

## **LHA BOARD MEETING MINUTES – May 7, 2020 (virtual meeting via Zoom)**

### **Voting Directors Present (13)**

Mike Cantwell, Sandi Chesrown, Michele H. Cornwell, Elaine Furlow, Pamela Gillen, Edith Gravely, Ralph Johnson, Tom Korn, Jim Lantelme, Scott Matties, Richard Price, Chris Sundlof  
Michelle Winters

### **Voting Directors Absent (2)**

Laura London, Peter Bota

### **Non-Voting Directors Present (2)**

Tom Wolfe, Matt Weinstein

### **Executive Director**

Ginger Brown

### **Guests Present**

Katie Cristol, Arlington County Board Liaison  
Susan Soroko, Director, Creative Economy, AED Liaison  
Natasha Alfonso-Ahmed, Project Manager, Plan Lee Highway, CPHD  
Leon Vignes, Senior Planner, CPHD

### **Welcome & Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Scott Matties, President, at 8:30 am. Acknowledging the serious challenges faced by the County due to the COVID-19 crisis, the LHA Board expressed great appreciation to Katie Cristol and Susan Soroko for the LHA funding approved by the County Board (\$85,500).

### **County Board Update**

Katie Cristol said that she was happy to assist with funding LHA. 2020 became a year to keep the lights on and save jobs, and she is grateful for LHA's help in helping the small businesses on Lee Highway. Katie noted that her colleague and friend, Erik Gutshall, was supposed to be here today. Erik taught her a lot about the importance of neighborhoods and civic associations, and she will continue to think about him quite a bit as we move forward with Plan Lee Highway. She thanks LHA for keeping him in our thoughts and encouraged LHA Board members to leave remarks on his memorial page on the County's web site, as it provides comfort to his family.

Katie reported that reopening businesses related to COVID-19 County policy generally aligns with state guidelines, but is more closely linked to the National Capital Region than to the Commonwealth. Given the unique challenges of the DC metro area, the County is also coordinating policies and guidelines with the Council of Governments (COG), including their five criteria. Arlington is preparing for contact tracing, and is increasing testing as cases continue to go up. This is an evolving policy, and there will be a tough conversation ahead if the State opens up fully before the DMV and Arlington.

### **AED Update**

Susan Soroko gave an update on AED activities.

The County has established a small business relief fund of \$1.2M. Funding was compiled from unused funds from AED, the Industrial Development Authority, the National Landing BID, and the Roslyn BID. Starting tomorrow, May 8<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am, small businesses with Arlington County business licenses may apply for grants of up to \$10,000. Small business support has been added to the AED web page, including categories of local franchises and Made in Arlington. Information includes curb side delivery, discounts, temporary offers, etc. The grant application asks 25 questions and takes only two minutes to fill out. Ginger noted that LHA has increased production of the newsletter to a weekly basis, and Maia has been contacting corridor businesses to inform them about the GRANT program and other initiatives. Susan mentioned that if LHA knows of a business who could benefit but does not have time to fill out the application, anyone can assist them and add the information.

Susan is heading up a new initiative for food assistance through the Cooperation for a Hunger Free Arlington, to bridge the gap between food production and people in need.

### **Update on Plan Lee Highway (PLH)**

Natasha Alfonso-Ahmed gave an update on PLH activities.

The PLH process is still on schedule. The Cultural Resources Survey (CRS) and Character Areas Analysis Report (CAR) are near completion, currently in review by staff. The CAR summarizes feedback from 2019 to the February 1 Community Forum, and will lay out the framework for the land use scenarios. They are expected to be posted to the PLH website at the end of May or early June at the latest. Phase 2 of PLH should start in early June, including development of land-use scenarios and transportation/connectivity improvements, to be developed by late fall. Prior to Covid-19, the CAR was to be followed by an Open House, but this will now follow the land use scenarios.

Staff is studying how to safely engage with the Working Group and the Community Forum. The County is short-staffed on communications due to demands of COVID-19. Michelle W. recommended simple live webinars to transmit information, and said that perhaps various groups/organizations like LHA can assist with virtual meetings. Natasha noted that smaller meetings will be held through Zoom, and that Plan Lee Highway is currently on-schedule.

Sandi mentioned that there might be an opportunity for an article about PLH in a fall issue of Arlington Magazine. Chris noted that he spoke to Gregg Hamilton (publisher) yesterday, and thought he would be thrilled to assist.

There is no County public health staff currently engaged in PLH. It was suggested that a public health staff member be added to the Community Forum.

### **Minutes LHA January 2020, Board Meeting**

It was confirmed that the minutes had been circulated and approved by the Board via email prior to the May Board meeting.

### **Finance Committee**

Michele H. Cornwell, Treasurer, provided the Treasurer's report, the Statement of Accounts, and the Statement of Operations. LHA has a balance of \$32,455.55 (as of 4/30/20). (See attached.) This includes transfer of approximately \$15,000 from the CD to the checking account. A new CD was opened with approximately \$15,000.

The final County FY2021 budget included \$85,500 for LHA. Michele noted that LHA successfully raised funds in the Spring for the Earth Day event, but \$500 had to be returned as the event could not take place. Other donors are still on board for a future event. She noted that both Amanda's and Maia's consulting fees are reflected in the budget. Ginger mentioned that expenses related to those events did not occur, and she did not work much in April due to C-19.

There was a discussion related to the cost of the office lease related to next year's budget. The County grant is expected around July 1, 2020 so any potential budget short fall may not be until March/April 2021. The current office lease ends August 31, 2020 and has not yet been renewed. Terms allow month-to-month at an increased rate. Chris recommended cost projections and budget scenarios be done to better inform this issue. If worst comes to worst, he said we could perhaps utilize space at their Glebe Road branch. Matt noted that even a reduced rate benefits the landlord in these tough times, and landlords will be flexible in the coming months. Given the leasing climate, it was agreed that the Finance Committee/Ginger will attempt to renegotiate the lease and secure a lower rent on a month-to-month basis. Michele has also started a CoStar search to reference alternate space. Jim noted we should be reluctant to let the space go to fix a temporary problem.

### **Transportation Committee**

Richard Price reported that the Bike to Work event has been postponed to September 22, 2020, and he assumes that Lee Highway will be a pit stop. As May is Bike Month, Ginger has been working with COG on an alternate event – Bike to Anywhere. A map is being developed for biking to local businesses.

The Transportation Commission met on 3/15/20 and approved the Artis Assisted Living and Key Bridge Marriott projects. There has been a loss of state revenue to fund transportation projects due to lower gas tax and I-66 toll collections. Richard was not sure if Vision Zero was funded in the revised County budget, but the premise remains.

Scott noted that VDOT has been contacted about the enormous sound wall at LH and Fairfax Dr (I-66 interchange). Discussions are on-going. Elaine brought the issue to the attention of Del. Patrick Hope, who was astonished by the scale of the wall.

The County has taken a position to not allow modifications to public streets to allow additional space for social distancing for pedestrians and bicyclists. Richard suggested writing a letter to the County Board recommending an alternate policy. Letter to be circulated to LHA Board.

### **Housing Committee and Missing Middle**

Michelle Winters gave an update on the Missing Middle Study and the grant application that AHS and LHA had hoped to submit in March and then in late May to the Virginia Housing & Development Authority (VHDA). Due to C-19, the community engagement strategy has to be re-thought. The County's Missing Middle Study was supposed to launch in April with a budget of \$250,000, but that is now on hold and was cut from the latest proposed budget. AHS and LHA still hope to do a video to inform the community about the concept of Missing Middle. The County has appointed Anne Venezia as the new Housing Director. Anne is a LH resident.

### **Events Committee**

Sandi Chesrown gave an update on the Committee's activities. The early March Placemaking Salon at LHA featuring Kris Krider's presentation was a big success with 60-70 participants. The Earth Day activities scheduled for late April were cancelled, and are being replaced by Earth Day Everyday/Broadview fundraising event, perhaps in the fall of 2020. LHA is also discussing a Walk Arlington event with the County, and there could be fall walks to spread the word on Plan Lee Highway. As the LHA rep, Sandi recommended that LHA end involvement in the Marymount Farmer's Market and its Oktoberfest event. Board agreed. Sandi will send a letter to the MFM ending LHA's role. (The following day MFM announced that the market would not operate this spring, due to a request from MU.)

### **SPRC & PFC Meetings**

Jim Lantelme gave an update on activities.

The Artis Assisted Living project was approved via virtual meeting. The SPRC gave a shout out to LHA's process and vision to encourage senior living rather than luxury townhouses.

County is still working through procedures for virtual meetings of Boards and Commissions. Elizabeth G. and Jim are meeting with Bob Duffy, Planning Director, to discuss it, and would also like to talk with NAIOP. Matt agreed and noted that NAIOP is meeting with staff next week to discuss virtual meetings on SPRC projects, and that process is expected by the end of May.

SPRC has convened a sub-committee to consider allowing LHA, CPRO, and the Clarendon Alliance seats at the table for SPRC meetings, realizing that alliances are not the same as BIDS. Jim is not on that sub-committee, which is being chaired by Elizabeth Gearin. No news yet. Jim noted that as Chair of the PFRC, LHA will continue to have a seat at the table for review of LH projects.

Fire Station 8 final drawings are expected to be reviewed by PFRC either in late summer or early fall. The County Board has approved funding. Final approval is by the County Manager.

### **Planning Committee**

Pamela Gillen provided an update of activities (summary attached).

Sandi noted that future redevelopment at 2500 LH offers an opportunity for Transit Oriented Design (TOD) based on proximity to Metro (10 minutes walk). This should be discussed under Plan Lee H., including consolidation with adjacent parcels. Jim stressed that the Lyon Village CA has had issues with building height in the past, and could be a problem. But he agreed that it presents a strong TOD opportunity. Natasha noted that LV supported higher density at the Community Forum, but there was concern as to what that means 4-5 or 7-10? Ralph mentioned that the owner is a good friend and does not know what to do in the short term, as the old apartment building was flooded and needs major improvements. Thus, he was trying to sell it.

There was a discussion about LHA taking a position on Special GLUP studies prior to completion of PLH. A special GLUP study and rezoning was requested by Kensington Senior Living on the Coldwell Banker site across from Lee Heights Shopping Center. What constitutes "completion" of PLH? PLH Phase 2 deliverables should include land-use scenario analysis and a preliminary concept plan. PLH Phase 3 will refine the concept plan and present to the County Board. LHA does not want staff diverted from PLH to review Special GLUP studies. Sandi has a meeting with PLH staff tomorrow and will make this a topic of conversation. Natasha noted

that the Coldwell Banker site, now under study by Kensington Senior Living, was seen by the Visioning Study as an 'activated area. PLH will explore various uses on the site, which includes three independent parcels (not consolidated). Pros and cons will be explored this summer, and the dialogue with the community will begin in the fall. Even if staff had the capacity, commenting on that site is premature. Staff is not inclined to do special GLUP Studies during PLH, and zoning is also not inclined. Jim noted that there are currently no plans for the Long Range Planning Commission to meet virtually. Scott noted that in initial conversations the majority of the PC, including himself, supports Kensington's land use on the site. Sandi recognized that she is a committee of one who does not support senior living without more active independent living, and would prefer to see apartment living for all ages in this strategic location. She noted that Kensington is a wonderful company, who has offered to bring the Arlington Artists Alliance to their ground floor retail space, which would be awesome for this strategic, 'Main Street' location. Sandi will send a motion to the Board after the meeting with staff tomorrow. Pamela noted the site's constraints with retail due to limited depth and the garage entrance.

Previously approved day care facilities were discussed, including the temporary stoppage of renovations to Goddard's facilities and the loss of Montessori Day School due to C-19. Jim recommended that PLH carefully consider the importance of concentrated retail. Pamela recommended that public art be used to activate storefronts, and Susan mentioned there are examples to follow. Sandi volunteered to assist Pamela with this effort.

Natasha noted that the McDonald's Use Permit application was deferred at the April 25<sup>th</sup> County Board meeting to September at the request of the Applicant, after the County Board introduced a resolution to deny it and requested major improvements. County staff and LHA did not support the application. Staff will provide precedents for urban McDonald's and will share with LHA and the John M. Langston CA (Wilma Jones). With regard to the mural behind McDonald's that their snow plow destroyed a few years ago, Edith noted that Sandra Green is still discussing it with the artist. Ginger will follow up-awaiting costs.

### **Other LHA Activities**

Ginger Brown reviewed status of other LHA activities.

Make No Small Plans has been halted due to suspension of in-school learning. This was prior to the planned walking tour of Halls Hill with Wilma Jones and the jury of student's work (architects' time was to be donated by Michael Foster). Hope to restart program in the fall.

Shop Lee Shop Local – VT's interviews of legacy businesses are restarting, including Peter Bota, Metro 29 Diner.

Census 2020 Breakfast – 400 renters were represented by the landlord participants at LHA's February breakfast. Thanks to Ft. Strong, APAH Leckey Garden Apartments, Dittmar Cherrydale Apartments, and Lyon Village Apartments. The research done by LHA's staff has been very helpful to efforts regarding C-19.

Murals - Cowboy Café expressed an interest in a mural. Ginger is following up with Mural Brigade/GMU students. Cowboy Café's owner is also interested in the artist/muralist, Maz Paz. Edith asked about the leasing sign on Federated Bakery-no one knew the status, but there are parking issues.

**Meeting Adjourned – 10:30 am** Scott thanked everyone for their participation.