



# RNA Community Meeting Minutes

**February 25, 2024**

**7:00 p.m. at Salem Lutheran/Riverside Third Space (Hybrid: in-person via Zoom)**

Board Members in attendance: Rich Badmington (President), Jen McLaughlin (Vice President), Joelle Woolston (Treasurer), Jeff Dewberry, Connor Eagleson, Jackson Fisher, Rachel Wagner

Members absent: Becca Charlton (Secretary), Jeff Brown

## Welcome

RNA President Rich Badmington called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., welcomed approximately 25 in-person and 10 on-line participants, and introduced the RNA Board members, including its newest member, Connor Eagleson.

He welcomed Councilmember Costello and Council staff Nancy Meade and Heather Bertling, as well as Peninsula Post publisher Steve Cole.

He also welcomed Zac Blanchard, candidate for the 11th District City Council seat who requested the opportunity to speak later and take some questions.

## Public Safety/Police Update

Major Jason Bennett, BPD's Southern District Commander; and Officers Owens and Smith attended in person. Major Bennett provided details about a string of crimes in late February, some of which involved a white BMW with covered license plate. The department has heightened police presence in the area and nearly captured the vehicle. Victims of various crimes associated with the vehicle have provided different descriptions of the suspects.

He noted that anyone observing suspicious activity, including suspicious vehicles with obscured license plates can call 911 to report details that may be helpful in tracking and stopping criminals.

Neighbors with external video surveillance cameras were reminded that they can register with BCPD. Registration does not mandate anyone to share any video. Registration only helps BCPD reach out to talk to neighbors who may have unknowingly captured evidence.

In response to a question about the legality of carrying "pepper spray" BCPD said that "pepper spray" bought legally under Baltimore City law (e.g. purchased within Baltimore City limits) is legal to carry, but may not be allowed in certain public buildings or businesses.

In response to a question about an unlocked car that had been accessed overnight, BCPD reminded everyone to lock their car doors and to remove anything that even appears of value every time they leave their car. Officer Owens emphasized that one should never leave a gun in a car.

Public Safety Committee Chair Rachel Wagner reminded anyone who has been a victim to a crime that they can reach out to RNA directly (not just through social media) for advice and support.

Officer Owens noted that, in response to neighborhood concerns, Baltimore City Park Rangers will be deployed in Riverside Park in coming weeks to issue warnings and citation to owners of off-leash dogs. The police explained that there would be a period of warnings before citations (typically \$250 fine) would be issued.

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Rich thanked Nancy Meade and Councilmember Costello for their support of this effort. In response to a question, Nancy noted that her office would follow up with Rec & Parks to properly install the new signs that were not installed properly.

Rachel mentioned that RNA is actively welcoming expressions of interest in reestablishing monthly crime walks as much or more for social purposes as crime prevention. Please contact RNA if you are interested in participating or helping to organize.

### Friends of Riverside Park committee report, (Jackson Fisher)

Jackson noted collaborative park care efforts continue with the students from the St. Ignatius school and other volunteers. Recently 15 students spread 30 bags of mulch, collected leaves, and participated in various other cleanup activities.

Again this year, Friends of Riverside Park is planting a significant number of shrubs and trees obtained from the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) at the Baltimore Convention Center.

Jackson noted that planning has begun for the 2024 Summer Concert Series. As always, anyone interested in volunteering in support of the concerts or the park in anyway can reach out to RNA to be put in touch with opportunities.

### City Council Candidate Zac Blanchard

Zac Blanchard, candidate for Baltimore City Council District 11 (including the Riverside neighborhood) explained his reasons for running and why he is urging residents to vote for him. He also addressed a number of questions.

### Development (Rich)

In response to a question, Rich confirmed that renovation work is ongoing at the former Park Bench Pub, but RNA has no new information about possible re-open dates. Rich noted that the landlord is seeking a new operator.

### New Business

Rich called for any new business. Jen McLaughlin reminded attendees of the upcoming primary election and explained their voting options, including vote by mail.

There was no other new business.

Rich noted that the March meeting would be a regular business meeting, at which time we would formally vote on the appointment of Board member Connor Eagleson to succeed Joelle Woolston as RNA Secretary. April's meeting will be social, and held at Little Havana.

### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned shortly after 8:00 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Jen McLaughlin (for Rebecca Charlton)*  
*March 1, 2024*