

## Minutes of HCA Public Meeting – 12 February 2020

**7:30 – 7:35** – Ms. Kris Fitzpatrick, the managing director of the CHI Center, where the HCA holds all of its meetings and events, accepted a check for \$500 from HCA Executive Vice President Margie Goergen-Rood. This payment is regarded as a goodwill gesture to CHI, which does not charge rent to the HCA. Ms. Fitzpatrick then spoke eloquently about the mission of the CHI in supporting the elderly and physically disabled. The Hillandale community applauded strongly at the conclusion of Ms. Fitzpatrick's remarks.

**7:35 – 7:40 p.m.** – Mr. Andrew Harris, HCA President, then spoke for a few minutes about the meeting's agenda. He said that we had allotted time for a few remarks from the new, local, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Police Commander, but that the latter had been unable to make it to this meeting. We hoped that the Commander might be able to attend a future meeting to introduce himself.

**7:40 – 8:45 p.m.** – Main Presentation – Ms. Sara Jensen, a licensed arborist and tree doctor spoke and answered numerous questions from the audience. She is employed by Savatree ([savatree.com](http://savatree.com)).

This area witnessed in 2019 great environmental stresses for local trees, especially:

- Heavier than normal rain for much of the first part of 2019 which was followed by a few months of extreme drought. The result was a large-scale dying-off of trees, especially white oaks, the designated Maryland state tree (some are known to have lived for over 600 years). Other factors may have played a role that might not yet be fully understood. Finally, this is a problem not just in Maryland, but in the entire Mid-Atlantic region.
- Ms. Jensen spoke of taking advantage of local government programs that will plant trees on your property. For example, the Montgomery County Department of the Environment will send an arborist to consult with you on trees you might wish to plant. The County will then plant the trees *at no charge to you*. In addition, the Department of Transportation will re-plant trees as necessary and at no charge on the county right-of-way along the curb. Some local nurseries will charge for planting trees but will guarantee them for the life of the house.
- In answer to a question, Ms. Jensen cautioned against the excessive use of mulch around trees. One must be careful to spread mulch thinly around the tree, in order to allow the root structure to receive the nutrients it needs. She cautioned especially against the practice of creating "mulch volcanoes," in which the mulch is piled so high around the tree that the tree looks like a volcano pouring out of a mound of mulch. It is vital to keep mulch away from the natural spread of the tree and out of contact with the bark which can invite pests and decay and may kill the tree.

- English Ivy and Bamboo are very invasive and real threats to the health of trees, and they should be cut back as much as possible. One of the problems of English Ivy in particular is that it can shroud the tree completely, making it extremely difficult to see any problems that it might have. Ivy damages the bark as it climbs and will eventually overtake even a mature tree, weakening branches through its weight and preventing light from penetrating leaves. Weakened trees are more susceptible to problems like pests or disease.
- In response to another question, Ms. Jensen stated that in general it is good to remove dead wood, mainly because of its danger in coming down in a high wind and doing damage to whatever lies beneath it.
- Ms. Jensen argued in favor of grinding out stumps, because they act as magnets for termites, which can then move from the stump to your house
- In response to a question, Ms. Jensen argued against planting fruit trees, unless one is willing to go the time and expense involved in constant pruning and the spraying of pesticides. She made an exception for fig trees and pawpaws.
- In response to a question, Ms. Jensen thought that nut trees on the whole were safe investments, though she stated that there are a number of different species of trees that might well be suitable for your property.
- In general, Ms. Jensen spoke strongly on the need to help your tree develop a strong root structure, which is the best long-term policy for ensuring healthy trees.

Near the end of her presentation, she gave three tips for preserving the health of your trees:

- During droughts, be sure to water your tree. It needs about 1 inch of rain or water per week.
- In order to promote a healthy root structure, think of applying a bio-stimulant to the area of a tree's root ball. (Note: This is not a DIY project; there is no fertilizer you can buy to sprinkle around the base of the tree.)
- Keep alert for the presence of boring insects like the Ambrosia Beetle, which can destroy your trees in short order. If spotted, one should act quickly and decisively against them against all of the trees on your property. This work is likewise best done by arborists.

Homeowners could get more detailed and site-specific information and advice from a licensed arborist like herself. In Ms. Jensen's case, she will visit your property at no charge, inspect your trees, and write up a non-binding proposal as to what services she might offer you.

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**8:45 – 9:15 – HCA Business Meeting**, presided over by HCA President Andrew Harris.

Main topics covered:

- The recent resignation of the HCA Secretary and the hope that someone else would step forward to fill this job.
- Described the HCA Board as a shepherding organization, that is, it is attempting to shepherd the community in a positive direction.
- Described HCA's communications as "broken" and in urgent need for improvement. He described NextDoor as not great, but he urged members to sign up on the organization's website.
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on New Hampshire Avenue. Mr. Harris reported that the letter sent to the County Council on behalf of the BRT had elicited positive replies from both Councilman Tom Hucker and the president of the County Council.
- Eileen Finnegan then stated that BRTs were contemplated on several of the main arterial roads in Montgomery County. The BRT on Highway 29/Colesville Road, for example, was fully funded and to begin in a few weeks. The BRT for New Hampshire Avenue on the other hand was not yet funded.
- Treasurer Ken Harringer reported that during the past 12 months the HCA had taken in \$4,840 and spent about \$6,763, thus leaving a deficit of \$1,923. There was the need for more members to offset this deficit.
- Discussed upcoming meetings, including the March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting with the principals, and the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, which might allow the Duffie Co. to speak about its development plans.
- Stated that the monthly meetings of the HCA at the White Oak Library were open to the HCA community.

**Meeting Adjourned about 9:15 p.m.**

[Note-taker: Margaret Goergen-Rood / Editor: Paul Rood]

At its peak, there were 38 persons present for the meeting including 2 speakers, 10 HCA Board members; and 26 other members of the community. This was a better turnout than at the October meeting (38 to 30), and proved the value of a strong presentation in attracting more people to attend. In addition, this higher meeting participation was done with an entirely electronic messaging system—there was no paper Hillandale Bulletin.]