

Kemp Mill Civic Association Meeting Minutes for December 20, 2021

Virtual Meeting from 7:33 – 9:15 PM

***Thank you to our speakers: Jeff Lunsford, Anne Ambler, and Gil Chlewicki!***

KMCA President Alan Felsen called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM on Zoom.

- The posted agenda and minutes of the previous meeting were approved without objection.
- Treasurer Anna Waller reported that we have 109 active members and a balance of \$6153.13 in the checking account and two CDs of \$3051.70 total.

**Committee Reports (Some shared at the end of the meeting)**

**Treasurer:** The report was presented at the beginning of the meeting. The proposed budget as published was approved by a vote of 23/1. Ms. Waller shared that it is a bare bones budget with more membership renewals than expected. The treasury will lose approximately \$2000 if we are able to hold a Community Day. The only new line item is the purchase of a thermal camera for \$300 – \$400. Jonathan Aghion has volunteered to oversee the use and distribution of the camera as a means to help members improve energy efficiency in their homes.

**Beautification:** Pete Lublin reported that the new solar lights on the sign are installed and working well.

**Speakers**

**Jeff Lunsford, Montgomery County Roadrunners Club: jlunsford@gmail.com**

**General Information and Upcoming Kemp Mill Annual Road Race**

Mr. Lunsford began his presentation with a general background about the Montgomery County Roadrunners Club (MCRRC.org). He is a Kemp Mill native and chose the site because he loves the dramatic hills in the neighborhood. He feels that having the race in the neighborhood has brought it to the attention of many runners who would have never known about it otherwise and have come to appreciate Kemp Mill as a result. The Montgomery County Road Runners club is the largest in the area and one of the largest in the country. A summary of race details follows:

- Date: Sunday, February 13, from 8:30 – 11:30 AM, staging area being Kemp Mill ES
- They are hoping for approximately 250 runners who will run 5K or 10K races through the neighborhood. Although all the runners start at the same time, the race soon becomes more of a single-file event, thus eliminating the need for any road closures. The specific

route can be found on their website with most of it going through the back section of the neighborhood along Lovejoy Street and then on Stonington.

- Approximately 40 volunteers are needed to support the race and people are encouraged to volunteer.
- Web site for the race is <https://mcrrc.org/calendar-event/kemp-mill-chills-5k-10k-2022/>

### **Neighbors of Northwest Branch**

**Anne Ambler: Website: <https://neighborsnb.org>**

Ms. Ambler shared a PowerPoint presentation about her organization. Highlights of her presentation include the following:

- The Northwest Branch is approximately 19 miles long, with its source in the southwest at Sandy Spring, going to the Piedmont, and ending in the coastal plain. It joins the Northeast Branch in Prince George's County, running from there to the Anacostia River.
- Her organization was formed in 2003 with the goal of restoring ecological health to the Northwest Branch. They currently have approximately 177 members/supporters.
- Activities of the organization include the following: remove litter, monitor water quality including bacteria levels, plant trees, educate neighbors, advocate for healthy streams, and remove non-native invasive plants.

Ms. Ambler's presentation included the following Q&A:

- What are the dues? Sliding scale with a minimum of \$25 or \$30 contribution but many people simply support activities and/or give what they can.
- Is there a reliable source for water quality data? Data reports are due out shortly for testing below the Colesville Road site and two other streams. They work with other organizations such as the Audubon Society that also collect data.
- What about e-coli levels? As far as we know there are no sewer leaks in our area so there should not be raw sewage. However, levels go up after rainfalls, especially heavy ones so swimming is definitely never recommended.
- Will Sunday stream cleanups continue? A few have been held but no residents of Kemp Mill participated.

### **Gil Chlewicki, KMCA Transportation Chair and Transportation Specialist/Engineer**

#### **University Boulevard Bike Lanes Pilot Update**

Mr. Chlewicki began with a disclaimer that he could have a personal interest in the project as he has worked on many local transportation projects in the past. He is currently the head of Transportation for VDOT and has no conflict of interest with regard to the project.

The focus of the presentation was on the process of the project rather than the issue of whether there should be bike lanes since it was a temporary study and we have no way of knowing if or when the SHA might want to make them permanent. The process itself was poor and flawed as indicated by the following:

- No real consideration was given to the neighborhoods affected by the loss of the right turn lane on Arcola Avenue and these neighborhoods were not aware of the project until it was too late to change it, creating a lack of public input.
- There was no need to close the right turn lane on Arcola Avenue and no one was consulted about how it could have been avoided.
- This project was unique in that SHA does not usually do temporary projects.
- The concept of creating road diets (taking away a lane as was done several years ago on Arcola Avenue) is relatively new and part of this experiment was to try a road diet on University Boulevard to slow traffic.

The project was designed as a 6-month experiment and the KMCA was assured at the meeting we did have that it must end after the 6 months. However, cyclists (many of whom are not from the affected area) swamped the state Transportation Secretary with requests to make the project permanent after an email blast went out to them. There was no communication between the Secretary and the SHA and the Secretary sent out a post hinting that they would become permanent.

This angered many of our residents for several reasons. It reinforced the perception that affected areas were not being included in the process and contradicted what was publicly stated to the Kemp Mill Civic Association when we had a speaker from the SHA, causing disappointment and mistrust among our members.

No formal data is currently available as the project ended so recently. SHA needs time to compile and analyze their data, which should then be made public. At that point public meetings should be held, hopefully mid to late winter.

After the presentation the following Q&A and comments were addressed:

- One member still wants a MPIA request because the origin of the project goes back over two years. Who originally requested it? Why was this stretch of road selected? We need to be prepared if it comes up again. Mr. Chlewicki responded that Montgomery County adopted a new Master Plan three years ago that includes cycle tracks specifically along University Boulevard, Georgia Avenue, plus all over the county. The plan includes a BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) lane. The road cannot be dieted down to one lane and these projects are now on our radar to be pro-actively involved with.

#### **KMCA Bike Lane Resolution**

The following resolution was passed unanimously:

WHEREAS The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), a division of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) installed temporary bike lanes along University

Boulevard between Arcola Avenue and Amherst Avenue without sufficient or timely outreach to affected communities, including Kemp Mill.

and WHEREAS The study included changes to the intersection of Arcola Avenue and University Boulevard that had a significant effect on Kemp Mill residents

and WHEREAS When the SHA did meet with the community the plans for the pilot were already finalized, leading to anger among members of the community that the SHA was not taking the community's concerns into account

and WHEREAS The SHA made assurances that the changes related to the study were temporary, that the study results would be released to the public, and that there would be further opportunities for public input before any permanent changes would be made, but the Secretary of the MDOT later made public statements that the lanes would be left in place after the conclusion of the study, leading to further anger in the community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KEMP MILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION, that no permanent changes to University Boulevard involving the removal of lanes or reconfiguration of the intersection at Arcola Avenue should be made until:

The SHA releases the results of the bike lane study to the public and

The SHA allows significant opportunities for affected communities to provide input on any proposed changes. Such public input should be sought early enough in the process that it can be taken into account before any plans are finalized

**New Business/Announcements:**

No new business

Announcements:

- Alan Felsen shared that three auto thefts occurred over the nights of December 15, 16, and 17. Police reports indicate that juveniles are involved in the thefts and the cars are soon abandoned. This is an unusual problem in the neighborhood. Indications are that at least some of the cars were unlocked and/or keys left in the cars. Residents are reminded to always lock their cars, never leave anything of value showing in the car, and not to leave key fobs close to front doors as they can sometimes be cloned and used to steal cars. Especially this time of year, safety and vigilance is of the utmost importance! Anyone who sees strange cars cruising around the neighborhood should immediately call the police and report it.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.