



VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND
CIVIC ASSOCIATION

**VHCA General Meeting
Monday, August 14, 2017; 7:00 PM
Grace Lutheran Church
1155 N. Highland Avenue**

Minutes

Attendees: Eleanor Barrineau, David Brandenberger, Jenifer Keenan, Steve Messner, Troy Murray, Robin Ragland, Debbie Skopczynski, Kay Stephenson

Absent: Cindy Kaufman, Micah Stringer, George Zirkel

Guests: Lt Gruen

Other guests: Kent Strickland - Council President Mitchell's Office, Kirk Rich - Candidate for City Council, Charlie Statdlander - candidate for Atlanta Board of Education, District 8

The president called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and board members introduced themselves.

APD - Lt. Gruen introduced himself, returned to Zone 6 about 3 months ago. He gave updates on crime. Crime down 10% city wide, 5% YTD in Zone 6. Discussed the protest last night that caused damage to the Beltline retaining wall (graffiti). Encouraged citizens to call 911 about trespassing, damage to property, etc.

Council President's Office - Kent Strickland introduced himself (is a VAHI resident). Brought "slow down" signs. Spoke about comprehensive transit plan (MARTA and city hall). Beginning discussions at state level regarding transit. Council president sits on the GMA and ARC.

Kirk Rich - candidate for City Council (Alex Wan's vacating seat) introduced himself

New Business

- Summerfest Report - Pamela Papner (running Summerfest for past 11 years!)
 - Discussed impact of weather on the past 2 years (decreased to ~\$80K vs. \$100K)
 - Increased competition - Candler Park Music Fest
 - Increased operations costs
 - Second acoustic stage
 - Recommended to move festival back one week to second weekend in June
 - First ever national mention in 2017 Sunshine Artist's 200 Top US Shows
 - More competition for the road race

How to get involved in committees - check out the website and email the chair

Committee Reports:

Planning Committee

- Variances - Planning Committee

V-17-208; 897 Saint Charles Ave.; RG-2



Applicant Pamela Bullock on behalf of homeowners Jeffrey Keesee and Shawn Whitman seek 1) a reduction in the front yard setback from 40' to 25', 2) a reduction in the east side yard setback from 7' to 5'6" and 3) a reduction in the west side yard setback from 7' to 3' to construct a new single-family home, more specifically a new front patio, and garage structure in the rear of the property. The proposed lot coverage with these new structures is 59.7%. No lot coverage maximum exists for the RG-2 zoning category.

All appropriate neighbors, including adjoining apartment/condominium complex management groups, have been notified. The Planning Committee unanimously recommended approval.

Motion to approve made by Jenifer, seconded by David. Passed with 7 ayes, 1 nay

V-17-197; 569 Elmwood Dr.; R-4

Applicant seeks a reduction of rear and side yard setbacks for construction of a finished basement and new garage.

Motion to approve to approve the 2 setback requirements (1 & 2) and deny the increased lot coverage (3) and deny the increase in maximum size of the accessory structure (4) as listed in the current application made by Debbie, seconded by David. Passed unanimously

- Liquor Licenses - Jenifer Keenan

None

History and Preservation Committee - Robin Ragland

- Todd Memorial update - The application for a historical marker is being prepared and must be submitted by Sept 1 to the GA Historical Society for consideration in 2017. Decisions are made and communicated after Oct 1. The marker will recognize the Todd Family as the first European settlers in the Atlanta region (Virginia-Highland was not part of the city of Atlanta at the time they settled here.) The marker will be placed at 797 Ponce de Leon Terrace within an easement created as a result of the settlement agreement, which can be found on the Vahi.org website.

Budget Committee/Treasurer's Report - George

- Current financials are published on Vahi.org
- Next month will include the Summerfest financials (not reflected)

Nominating Committee - Debbie

- Application is online currently
- Nominations due August 30 to be included in printed ballot



- Vote to occur at Inman Middle School on Sept 14 at 6:30
- Encouraged applicants to submit bios
- Robin read a letter expressing her concern about the nominating committee. An Excerpt from that letter can be found at the end of the minutes
- Discussion was had about the role of the nominating committee and the need to have the members be unbiased.
- Voting process was discussed

Grants Committee -Steve and David

- Grant applications open
- List of past recipients distributed to board members who signed up to contact and inform that applications are on website at:
- <https://vahi.org/inside-vhca/grants-and-awards/>
- Applications are due August 25
- Awardees will be notified prior to the VHCA Annual meeting and distributed at the meeting on September 14

Parks Committee - David Brandenberger

- John Howell Park update
- Signed agreement with brick mason
- Will see construction in upcoming months

Guest Charlie Stadlander introduced himself - running for Atlanta Board of Education District 8 at large seat

Fundraising Committee

- Tour of Homes - Robin Ragland
 - Working on communication plans
 - Identified some sponsors
- Other Fundraising - George, Kay
 - Deadline is end of month to get event summaries to committee

Business District Task Force - Jenifer provided update in Micah's absence

- Task Force met and identified the following areas to address:
 - Parking
 - Beautification

Safety Committee- Eleanor and Steve

- Update on Eastside Beltline lighting requested.
 - Expect to know more by end of week
- Graffiti update
 - Issue identified on Beltline this morning and addressed today by DOC and Beltline

Communications Committee - Kay



- Voice advertising

Sidewalk and Transportation Committee - Troy Murray

- Explained process to submit issues on the website
- Looking to increase the membership of the committee
- Will provide report at next meeting

Old Business

- None

Calendar: (All meetings are public)

- NPU-F Monthly Meeting at Hillside: August 21, 2017, 7 pm
- VHCA Planning Committee at Church of Our Saviour: September 6, 2017, 7 pm
- VHCA General and Board Meeting at Grace Lutheran: September 11, 2017, 7 pm
- VHCA Annual Meeting: Inman Middle School, September 14, 2017, 6:30 pm

NOTE: no action was taken by the board in response to the following statement, and publication of the statement does not imply endorsement by the board.

Concerns About the 2017 Nominating Committee (Excerpt of Letter Read by Robin Ragland, Nominating Committee Member).

I've expressed strong concerns to Debbie and Jenifer about the make-up of the nominating this year's election, and I am sharing them with the entire board openly at tonight's meeting openly rather than at the private board meeting last week.

Prior to launching a nominating committee for the annual election last year, a former VHCA Board President insisted on joining the committee to help ensure fairness while also voicing concerns of bias, as well as their perceived potential for irregularities in absentee ballot collection and ballot counting.

- During the period open for absentee ballot casting last year, I was therefore surprised to receive a phone call from this nominating committee member indicating that he and three other past VHCA Board Presidents were against re-election of some of the incumbents on the ballot, but that I enjoyed the support of this group.

- Around this same period of time, I became aware that a group including past VHCA Board Presidents was hosting small gatherings of VHCA members to reiterate their opinions of certain incumbents on the ballot, also relaying their opinions on actions of the board and indicated other names on the ballot for which they encouraged folks to cast votes.

- As I see it, one person on the nominating committee expressly campaigned for and against certain candidates he was responsible for representing on a slate of candidates without bias, and with equal opportunity. In addition, he insisted on joining the nominating committee under the auspices of ensuring no untoward behavior, bias or influence occurred during the voting or vote counting processes. He represented that current board members would use their positions to influence the outcome, when he himself used his title as past VHCA President to influence the outcome of the election.



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- Based on his behavior last year, I strongly objected to having this individual repeat as a member of the nominating committee, especially given the proposed approach to use personal criteria to create a slate of nominees.
- It was disappointing to hear in a private board meeting on 8/8, that Debbie does wish to have this individual participate. To be clear, I have no objection to anyone's campaigning for their favorite candidates, but as representatives of the Board, the Nominating Committee should present a slate without bias and refrain from campaigning. Campaign all you want, but do it independently of being part of the process of who gets to be on the ballot.

My efforts have been spent with the goal of creating a better more objective election process, and wanted to make the entire board aware of them.

Adjourned at 9:05pm