



RNA Community Meeting Minutes

May 20, 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), Connor Eagleson (Treasurer), Jeff Brown, Jeff Dewberry, Jackson Fisher, Rachel Wagner, Joelle Woolston

Members absent: Becca Charlton (Secretary)

Welcome (Rich Badmington)

RNA President Rich Badmington called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced the Board members.

Public Safety/Police Update (Rachel Wagner)

Rachel gave a presentation about her role as Chair of the Baltimore Police Southern District's Community Relations Council (CRC). Neighbors can sign up for the CRC email list at <http://eepurl.com/hhk97H>

Rachel also reported on the most recent RNA Safety Walk. Depending on interest, Safety Walks may continue. Watch email and social media for upcoming walks.

Sargent Rivera provided some year-to-date and year-over-year crime statistics. He reported that there have been overall reductions in both violent and property crimes, but an increase in larceny. He reminded anyone who has a steering wheel lock to use it.

In response to a question about dirt bikes, Sargent Rivera recommending calling 911, but he noted that police policy is not to chase people driving dirt bikes. He requested neighbors also call 911 if they see dirt parks parked or stored anywhere in the neighborhood or if they see a dirt bike refueling at a gas station. He noted dirt bikes are illegal and can be seized by police, and gas station owners can be fined for permitting service to dirt bikes.

In response to a question about "nuisance properties" (locations perceived to have repeated late night loud parties or other illegal activities), Sargent Rivera asked that neighbors call 911. He also recommended attending Safety Walks so police can discuss those concerns in more depth

Friends of Riverside Park committee report (Jackson Fisher)

Jackson reported that work on the lower playing fields and the Red House are ongoing. No official completion dates are available, but it is possible those facilities will be re-opened later in the summer.

Jackson noted that the Riverside pool inspections are underway and the pool is scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend. It will then remain open on weekends-only until the City Schools close for the Summer, when the pool opens full-time.

Jackson reported that the St. Ignatius student volunteer program has ended for this school year, but that volunteers are welcome to paint benches in the playground on Sunday, May 26.

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Jackson noted that the Second Sunday Concert Series will kick off on Sunday June 9 at 5:00 p.m. The series is sponsored by Domino Sugar.

In response to a question about portable toilets in the park recently, it was explained that they were placed temporarily in coordination with a private permitted event (bubble Parade).

Rich noted that RNA received a \$5,000 grant from South Baltimore Gateway Partnership in its 2024 spring grant cycle for park improvements.

Parking (Jeff Brown)

Jeff reported that the City has not yet updated existing Residential Permit Parking (RPP) signs in Riverside to reflect changes to parking hours.

He noted that two petitions to expand RPP were verified, and approval is pending City Council action:

- 300 block (North side) of Randall St.; and
- 1700 block (even-side) of Johnson St.

Jeff noted other expansion efforts are underway for

- 1700 Block (West side) of Johnson St.;
- 1600 Block (West side) of Johnson St.; and
- 1600 Block (East side) of Light St.

Jeff reminded anyone on a block adjacent to an existing RPP block who is interested in expanding RPP to their block can reach out to an RNA Board Member for details on how they can assist in this process.

Guest Speaker (John Paré, National Federation of the Blind)

John Pare (immediate past President of RNA) gave a presentation that included the history and mission of NFB, as well as some etiquette suggestions about interactions with the blind, including:

Feel free to say “hello” to blind people to help them know you are nearby, but you should never just touch or grab them.

It’s ok to offer assistance to a blind person, but you should respect their response if they decline your assistance.

You should not approach or interact with guide dogs wearing their harnesses because they are “working.” This includes not letting your dog approach a guide dog wearing a harness.

Communications (Rich Badmington)

Rich noted that Jessica Pressley has volunteered to assist RNA with communications and social media.

Rich recapped a recent meeting between RNA Board members Jen McLaughlin and Jeff Brown, and Webster St. HOA President Jeffrey and the director and deputy director of the MARC railyard. MARC shared emergency preparedness efforts, their ongoing project to transition engine-idling from diesel to electric, and future enhancements planned for the buffers between the MARC facility and adjacent neighbors.

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RNA representatives will meet twice annually with the director and/or his representative to ensure ongoing positive relations with MARC on relevant developments on both sides of the fence.

Rich thanked our neighbor Marc Gentile who made the Little Havana restaurant available for our most recent RNA social meeting, and noted that plans are underway for another social meeting at another location for July.

Development (Jeff Dewberry)

Jeff noted that RNA has engaged with Kneads (the new food establishment at the Northwest corner of Fort and Lawrence, formerly Urban Oyster) to address neighbors' concerns about blocked alleys.

Jeff also noted that RNA has reached out to the City in response to neighbors' concerns about possible sinkhole/infrastructure issues at the garden lot on the 600 Block of Clement Street. He is working actively with Councilman Costello's office to ensure the City performs an inspection of the area and prepares a report.

Jeff also noted that RNA has reached out to the owners and operators of the Park Bench Pub over neighbor concerns about the condition of the property.

New Business and Community Comments

There was no new business proposed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned around 8:00 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Jen McLaughlin (for Rebecca Charlton)
May 23, 2024)*