

MINUTES

Virginia-Highland Civic Association Board Meeting

November 14, 2011; Ponce de Leon library

Mr. White called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Present at roll call were board members Peggy Berg, Lola Carlisle, Frazier Dworet, Genny Ferrero, Lauren Wilkes Fralick, Brian Gross, Pamela Papner, Jack White, John Wolfinger, & David Wolfson. Absent with notice was Nicole Foerschler Horn. Arriving subsequently was Rob Glancy.

The attached agenda (labeled "Addendum 1") was approved without objection.

The minutes of the VHCA board meeting of October 11, 2011 were adopted without objection and will be posted on the VHCA website www.vahi.org.

OLD BUSINESS

The Yogi Muglia variance will be discussed later in the meeting.

POLICE AND FIRE

Sgt. Bruce of APD reported that crime was down 16% year over year comparing a 20 day period of 2011 versus 2010. There were 30 crimes total in Beat 603 (VaHi) Larceny auto was down 38%. The realignment of police zones 2 & 6 is still pending.

Mr. Gross asked if there was any additional news about the recent three muggings (10/19 Los Angeles, 10/15 St. Charles, and 10/9 Virginia Ave.) There was nothing new; one Roy Latimore was arrested for the Los Angeles mugging, and APD is still looking for his alleged accomplice and still assessing whether or not the three muggings were related.

Sgt. Bruce advised that in response to these crimes, a 100-person task force will begin setting up roadblocks in VaHi starting on Wed., November 17th and continue for 4 days. She asked that citizens make no effort to evade the roadblocks and show driver's licenses upon request.

CITY AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

City Councilman Alex Wan gave an update:

There will be a public safety meeting at the YWCA 11/16. The meeting is partly prompted by a recent mugging on Los Angeles Avenue. Because there typically there is an increase in criminal activity as the holidays approach, the meeting is to get people thinking about how to help address that trend.

City council district lines are being redrawn based on 2010 census data. Three alternatives now being considered; one splits VaHi down the middle along Barnett, but it is unlikely to pass. The other two keep VaHi intact. Of these three, Mr. Wan believes that Plan 3 has the best chance of adoption. The Council is scheduled to vote on them on Nov. 21st.

It would cost \$300K to completely “micro-resurface” the VaHi streets that Atlanta Gas & Light disturbed in their recent gas line installation. It is possible that such funding may come from unspent bond proceeds. The different city departments do try to coordinate projects and re-paving but in this case AGL could not dovetail into the city’s schedule.

In the Nov. 8th election, 82% of voters approved Sunday alcohol sale. Council District 6 voted 93% in favor - the highest of any district in the city - and had the highest overall voter turnout.

Mr. Wan has introduced legislation proposing adoption of a SubArea 6 BeltLine plan with existing land-use and zoning. Atlanta BeltLine Inc.’s original proposal made land-use changes in VaHi along Monroe Dr. north of the railroad tracks that many residents, VHCA, and NPU-F had adamantly and overwhelmingly opposed. ABI is now focused on passing the T-SPLOST (transportation special purpose local option 1% sales tax) that citizens will vote on in July 2012 and is willing to settle this issue.

(Mr. White observed that maps with specific data to accompany the legislation had not yet been furnished by ABI; Mr. Wan promised to ask for them immediately.)

The proposed T-SPLOST will fund a series of road and transit improvements in the 10-county metro region. If approved, the sales tax within the City of Atlanta will go up to 9%. Mr. Wan noted that the Atlanta Public Schools E-SPLOST (education-construction special 1% sales tax) was just approved and that a sewer SPLOST will come up for renewal in March 2012. If the latter is voted down, sewer rates will almost certainly rise.

No other city or elected officials were present.

PLANNING

SAP 11-113

841 N. Highland Ave.

A proposal by Matt Bowman of Tradition Trees to sell Christmas trees at lot at 841 N. Highland. The Planning Committee foresaw no problems and submitted comments to the city’s Planning Department by the 11/1 deadline; they are attached and labeled “Addendum 2”.

Variance V 11-113 (Part B); 970 Arcadia Ave. NE (fka 792 Virginia Ave. NE)

Last month the applicants sought and received approval for a setback variance for the garage (referred to as Part A of the same variance in last month’s minutes). At this time

the applicants seek a variance for a privacy fence exceeding 50% in transparency. The revised site plan moves the fence westward 2.5' off the sidewalk and clips the corner at 5 feet, increasing visibility for and of pedestrians to cars leaving the garage.

The Planning Committee unanimously recommended approval based on a site plan which the applicants committed to have signed before the VHCA Board meeting.

Ms. Carlisle moved and Ms. Ferrero seconded approval based on a site plan dated 11/14/11. The board approved unanimously.

Yogli Mogli

The BZA approved the Yogli Mogli proposal with all conditions and provisions recommended by VHCA and NPU-F. The parking reduction stays with the property but the specific conditions are attached to the site plan; any subsequent applicant who wants to amend any of them will have to apply through the normal processes.

An audience member observed that The Mix's sign is down. Mr. White noted that the Board has asked for clarification in writing, with Alex Wan's support. The unattractive chain-link fencing will be addressed if and when the permit is revoked by City.

Tour of Homes report: Eleanor Barrineau

Ms. Barrineau reported that the Tour of Homes this year will be Saturday, December 10 (10 AM-4PM) and Sunday, December 11 (from noon to 4 PM.). Eight houses and eight restaurants are featured. There is \$13K in sponsorship commitments so far. The YWCA is letting the ToH use their parking lot and portico for ticket sales.

The new Tour website may be linked at vahi.org: vahitourofhomes.org. Volunteer registration may be done there, using volunteerspot.com. Half the needed volunteers are signed up; filling the remaining spots should not be a problem.

BOARD UPDATES

Communications Committee

Mr. Gross reported that the new website should be live early next year – by February 15th at the latest. The process has not been as rapid as we would have liked, but there is a degree of cost-saving volunteerism involved that rewards patience. The design is finalized and now being programmed. In January we will migrate the existing content from the old site and add new material.

The Voice

The paper edition has been costly for many years - about \$15K last year. The Communications Committee is considering using printed versions only for special events

(Tour of Homes and Summerfest) and moving to a monthly electronic newsletter with more timely and relevant news items, as well as some feature stories.

There was considerable discussion among the board and attendees of the advantages and challenges of such a format, including timeliness and relevance of stories in the delayed print editions, cost to the association, and the neighborhood's degree of access to the internet. Mr. Gross observed that paper prints of the monthly newsletters could be mailed to residents without internet access who request them.

The discussion was tabled until the Executive Session following the meeting.

Traffic

Ms. Berg reported that Public Works has agreed to amend the taxicab signage in front of the Wells Fargo on Virginia Ave., Public Works to make it clear that there is no parking 8PM to 5AM except for taxis.

Budget

Mr. Dworet noted that the Board will broadly review the budget after the meeting in executive session. The goal is to discuss and adopt the budget in the December meeting..

An audience member asked if there will be chance for public input and review. Mr. Dworet said that the proposed budget would be posted on the VHCA website prior to adoption.

Safety

Mr. Wolfinger updated the plan for neighborhoods across Zone 6 to provide a Thanksgiving Day dinner for the officers serving on that occasion.

He encouraged everyone to attend Alex Wan's safety meeting, noting that a similar meeting in the Old Fourth Ward produced a concrete list of things residents can do to help the APD.

Mr. Gross noted that there was an FBAC renewal/membership drive in the southern part of VaHi. He encouraged residents there to join or renew by going to www.fbacvahi.com.

Parks

Parks was not on the agenda, so there was a motion made, seconded, and adopted without objection to add Parks to tonight's agenda.

Mr. Glancy reported that he and Mr. White had met with VHCA resident Jerry Bright, who thinks that we need to "bring John Howell Park up to snuff" with Orme. The Parks Committee has made a punch list of repairs - broken fencing, invasive plants, dead shrubs, broken lights, etc. - and will get them entered into the city's system.

There will be two meetings for fundraising. Mr. Glancy would like to hold a 10K race on March 3, 2012, to help raise funds. He will propose a motion to Board to hold that event.

TREES ATLANTA

Stephanie Coffin reported that the yearly tree planting with Trees Atlanta is scheduled for Dec. 10th from 9AM-12 noon. The goal is to plant about 60 trees. This year the focus is on streets that run into the BeltLine, which is where trail users will enter VaHi from the new BeltLine trail under construction. Targeted streets are St. Charles and Greenwood, with replacement trees going in along Virginia Ave. and on Monroe near the bicycle shop. Mulch may be added at John Howell Park.

Mrs. Coffin noted that the ginkgoes planted last year on St. Charles are displaying some brilliant yellow fall foliage.

2012 COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLANS

Committee strategic plans are still being finalized. Some highlights of certain committees' plans were shared:

Planning

Planning will focus on:

- Oversight of variances – to continue variance site visits, liquor license review, BZA involvement, monitor commercial nodes, make docs available on website;
- Creating a comprehensive development plan subcommittee;
- Creating a history subcommittee;
- B-laws revision.

Parks

Goals will include a program to sell bricks and a 10K race, both to raise funds for parks, and aesthetic improvements at John Howell Park.

Safety

Goals will include finding (a) replacement(s) for John to take over the neighborhood watch system, to continue current efforts, and – possibly - a supplemental streetlight program.

Traffic and sidewalks

Ms. Berg reported that VHCA has not funded sidewalk repairs for several years, as they are the responsibility of homeowner. She would like to identify the most problematic areas and suggested using the Voice to get such info and use that as a basis to start a conversation with homeowners. The notion of using VHCA funds as an incentive for the homeowner to

repair the sidewalk prompted remarks on a diffuse set of topics from the audience, including the advisability of extra help for those on fixed incomes and a suggestion to focus on streets where the most people walk, like N. Highland Ave.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 P.M.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

An executive session followed the regular meeting and began at 8:46. All Board members were present.

Mr. Dworet reported that based on the data he had seen, he expected that the association would have about the same or slightly fewer discretionary funds available than it had last year.

Mr. Gross noted that from a planning perspective, there were several advantages to a timely board decision on the Voice schedule for the next year. The discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of moving the Voice from a published format to an electronic one was renewed, including the practices and experiences of adjacent neighborhood associations.

Mr. Gross moved and Ms. Berg seconded that in 2011 the VOICE:

- become a monthly electronic newsletter, starting in January;
- not print a paper Spring 2012 edition;
- print a Summerfest 2012 paper issue;

and that the VHCA Board:

- re-evaluate the approach in July
- provide refunds as needed for existing pre-paid ads or sponsorships.

The motion passed 8-2, with Mr. Glancy and Mr. Wolfinger opposing. Mr. Wolfinger said that he preferred a print edition and thought it was more effective. Mr. Glancy said that “while I don’t necessarily think this is a bad idea”, he wouldn’t vote for it. Mr. White supported the idea, but did not vote.

There being no further motions or discussion, the Executive Session adjourned at 9:22.