

RNA Community Meeting Minutes

October 30, 2023

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

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

Next meeting: Monday, December 11 - Time TBD (Social/Cookie Contest)

Welcome (Rich Badmington)

RNA President, Rich Badmington called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., welcomed approximately 8 residents in-person and others who joined remotely, and introduced the RNA Board members. Then he welcomed Amanda Brown, TJEMS Principal, to speak.

Amanda Brown, Principal, Thomas Johnson Elementary-Middle School

The new principal of our neighborhood school, Ms. Brown introduced herself and shared her vision. She is hoping for a collaborative, two-way partnership and building support systems between the neighborhood and school community. She shared that TJEMS is outranking much of the City and State in standardized testing. The neighborhood should expect more visibility from the school as time continues, with school kids out in the park and heading to local field trips such as the MD Science Center. The Annual Fall Fest at the school is this Saturday noon to 4:00 p.m.; this is TJEMS' biggest fundraiser of the year and helps cover the cost of buses for field trips. For those who would like to get involved or volunteer time, TJEMS is also looking for adults to present for the upcoming Career Day on Nov 14. There's a 1-hour commitment to share information about your career with students.

Ms. Brown closed by thanking RNA for the opportunity to engage and saying she looks forward to collaborating and hearing how TJEMS can contribute to the community. Additionally, she would ask that residents please keep an eye out and be cognizant of things happening on school grounds as we do for other parts of the community.

Rich Badmington thanked Ms. Brown for coming, noted how important an excellent school is to the neighborhood, and expressed RNA's commitment to support the school in any way possible.

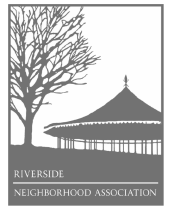
Crime & Public Safety (Rachel Wagner)

As Officer Owens was unavailable to present a recent crime report, Rich shared that the last 30 days in our area included: 9 property crimes and 1 violent crime, all on the Light St. side of Riverside or near Key Hwy. Year-To-Date there have been 84 property crimes, 4 violent crimes, or an average of 8-9/month. The most recent month was consistent with this average.

Rachel shared that Councilman Costello recently reached out to BPD for increased presence in the area

Riverside Neighborhood Association Inc.

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around Halloween, after reported increases in crime City-wide including District 11.

Separately, Baltimore Family Alliance sent a letter to local elected representatives expressing concern and requesting additional support and presence. Rachel also noted that she attends the Southern District Community Crime Meeting and that these meetings are open to the public.

As residents often ask RNA what the process is when there's a crime, Rachel shared that we strongly urge residents to call 911 if you're a victim or supporting a victim after a crime and, ideally, leave your name and number even if you don't stay on the scene. When people do not leave contact information, law enforcement is unable to press charges without a victim staying in touch and contributing to the process. RNA will support victims and, as appropriate, write community impact statements that come into play during sentencing; these statements speak to how the crime impacts the entire community. Please email rnabaltimore@gmail.com for information or to request support.

For several months, the recent uptick in vehicle thefts has been discussed at RNA meetings. Jeff Dewberry shared a picture of a car dumped at Gittings/Covington that he found recently, one of many Kias/Hyundais being stolen right now because they're easy to steal using a USB. These cars are often driven until they're out of gas, then abandoned. If you see a car that may have been dumped, check the steering column for evidence of tampering. Please call 911, not 311, to alert authorities.

Far from a problem specific to Baltimore, Rich shared some statistics from a *Vice* article that details how Kias and Hyundais are being stolen across the country. You can read it here: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkaq9z/us-cities-have-a-staggering-problem-of-kia-and-hyundai-thefts-this-data-shows-it>

BPD has offered free steering wheel locks for months to address this problem. A resident noted that BPD is currently out but expects to get more. Please check at the Southern District Police Station, just south of the Hanover Street Bridge, across from the hospital.

Regarding a public safety grant RNA received from MD earlier this year, Jeff Dewberry also shared that the new License Plate Reader installation is expected to take place on Nov. 8 at Key Hwy/Lawrence St. Once complete, the work on TAPCO pedestrian crosswalk lights will begin at Webster St./Fort Ave.

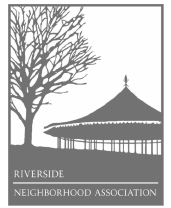
Friends of Riverside Park, (Jackson Fisher)

Jackson shared recent events in the park including Rhythms and Reels in early October and the annual Halloween Bash this past Saturday. He also noted there is a monthly workday in the park with St. Ignatius school kids, such as today when about 14 5th graders helped move mulch into the playground. Monday of Thanksgiving week is the next park workday with St. Ignatius and all are welcome to come out and support.

Residents will continue to see construction work on the fields; sod is being placed right now. Work on the red house has begun and includes reconfiguring the interior and changing some of the entrance/exit areas. It's expected to take about 6 months. Fencing will stay up through the winter to give the grass time to take root. We expect the fields to open late spring, early summer 2024. The park is also getting new trash can liners. Note that you can drop trash in the trash or recycling holes, as there is only trash service (no recycling) in the park.

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For residents who have fall leaves to clean up, note that the City will take up to five bags of leaves on regular trash pickup days. If you call 311 for leaf pickup, they will take up to 20 bags the following Monday.

Gazebo work continues and there was a crew working on trim at the gazebo this morning. This work, which included the replacement of the roof earlier this year, was funded by a SBGP grant. Work will eventually get to repairing the iron elements, then everything will be repainted.

November is usually the beginning of City street tree planting. These are usually addressed between November and March. Specifically, request a Tree Inspection (Forestry) in 311 for dead trees. For an empty pit, contact Tree Baltimore or the City arborist, though you can also submit these requests through 311. If you have a request in and haven't heard anything, you may also email rnabaltimore@gmail.com and Jackson will attempt to get a status update for you.

Our annual Gazebo lighting will occur on the first Sunday of December, Dec 3. This often includes carols with TJEMS students, hot cocoa and cookies, a visit from Santa, and a (stuffed cotton) snowballs.

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.

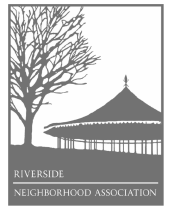
In early 2021, Riverside launched Area 48, which includes both sides of the 1500 blocks of Light, Burd, Williams, and Battery streets, the 100 and 200 blocks of Randall, and the South side of E. Fort Ave. between Light and Battery.

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.



RNA Bylaws Update (Rich Badmington)

Rich shared the RNA Board's proposed changes to our monthly business meetings that would take various approaches to engaging with residents and coming together as a community. To date, RNA has monthly Community business meetings except in August, with a combined November/December cookie contest and social event.

The proposed schedule for 2024:

- January, February - business meetings
- March - social
- April, May, June - business meetings
- July - social
- August - no meeting
- September, October - business meetings
- November/December - combined social

Rachel shared details of this year's annual Cookie Contest which will take place on Monday, Dec. 11 in lieu of a November/December business meeting. Please join RNA and special guest judges and bring 3 dozen of your favorite holiday cookies. Everyone gets to share and taste test and there will be prizes, adult beverages, recognition of neighborhood contributors.

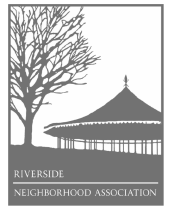
Additionally, the Board is considering restarting the RNA Newsletter on a semi-annual basis.

Ad Hoc Placemaking Committee (Becca Charlton)

The placemaking effort, now supported by about 8 or 9 volunteers as well as the local Cohere agency, is about raising the profile of Riverside and sharing why it's a great place to live. One example of why we think this is so important is the new Inner Harbor booklet, in which Riverside is not mentioned or even noted on maps among all the abutting neighborhoods. We will continue to meet and develop ideas, from refining our graphic identity to creating social events. Updated graphic standards and messaging informed by community engagement will be used for further website, brochure, and social media development.

Becca announced that RNA just received confirmation that we will receive a \$5,000 SBGP grant that will fund the design and creation of several street banners and Riverside brochures that we will use as we continue to develop and share pride in our community.

Other things the committee will consider include third spaces and social connections, which are indicators of civic health and healthy communities.



Development (Rich Badmington)

Key Highway Initiative – In August, a meeting of representatives from every peninsula neighborhood and many area businesses took place for the purpose of exploring ways to enhance Key Highway. RNA has been invited to assume leadership of this ad hoc group of stakeholders in the earliest stages of a possible project. At the group's next meeting, they will hear from a traffic engineer who has developed ideas about "right-sizing" vehicular capacity and including features more akin to Complete Streets. At the next meeting on Monday Nov. 13, the group will consider how to make the area between Webster through Lawrence more pedestrian friendly. One thing of special note is that Domino Sugar trucks have to move in and out from I-95 to the factory.

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 enjoy and support a positive addition to the neighborhood.

Abattoir – The developer for the former Heinz Riverside Abattoir building at 1900 Light St. (technically in South Baltimore on the West side of Light St.), recently provided RNA an update. They have modified their original concept to no longer rely on an enterprise liquor license (that would have required legislation); they still plan on restaurants and retail on the first floor, with studio/office space on the second. They have received their tax credits, consolidated utilities, stripped the building, and are exploring ways to phase construction while they hope for some relief on interest rates. The recent story in SouthBmore.com is a good summary. When they are ready to announce more details, they would love to share more with us.

Other Business

Jen McLaughlin, from her position working with the State Board of Elections, reminded residents that 2024 is a presidential and Baltimore City election year. She encouraged everyone to double check that you're registered to vote, and if/whether you registered with the party you want to be.

Christine Benell joined us from the local branch of Reading Partners Baltimore, which is supporting Fed Hill Prep, another local public school just a few blocks north of Riverside. If you're interested in tutoring a student who is below grade-level reading during the school day, please get in touch at readingpartners.org.

At 8:00 p.m, Rich accepted a motion to adjourn and concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Charlton, Secretary
October 30, 2023