

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



7:03pm: Introduction and Welcome by James Miceli, DRCA VP and Elena Hutchison, DRCA CIO

7:04pm: Crime/Traffic report from Captain Dennis Andreas

- Citywide crime is 29% higher than last year
 - Larceny
 - Stolen autos
- Del Ray is having a good month
 - 14 Larcenies (9 from same location) - shoplifting from CVS on Richmond Highway
 - 3 stolen autos since last meeting
- 3400 Mt. Vernon 7-11
 - Different shoplifting case involving use of force
 - Suspect was combative
- Traffic
 - 24 traffic stops in Del Ray, 9 were close to enforcement on Commonwealth / Windsor
- Series of ATM thefts in the City, larger series in NOVA
 - Middle of the night most often
- Note from the City - objectionable material that appeared in a police cruiser
 - Ongoing investigation
- Questions:
 - Gayle Reuter: Last Sat. At the farmers market, there was a fender bender with a bus blocking a lane. Is there any way to make police cars aware when there is a high pedestrian event that they can avoid?
 - Answer: Officers should be aware of those gatherings, it's a call at the moment depending on safety and priority situations. Don't know the specifics.

7:11pm: Sheriff's office report from Sheriff Sean Casey

- The Sheriff's office manages the jail, secures the courthouse, serves warrants and civil process in the City of Alexandria, helps the police department when called upon.
- Obtained the triple crown accreditation. One of only 51 sheriff offices. One of only 5 to gain 3 times under different sheriffs
- The Triple Crown Award was established by NSA to recognize those sheriff's offices that achieve simultaneous accreditation from the [Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies](#), the [American Correctional Association's Commission on Accreditation for Corrections](#) and the [National Commission on Correctional Healthcare](#).
- Away from home checks: If you would like the Sheriff's office to take a look at your residence while you are out of town M-F <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sheriff/away-from-home-check>
- Project lifesaver - wander because of medical or mental health. Bracelet for that individual, quickly called out to locate the individual. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sheriff/project-lifesaver>
- Operation Elf: Ask the community to donate to the office so we can purchase gifts for children of incarcerated individuals. Last year over 80 families participated: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sheriff/sheriffs-office-welcomes-donations-for-operation-elf>

7:15pm: Parks Committee Update from Peter Garafola, Chair

- Last month of park maintenance for 2023

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- Looking for dates and headcount for thank you party of group around end of year or into Jan
- Working with the City on improvements to St. Asaph park. Waiting on the City to suggest plantings, remove invasive plants.
- Long list of volunteers interested in Parks Committee for next year, will be reaching out to get everyone assigned to a park

7:22pm: Land Use Committee Update from Kristine Hesse, co-chair

404A East Alexandria Ave Special Use Permit and VOTE

- LUC met on 11/7/23
- Applicant purchased substandard vacant lot
- Surrounded by 2 alleys and adjacent to open space owned by City
- Parks Department considers the adjacent lot as open space, so it is not likely to be vacated
- No street frontage on this property
- Power poll that is off the alley serving multiple overhead lines feeding neighbors
- Wishes to build a single family home with a detached ADU
- Carving out a below grade courtyard with basement windows into courtyard
- “Front Elevation” of house faces the alley, back of ADU faces East Alexandria
- Concerns:
 - Fire truck access for life safety
 - Stormwater management: flooding on this end of the block has occurred multiple times
 - How do you get the water out of the basement courtyard - piped out of site
 - No street frontage does not meet the historical development pattern of Del Ray
 - Setback requirements and zoning requirements question validity of calculation
 - Overhead power lines
 - Construction vehicle access because of tightness of public alley
 - Tree root zone impacts to (3) adjacent trees
 - Vision clearance concerns
- Applicant has decided to defer until January, so we may see changes in December

Motion from the LUC

The Land Use Committee does not support the SUP application for 404A E Alexandria Ave due to the following issues:

- The proposed project does not meet the historical development pattern of Del Ray by not having street frontage.
- Fire truck and life safety emergency access to the site.
- Stormwater management on the site due to the historical flooding concentrated on the western end of the 400 block of E. Alexandria Ave.
- The exclusion of the basement from the FAR calculation and setbacks is questionable as we do not think it meets the zoning requirements for being below the average grade calculation based on the proposed basement exterior walls in the courtyard.
- Utility impact on the neighbors due to the numerous overhead electrical wires, the outflow connection for stormwater, and the construction issues with the site.
- Impact of proposed construction on trees both on city owned and neighbors' properties.

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- Vision clearance at alley entrances.

Discussion

- Stephanie: Question
 - Is the lot undevelopable or does this design just not work?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - There are many issues trying to develop it, city allows an SUP application for lots without frontage
- Peter G: Question
 - Can you elaborate on the FAR calculation
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - By having the basement fully below grade it does not count in the FAR calculation. The calculation is based on average grade calculation, with the courtyard the LUC feels like the average grade should not allow the basement to be excluded.
- Tim Laderach: Question
 - What part requires a special use other than by right?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - Substandard lot with no street frontage.
- Question:
 - Would a 1-unit house minus the ADU work on this lot?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - It is more about the overall lot itself, if this was a standard lot, an ADU would be allowed by right.
- Lisa Lettieri, LUC member: Comment
 - Regarding the question of if this was not a buildable lot because of these conditions. The lot can be buildable if the applicant meets the guidelines that the City sets.
- Carol Black: Comment
 - Reorganize the bullet points to have the street frontage as the first point
- Peter Garafalo: Question
 - How much on premise parking is included?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - 1 space per suggestion of T&ES to request a parking reduction
- Question:
 - Is the City open to purchasing the lot as open space?

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- Can anyone use that open space adjacent to this property?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - There has not been discussion of the City purchasing the land at 404A
 - The open space adjacent to 404A is Park property and can be used by anyone
- Karen Johnson: Question
 - If zoning for housing passes can this house be built?
- Kristine Hesse: Answer
 - No, still cannot be built by right even if zoning for housing passes.

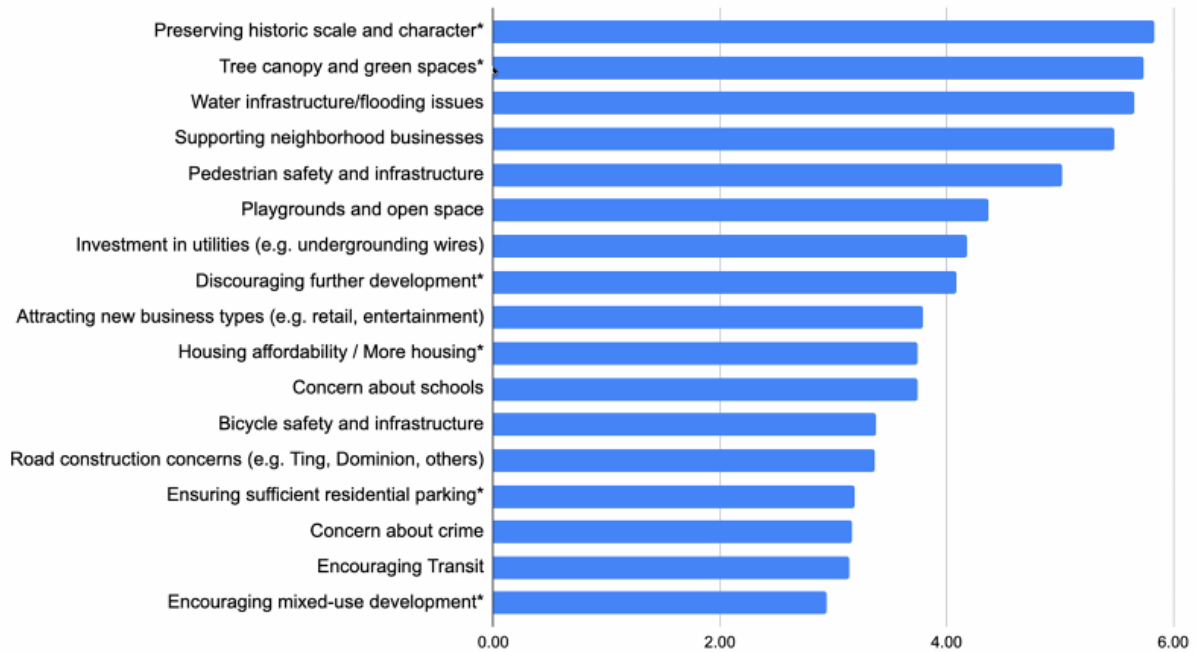
VOTE

LUC Motion Passes

7:42pm: Overview of the DRCA survey from Elena Hutchison, Chief Information Officer

- Membership survey sent out via email during October
- List of all members primary and secondary, unique survey link for each household
- Over 200 people completed survey, about 30% response rate, good metrics by survey design standards
- Membership demographics of survey respondents
 - Demographics:
 - 60% Female / 33% Male / 7% Declined to State
 - 82% White / 12% Declined to State / 6% any other answer
 - 96% Homeowners / 3% Renters / 2% Declined to State
 - Age: 35-44 (27%), 45-54 (20%), 55-64 (22%), 65+ (22%)
 - 36% of households include children (21% children <10)
 - **Lived in Del Ray: 10+ Years (64%) / <10 years (36%)
- How long have you lived in the neighborhood made the biggest difference in how people answered questions
- What do you love about Del Ray: walkability, community, restaurants, neighbors, events, small, town, shops
- What needs to improve: Parking, traffic, housing stock, scale of housing, McMansions, pedestrian issues, affordability, diversity, empty storefronts
- Ranked 17 issues

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- There were significant differences between in the neighborhood more or less than 10 years
- Consistent among demographics: Tree canopy, Neighborhood businesses, playgrounds and open space, water infrastructure, pedestrian infrastructure, investment in utilities
- Member meetings: Survey results don't point to anything obvious that needs to change to get more people to meeting
- Topics of interest:
 - Local initiatives impacting Del Ray
 - DRCA initiatives - stuff our committees are doing
 - Local charities, causes and volunteer opportunities
- People newer to the neighborhood have more interest in DRCA events and less interest in crime reports
- New Volunteers will be contacted soon:
 - Land Use Committee
 - Traffic Calming Committee
 - Membership recruitment
 - Parks Committee
 - Events Committee
 - House and Garden Tour Docent
 - Rebuilding Together Alexandria
- Next steps:
 - Exec board will reach out to people who expressed interest in being more involved
 - Traffic calming committee - presentation from T&ES
 - Looking at structure of our meetings - consider adjusting order
 - Add a social event for an in person gathering
 - Reach out to more renters and minorities to have a more diverse membership population that is more representative of the neighborhood

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



7:58pm: Presentation on Historic Preservation from Rod Kuckro, DRCA member and Past President

- Creation of the Historic District (Town of Potomac) in 1992 by Federal and State government as an early example of a planned community served by rail and trolley
- The Town of Potomac is not recognized by the City of Alexandria as an area with any extra design review requirements such as a Board of Architectural Review (Old Town and Parker Grey)
- Subsequent property survey in 2016 to determine if status of contributing structures had changed - concern about large scale renovations and tear downs removing houses from the list of contributing structures
- Both surveys were funded in part by DRCA
- Original Town of Potomac District Map outlined in red, area in blue was not originally included
- 1840 acres, approximately 40% of current Del Ray neighborhood



- In May, Preservation Virginia named the Town of Potomac Historic District to [Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places List 2023](#).

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- This neighborhood is attractive because of scale, architecture and walkability
- Endangered because of the acceleration of demolition
- Proposed solution is a collaborative process to determine what local controls could be adopted with a consensus of a majority of residents
- Options: Demolition ordinance, Neighborhood conservation district, local overlay district
- Other options: historic easements, covenants
- Conduct workshops on how to create an easement for your property
- Don't currently have the same value placed on the Town of Potomac by the City as other historic districts in Alexandria
- City has stated that as a neighborhood, we must gauge sentiments of local property owners, City is not interested in funding, but some local non-profits are
- Not this same kind of condition placed on Parker Grey or Old Town when those districts were established
- Historic designation leads to Economic Development, civic pride, stable property
- Success of commercial corridor is the core of the Town of Potomac
- Will prevent the indiscriminate destruction of community character, value the benefits of preservation, and still provide the flexibility to grow.
- Pattern Book creation for sympathetic additions to enlarge properties
- What needs to be included in the survey and how do we do a survey that meets the requirement, Karl Moritz has not responded. We need to know what the City needs to know from the survey.

Discussion:

- Jim Snyder: Houses built before zoning existed when this was part of Alexandria County, buildings do not conform to later rules. Make it hard to fix up old homes. It is easier for people to tear down a home rather than fix up an old home. Zoning changes have created the current "tear it down" mentality. New rules do not match the older homes. Economic numbers game.
- Carol Black: Recently rejoined member. Only person from Del Ray on Historic Alexandria Resources Commission. Moved away between 2015-2019, shocked at the number of homes lost during that time. Seems to be a desire of a lot of people who want to have much larger houses than those surrounding them. More historic structures will be lost without doing this. There is a City commission to help people put easements on their properties. The City will only consider a "significant and documented public outreach", a series of property owners agree. Promote open house discussion, meetings and public forums. If we don't do something we will have buildings built as large as allowed. I fully support the desire to have something done to preserve the area. We should not read anything negative into the City not responding to the TOP being added to the list. Question your opinions about what will happen to the neighborhood with such large development. Check out flood action website, look at google to see what used to be on the site across from Duncan Library. Bill Conkey, city preservation architect would be a good resource.
- Caitlin Leach: Divide between priorities of neighbors who participated in the survey. What is the appropriate role for DRCA versus Save Del Ray or one of the other groups?

DRCA Membership Meeting Minutes
Virtual via Zoom
November 08, 2023



- Process similar to zoning for housing that would include discussion and hearing multiple sides of a topic.
- Jim Snyder: Garden apartment communities have been reinvested in.
- Elizabeth Reyna, Membership Chair: We need to do more recruiting to diversify membership. More outreach and recruiting to renters so this organization reflects the neighborhood.
- Rod: Would not support a BAR type situation in Del Ray. More comfortable with an ordinance that would prohibit demolition without a public hearing. Work with the City to determine an alternative solution.
- Snyder: Incentives to renovate rather than punishment. It's easier to tear down than renovate right now.
- Carol Black: Two BAR that are in existence now are not the same. Tailored to fit the area, different things for different areas.

8:40pm: Announcements

- Gayler Reuter:
 - Thank you to DRCA for donating to the Halloween parade, it costs over \$20,000 to put on each year
 - Sign up for the [Alexandria Turkey Trot](#)
 - Holiday decorating along the Avenue coming soon
- Elizabeth Reyna
 - MVCS PTA Fall fundraiser this Saturday, parking lot in front of ROAM

8:43pm: Meeting adjourn