

Minutes of Parkwood Residents Association Meeting, February 24, 2020

Kira Lueders, PRA president, opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thirty-eight members and two guests from Kensington Estates Civic Association were present.

Proposed Future Use for HOC Building at Knowles and Summit Avenues: A Community Center

Liz Brennan presented a plan to request MC to repurpose the building that currently houses offices of the Housing Opportunity Commission into a community center for Kensington (and the part of Parkwood that's in Bethesda). Liz gave a brief history of the building that long-time residents remember as Kensington Elementary School prior to the merger of Kensington and Parkwood Elementary Schools. Because Montgomery County plans to move the HOC offices in three years, there exists an opportunity for residents to weigh in with community preferences for possible uses. Liz noted that the Board of Education could decide to re-open this building as a school; she views this as unlikely as the closed Grosvenor ES appears to be a more likely candidate for a new elementary school in the Walter Johnson cluster. Liz has spoken with Tracey Furman, Mayor of Kensington, Al Carr, State Delegate, and Rich Madeleno. She believes that they are supportive of the community center proposal.

As a community center, the building could have multiple uses such as a venue for basketball and other sports, meeting space for neighborhood groups, space for pre-k initiative endeavors, and senior activities (noting its proximity to planned senior living facilities). PRA members voted to request MC to support funding of a community center in the HOC building.

Presentation by Councilmember Hans Riemer: A Five Point Plan to Power Up Montgomery County's Economy:

Councilmember Riemer stated that Montgomery County needs stronger job growth. Local forces have shifted; Northern Virginia generated 90% of regional jobs in 2019. Mr. Riemer outlined a 5-point plan for job growth in Montgomery County.

1. Purple Line Innovation Corridor

This could maximize the economic potential of the Purple Line. It would support walkable environments from downtown Bethesda through downtown Silver Spring to New Carrollton while creating thriving urban environments and connecting powerful research hubs such as NIH, UMD, and NASA.

2. North Bethesda Economic Development

Montgomery County has a vision for an urban corridor up and down Rockville Pike. In North Bethesda, large employers are investing in new office buildings and developments such as Pike and Rose. We need to rebuild roads to make them more multi modal and safer for pedestrians and bicycles. Vacant land space in the former White Flint Mall is a problem to be solved. Developers need to know that construction will be profitable before investing.

3. Talent Pipelines

In today's innovation economy, companies chase talent. Talent drives growth.

The County Council will work with K-12 schools and universities to grow STEM programs.

A Kids Museum can also help grow interest in science and technology.

4. Entrepreneurship from our Federal Labs

We have some of the world's most powerful research institutions, such as NIH, NIST, FDA, NOAA, Carderock Naval, NASA and NSA. We need a deliberate strategy that supports entrepreneurship working with these labs.

5. Transit Upcounty and to Northern Virginia

Gaithersburg (a biohealth powerhouse), Germantown, and Clarksburg are envisioned as employment hubs. However, companies are increasingly seeking transit-served locations with walkable amenities. We need to implement the following Upcounty transit projects:

- The Corridor Cities Transitway
- BRT on 355
- BRT on 270 to Northern Virginia, added to the 270 managed lane plan (Transit connections to Tysons and Downtown are essential.)
- MARC integration with VRE
- Monorail or other transit to Frederick

We need stronger job growth. We have made progress, but there have been some setbacks. Seneca Science Corridor was envisioned for upper 270 with Johns Hopkins Univ. as its core. Unfortunately, Johns Hopkins pulled out.

The White Flint Mall is a painful symbol of our county's problem. The Lerner family is not convinced that if they build something they will make a profit. There is higher density around Metro stations, but we need to have enough development for construction to be profitable.

Councilmember Riemer's responses to questions:

Climate Change and Green Building Codes. Construction is not meeting current International Green Construction Codes. We have adopted the 2013 version of green building codes.

About 40% of energy use is through our buildings. Another 40% is through vehicles.

We have to transform how buildings are built. It takes decades for building structures to turn over. We must get rid of coal-powered energy in our grid.

The school system has been slow to embrace solar power.

School Boundary Study. An analysis of school boundaries is underway. We are reopening Woodward High School and are studying construction of Crown HS in Gaithersburg. We have to take a broad view of high school boundaries and enrollment patterns.

Beltway Expansion. HB 1249 would require MD to follow through on promises. Councilmember Riemer supports Jared Solomon's bill to revise the P3 (public private partnerships) process. One of the features of the reform bill would toughen P3 oversight.

How do we get past planning and into action? Master plan visions do not always match what the private sector wants to do. Lack of implementation is a disappointment.

Tangible improvements we can do. More MARC service, more buses on Connecticut Avenue.

The millennial generation is not settling in Montgomery County because of lack of affordable housing. They often feel they have no place in neighborhoods of single-family homes. Kids that grew up here can't afford to live here. We need more housing, including middle-income homes.

We don't want to become Tysons. A lot of growth and development in Virginia comes from Pentagon spending. Northern Virginia has had a tech economy for a long time. There is much to like in Montgomery County, but we need development to keep going forward.

PRA Business

Safety Committee Report. Gabrielle Prandoni reported on the Safety Committee's investigation into PRA purchasing a speed camera. She reported that when a proposed speed camera location meets DOT criteria, it will do a data collection study in February or August. (Obviously there is more vehicular traffic near schools in February.) Lara Akinbami related the experience of PRA's unsuccessful appeal for a speed bump several years ago. Further speed camera discussion was postponed for the Spring PRA meeting.

Presentation and Vote on PRA Budget for 2020

Gerald Sharp, treasurer, presented a table of 2018 and 2019 budgeted and actual expenses alongside the proposed 2020 budget. Expense categories are: Administration, Newsletters, Beautification (including special projects) and Meeting Expenses. Dues, \$10 per member household, have remained the same since 2003 when that annual membership fee was raised from \$5/year. Since that time, besides inflation reducing the value of \$10, our expenses have increased a great deal, including adding signs and plants at two of the Parkwood entrances, adding the Wildwood Road garden with its bench and little library, adding plants on the Jonquil Lane easement between Edgefield Road and Parkwood Drive, hiring a part time landscaper to maintain the gardens and renovate the Saul Road garden, and adding doggy potty bag dispensers throughout the neighborhood and maintaining them. Beautification donations have exceeded dues for the past several years. Income from dues and donations fell from \$7655 in 2018 when we had additional donations to support the Saul Road garden renovation, to \$7020 in 2019. Expenses exceeded Income by \$2700 in 2018 and by \$700 in 2019. These deficits were covered by PRA's reserves. There are 930 houses in Parkwood; PRA has approximately 330

member households each year. Approximately, 400 member households paid at least once in the last three years, so the percentage of households joining the PRA is very high.

The 2020 proposed budget was approved by membership. It was decided to limit garden maintenance to \$4000 in 2020 and to only use up to \$1000 of reserve funds to pay for additional beautification projects and other expenses this year. Thus, the PRA will limit deficit spending this year to \$1000. Several beautification projects, such as painting the Parkwood signs and refurbishing the gardens, are pending. At the spring meeting, the beautification committee will present for discussion a list of priorities for 2020. A decision re: whether to raise dues was postponed until the spring PRA meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Judith Dighe, secretary