

Tara-Leeway Heights Civic Association

Minutes of the January 5, 2021 Virtual Meeting

Board Members in Attendance:

John Ford, President
Laura Stout, Vice President
Dave McGowan, Treasurer
Mary Ann Frias, Secretary
Bill Braswell
Alyssa Cowden
Matt Fleming
Meredith Judy
Ray Keaney
Sima Nasr
John Richardson
Irene Szopo
John Vihstadt

Guests: John Reeder, resident - Huntington Street N.

Arlington County representatives:

Demetra McBride-Bureau Chief, Office of Sustainability & Environmental Management
Aileen Winquist-Stormwater Communications Manager
Mike Gallo-Senior Design Engineer

Administration

The minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report - Dave had circulated the Treasurer's Report to board members prior to the meeting. He noted that a few membership fees were received in the past couple of months, and the TLHCA Civic Federation dues were paid. He requested ideas on a repository for receipts.

Stormwater Action

Link: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/reed-school-stormwater-vault/>

Aileen Winquist gave a presentation on the stormwater detention vault being installed on the Reed School site.

Due to flooding in July 2020 as well as in prior years that impacted homes and businesses, some which received up to 11 feet of water, a stormwater detention vault is being installed at the new Reed School site. Factors that contributed to this flooding include the fact that Arlington is a small and densely developed county. In the 1940s-50s, Arlington was the fastest growing county in the country. Over two-thirds of the streams were channeled into storm sewer pipes at a time when there were no requirements for overland relief (overland relief is a safe flow path for water to get to a stream). The county has five critical watersheds, one of which is Torreyson Run, which flows under the Reed property and Westover shopping center. Flooding over the years has resulted from infill, paving, loss of tree canopy and

climate change. The county has over the years purchased FEMA floodplains along Four Mile Run turned into natural areas south of Route 50.

The current plan includes a blended approach with distributed detention, overland relief and the addition of tertiary system elements on multi-phase, watershed-scale. The goal of the project is to reduce water flow so it will not impact buildings or homes or threaten public safety.

The stormwater vault will be made of concrete. Once it begins to fill, gravity will cause water to flow into new piping due to the sloped design. The top of the vault is 4 feet below the surface of the Reed field.

Phasing of construction: a key factor is that the school construction is completed and the school opens as planned in September 2021. There are two phases: Phase I consists of the installation of piping and junction boxes underground and underneath/adjacent to the playground. Funding has been approved and these boxes are currently being installed as part of the school construction. Phase I is scheduled for completion in Summer 2021 and costs are estimated at \$1.544 million including design and construction. Phase II consists of installation of the stormwater vault. Its capacity will be 540K cubic feet (which is 85% of watershed requirements for a 10 year storm plan). Phase II timing will follow Phase I and is expected to take 9-12 months. The combination of costs of Phases I & II is \$14-\$16 million. Most of the project's funding is coming from the existing reserve fund balance. Gilbane, the contractor for the new school, is also doing the work for the stormwater under a change order to the school contract. This change order is being funded by the county.

This stormwater detention vault plan has allowed the county to avoid other smaller, more numerous projects. Other supplemental projects are ongoing due to flooding in homes above the area because the detention vault will not help these.

Issues that need to be managed on the project include trees, Reed School opening on September 1, 2021 without the availability of the field; however, Parkhurst Park, The Reed School playground and the old Westover library site will all be available. Additional issues will be truck traffic which is expected to be significant during excavation. Dave requested specifics about the timing of heavy truck traffic to be able to pass information on to residents. There will be a lot of communication available on the project on different platforms; contractors are experienced with working on school grounds so notice will be provided. Continuous outreach to the community is planned.

A board member inquired about the plan for restoring grass to the Reed School field after the vault has been completed. Demetra reported that she has requested a cost analysis of seeding vs. sod.

COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletter & TLHCA Website

A newsletter was posted on the TLHCA website and NextDoor in December.

John Reeder, a resident of TLHCA, spoke about the proposed banning of gas-powered leaf blowers and the need for the Rouse property Historic Designation.

John Reeder noted that he is an environmental activist, and initiated a petition to ban gas-powered leaf blowers; he now has over 200 signatures. He reported that the use of gas-powered leaf blowers will be banned in DC effective January 1, 2022. Air pollution and noise are the biggest issues with gas-powered leaf blowers. Electric appliances are the preferred alternative. Matt noted that he has an electric leaf blower; however, he believes it is equally or equally noisy. Dave has a battery-powered blower which is not as efficient as the gas-powered blower.

John Vihstadt offered that it would be helpful to have examples of other cities/counties in Virginia that have already banned gas-powered blowers. He added that this is an important enough issue on which to survey the entire community. He also suggested that Reeder get buy-in from the county's C2E2 Energy Committee to advocate for this proposal.

On the Rouse property, John Vihstadt, Bill Braswell and John Ford attended the recent CivFed meeting at which the historic designation issue was raised. The land at the property has already been surveyed for single family homes. The house has some historic value. The most feasible idea is to convince the owner and developer to try to keep some open space at the site.

John Reeder reported that he filed a petition for historic designation a year ago with the county HALRB, and they unanimously voted to keep it historic. The house is currently owned by an estate. John Reeder noted that if a historic property is threatened with demolition, the county board can decide if it can be given a historic designation. The issue is to act on a petition already unanimously approved by HALRB. John Reeder added that the property was built in the 1840s, and its history includes the stationing of 5,000 Union soldiers during the Civil War, and the use of the house as a hospital for soldiers.

UPDATES

Greater Westover Website

Matt reported that connectivity is not reliable on the Greater Westover Website, so we may need to move it to another host site. We can use the current site as a prototype. All 5 Civic Associations are paying hosting fees. To save money, the 5 CAs could post on one site and each have its own site. John Ford offered to contact HP/Overlee Knolls to see if they're interested and report back to the board.

Civic Federation

John Vihstadt reported that:

- 1) A resolution regarding green space was introduced and will be sent to CivFed for a vote. Green space distribution around the county appears to violate the county's new equity perspective; the biggest parks/acreage exist in predominantly higher income neighborhoods. The county will look into the validity of this claim, and if confirmed, the county will take new approaches to more equitable greenspace allocations.
- 2) A committee group of ethnically and politically diverse members are taking a look at the county government structure to come up with a more responsive/representative county structure. Ideas include the increase in the number of county board members, at large elections, term limit changes, and meetings that are open to the public. The committee's inaugural meeting will be held in the latter half of January.

Virginia Hospital Expansion

John Ford continues to participate in the civic association calls with the developer, county and senior hospital representatives.

Next Meeting

The next TLHCA meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, at 7:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.