Investments (owner), and Urban Design Group (architect and historic consultant), have provided us with promising concepts to dramatically improve the property, respect its historic character, and operate it consistent with its current scale, design, and the residential use of abutting properties.

While plans are not sufficiently advanced for RNA to express its support of the project, we appreciate the developer's need for support in its pursuit of essential state and federal tax credits, and hereby provide that support.

We understand the property is listed on the National and Maryland Registers of Historic Places. Plans call for the removal of the metal building on the South side of property making room for new surface parking and renovation of the historic brick buildings into 150 multi-family apartment units, preserving the heavy timber post and beam construction, exterior walls, and wood flooring.

We look forward to inviting the developer to present to the community at an upcoming meeting so that we can hear details of their plans and provide our input.

Park Bench Pub – The Pub's owners have applied to acquire the liquor license held by the pub's former operator. They have been in touch with members of the RNA Board about their plans to reopen with a new operator, and we will be engaging with them so that the community interests are clearly communicated and we can end up with a positive addition to the neighborhood.

Railyard Fence at the End of Webster – Jeffrey Graham, the HOA president has been in touch with the MTA about follow through on the plan to improve the fence as part of the big construction project. We will report developments as we hear from our MTA contacts.

Seeking Residents' Input on Meetings (John Paré)

John Paré invited attendees to share ideas about how they would like to see RNA meetings improved and what guests they might wish to hear from.

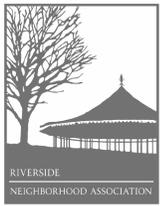
Suggestions included historians, restaurateurs, urban planners, and mural artists.

Other Business

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

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*Respectfully submitted,
Jen McLaughlin (for Rebecca Charlton)
September 26, 2023*