

HCA General Membership Meeting
Thursday, March 21st, 2019 at 7:30 pm

In the all purpose room at The Center for the Handicapped
10501 New Hampshire Ave, Silver Spring, MD

Doors open at 7:00pm

Meeting called to order at 7:31pm

Board President Margie Goergen-Rood opened the meeting with a reminder that the HCA is a volunteer run association to educate, organize, and sometimes advocate for the residents of Hillandale to make our community an even better place to live. More volunteers are need to continue and expand these efforts.

Margie then introduced the evenings agenda

- ZTA 19-01 Discussion
- Priorities for the HCA
 - Local Transportation - Issue identification and solution options
 - Community Unity - Ideas for additional community events
- Nominating Committee introduction

ZTA 19-01

Barry Wildes (North White Oak Citizens Association) and Eileen Finegan (HCA Zoning Committee) presented background information regarding this proposed legislation that is currently in discussion at county council. The zoning amendment is designed to make accessory apartments (including tiny houses) easier to have in Montgomery County in response to a shortage of affordable housing in the county. Eileen prepared a handout (attached) and explained that across the county there is concern that this proposed legislation -- particularly the increased allowances for off-street parking , setback waivers for existing buildings, and increased-footprint of these apartments -- is a blow to the concept of “single family home” zoning. Barry is particularly worried that this is going to be acutely felt in the older communities that don’t have HOA covenants like North White Oak and Hillandale.

Barry is advocating for better laws to enforce the existing regulations. He has organized meetings over the next couple of weeks with several council members, so that they can be educated by the neighborhood representatives as to how accessory apartments currently affect our neighborhoods, and what these rule changes would further exacerbate. Some specific proposals he endorses include housing enforcement allowed access to reported properties by right, more stringent enforcement of existing multi-family affordable apartment complexes, creating a specialized housing court to adjudicate the cases, and a tougher set of fines and sanctions for non-compliance.

The meetings with council members will occur Thursday March 28th and April 4th at 7pm in the basement meeting rooms of White Oak Library. Councilmembers Reimer and Hucker are expected at the first one, Councilmembers Glass and Albornoz at the second.

A Hillandale neighbor asked that Barry share a prepared letter stating the issues and solutions so that it is easier for folks to write to the council members in support of his ideas.

HCA Priority Issues

The Town Hall meeting in January brought forward a number of ideas for ways to improve Hillandale (notes from that meeting attached). The Board would love to do them all, but given the limits of the volunteer pool, has settled on two issues as the highest priority for the remainder of the year:

Transportation and Community Unity

Transportation

We have both “big” (long-term, multi-faceted) transportation issues, as well as “small” (nearer-term, local streets) transportation issues. Tonight’s discussion is intended to focus on the small transportation issues, but Margie did provide an update on the Hillandale LATIP decision -- the slip ramp was postponed and the DoT examiner recommended that the traffic solutions for Hillandale should be more deeply studied. The HCA Board is in the process of preparing a letter to DoT to encourage the study to be done.

Additionally, the HCA Board is proposing the formation of a Transportation Working Group (outside of formal HCA committees) composed of Hillandale residents that are willing to listen to the neighborhood to identify issues, learn from the experts, and then explain the options to the community so that we can advocate for real workable solutions. A signup sheet was passed around at the meeting, and additional outreach to create the working group will be coming out.

The rest of the discussion was a brainstorming session regarding the local transportation issues that folks have identified, and included some background of things community members have already started.

- A neighbor has put in a request with the county to study speeding on Cresthaven and Schindler (he also included Royal, but the county declined that request)
- Explanation of how the Hillandale Forest Traffic Committee was convened to get speed bumps installed on Wooded Way and Elton, but it only was successful in the Prince George’s county section of the neighborhood. From the residents in attendance, the speed humps have seemed to reduced speeding, but the volume of cut-through traffic does seem to be the same. From this experience, residents found that Montgomery County was not as responsive to the request, and even once they did finally do the study showing speeding and volume, these streets still didn’t qualify for Montgomery County’s very strict requirements.
- Suggestion to bring back the police to do a preliminary speeding look at Cresthaven and Schindler near the schools. Around 10 years ago they did this and the report included time of day measurements which can be especially helpful for understanding and scoping the problem
- Repainting crosswalks -- if it’s near a school, it can be reported to 311 and may get addressed faster

- Increased enforcement especially near the school
- Sidewalk from McGovern to New Hampshire on Cresthaven
- Sidewalk along the back part of Cresthaven past Devere -- the street is very narrow with a lot of on street parking, and does not seem safe to walk in the street. Maybe making that stretch circle one way would help too. (Sidewalk requests in the county far outpace the resources assigned)
- Traffic in and out of Key Middle School (as well as aggressive bus drivers); the school has said they will advise the drivers
- Address speeding with traffic calming bump-outs to make a straight street curvy
- Adding a stop sign to the crosswalk at Cresthaven, or at La Grande (a four-way stop had been proposed before but was denied)
- Downhill portion of Cresthaven (after the school before La Grande) would be a good spot for a speed bump

- Additionally a discussion about what we could do on our own that isn't County controlled
 - Can we form a group that gets out during busy times and "encourages" folks to slow down with signs, or simply waving and talking to them
 - Could we get the Traffic group from the police station to come educate a group of neighbors about what is and isn't speeding
 - Start a word-of-mouth education campaign. Encourage residents to talk to their neighbors and friends about slowing down on our neighborhood streets
 - Bring back the yellow street sign campaign

The discussion notes will be passed to members of the new Transportation Working Group.

Community Unity Events

There seems to be interest in increasing neighborhood participation and community volunteering opportunities. The board would like to add an addition event in the spring (in the next couple months) and identify folks to volunteer to coordinate it.

The rest of the discussion was a brainstorming session of community event ideas, although there were no immediate decisions or volunteers:

- Community Picnic - potluck in the park or at one of the pools
- Block Party - Close a street
 - This may be better for smaller sections of the neighborhood. It would be nice if HCA provided some documentation on the steps neighbors can take to close down a street and host a block party
- Movie Night - we could project onto the building at one of the pools, or schools
- Have a neighborhood night at Takoma-Silver Spring Thunderbolts (local Cal Ripken Baseball league that plays at Montgomery Blair High School in the early summer)

- Bring in a musical ensemble (many years ago the Navy Band would come to the old Naval Research Center). Current day alternatives may be with the Strathmore Bloom program

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is being formed now, and will work through April to solicit volunteers to serve on the next HCA board that will be elected in at the May 2019 general meeting. General membership was solicited for at least one volunteer to serve on the Nominating Committee in addition to the two appointed board members. Two general members volunteered, and the Nominating Committee plans to start working in the next week or two.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm