



ECA News

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Newsletter of the Eastport Civic Association

December 2004

General Membership Meeting: Thursday, December 16, 2004

All meetings begin at 7:30 pm and are held at the Eastport Elementary school unless otherwise noted.

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December Membership Meeting Agenda Items

From the Board

This is the annual membership meeting and we will have two changes from the normal format for the December meeting. We will have lunch tables rather than folding chairs for seating and a Board Member will be at each table. This is intended as a way for the membership to meet with the new Board and a way for the Board to engage the members in a discussion of what ECA is doing well and what we need to do to improve the Association. We will provide updates on current ECA issues, have a discussion of ECA Committees, and then share some holiday cookies and punch.



Eastport Sing-a-Long

Please plan to join neighbors and friends at the annual Eastport Caroling and Sing-a-Long at 6 PM on Wednesday December 15, gathering at Mount Zion United Methodist Church on Second Street. There will be Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa music, a visit from Santa, door prizes and some nice refreshments. This will be an enjoyable and fun filled evening for the whole family and for persons of all beliefs.

Eastport Needs You!

From the Board

ECA has many -- too many -- vacancies on all of its committees and we need your help. We can only remain a viable organization with the hands-on support of you, our members. For whatever reason, participation on committees has dwindled recently, even though the workload continues to increase. A few hours of help from you can make a big difference in our effectiveness and if we are effective, it, in turn, helps you and our Eastport community.

The Board is working on the committee structure to better define the committees to make their purpose and duties more clear and to cover all the needs of the Association without duplicating effort. We have vacancies on the following committees: Architecture, Development Oversight (Zoning), Maritime, Safety, Membership, Parking, Worthy Causes, and Tours. Please contact any of the Board members to discuss the committee you wish to join. See our contact information on the front page of this newsletter.

Treasurer's Report

By Joe Haebler

Our cash on hand is \$5,425. Income is on target, however we are slightly over budget due to the initial one-time cost of our new website, and the purchase of a projector for presentations. Membership is currently at 467.

Fourth and Sixth Street Design Plans

By Dick Franyo

The City has funded an Eastport Streetscape Improvement Plan that is looking at ways to improve the pedestrian environment and appearance of Fourth Street (between Chesapeake and Spa Creek) and Sixth Street

(from the Bridge to Chesapeake). The City hired the O' Doherty Landscape Architecture Group to work with a committee of Eastport residents and business owners and to conduct meetings to solicit the opinions of all Eastport residents. (The ECA appointed two members to this Committee.) The end product will be a design plan for improving Fourth and Sixth Streets, looking at the public right of way. The plan will not consider changes in land use or zoning in any detail.

On Sept. 30 there was a community meeting where all interested parties from the community were invited to attend. Ideas and opinions from the community were solicited as to what type of design, pavement and surface materials, lighting, greenery and guidelines for signage were desired in order to make these streets more attractive as a commercial area for Eastport residents and, in the case of Sixth Street, a gateway to and from Eastport. There were two meetings of the Committee in October and a second community meeting in November. *There will be another Committee meeting and community meeting over the next several months.*

At the recent community meeting the work of the design team and Committee was presented to a large group. There seemed to be general support for the improvements to Sixth Street and the significant enlargement of "Leon's Park" at the foot of Fourth Street overlooking Spa Creek.

The proposal that Fourth Street between Chesapeake and Severn be made one-way toward Severn, so that significant streetscape improvements could be made, was met with a considerable amount of concern over the impact on traffic both on Fourth Street and other nearby streets. The result of this community meeting was that the design team and Committee will come up with a two-way streetscape for Fourth Street as well and both the one-way and two-way plans will be

discussed at a future meeting. This meeting will be widely publicized and all interested residents are strongly encouraged to attend. The Committee meetings are also open to the general public.

Once a plan is agreed upon, the City will endeavor to fund these actual improvements in its future budgeting process.

Parking at Annapolis City Marina

By Ross Arnett

This is to remind you that public parking is allowed on the top level of the Annapolis City Marina lot between the hours of 6 AM and 9 PM, subject to a parking charge. As a courtesy to neighbors and visitors, the owner has been in the practice of leaving the lot open and unattended during the evening and nighttime hours. Though the sign currently on the parking ticket booth reads “private”, the owner has agreed to change the sign to read “public” sometime in the near future. I want to thank Jim Nolan, council for the owner, for his help in addressing this issue.

Hopkins Warehouse Development Plans

By Ross Arnett

Planning for the development of the Hopkins warehouse on Fourth Street and the adjoining property on Chesapeake Avenue is starting to gather some pace. I recently met with Steve McManus, a member of the limited partnership of eight persons developing the site. While we had a very good initial discussion, I felt that their plans are far too tentative at this point to give us specific answers to basic questions about the effects of the development on parking, traffic, trash handling, facades, streetscape, etc. The general concept is to have underground

parking, first floor commercial and condos on top, all with an “Eastport look” exterior. Steve has offered to present the initial plans to the Membership, but we both agree that a little more preparation time is needed. Steve assures me that the developers want to take all the time necessary to come up with a plan that best suits everyone's needs.

On a related front, Josh says that the Fourth Street zoning map amendment legislation will not be ready in time for the 13 December city council meeting. The new anticipated date of introduction is Monday, January 10th. Once it is introduced, the ordinance will be available online. Josh had not planned to have the property on Chesapeake be part of the remapping and now may not include the warehouse property in the January legislation.

I let Steve know that that the community does not plan support changes to zoning until it has a specific development proposal that will allow collective analysis and consensus building. Steve noted that there was no need on their part to get the zoning changed immediately. Their plans are predicated on both parcels being completely zoned B2.

ECA will definitely be staying on top of this issue, but my sense is that we have a way to go before the developers have a plan ready for ECA membership review. In the meantime, the ECA and EBA will be working with the developers to give them a sense of what will or will not work for Eastport. We will continue to bring information to the ECA membership as we get it. And we will have the Hopkins property development on the membership meeting agendas whenever there is a potential decision point approaching, and certainly with enough lead-time for the membership to be effectively involved. In that regard, I informed Steve that any formal ECA position on the project would come by vote of the membership and not from the Board. We'll keep you posted.

President's Message

By Ross Arnett

The Board has put our collective heads together and looked into the proverbial ball to assess the major issues for ECA in the coming year, and we have come up with three key topic areas.

At the top our list is planning and zoning. Next year the City Council will conclude its deliberations on the proposed reorganization and simplification of Title 21, the Planning and Zoning Code. The Board has been following this proposal, and while we don't see anything necessarily objectionable, it is much, much more than a mere reorganization and simplification. We will continue to monitor the process and work closely with Josh Alderman Cohen to assure that changes to the code meet the needs of Eastport and the City.

2005 will also be the time when Alderman Cohen will submit revisions to the Residential Conservation Overlay for Eastport. As you know, ECA conducted a survey of the community regarding the findings of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Overlay. I think it is fair to say that the survey showed that, in general you favored the findings of the Committee. There were just a few areas of split opinion, notably the square foot ratio, and we will work with the Josh to see if there is a better solution to control bulk and mass. We will keep you abreast of any developments as this moves towards final legislation before the City Council.

On the planning front there are two important items. You will find elsewhere in this issue Josh Cohen's report on the appeal of the development planned for 225 Severn Avenue. The Board and membership are on record with our concern about the precedent this project may set. If the case goes to court we

will need to determine what action the ECA will take. Stay tuned.

Another planning issue in 2005 will be the development of the Hopkins properties at Fourth and Chesapeake. The owners are thinking of a mixed commercial and residential use and have expressed a desire to work with the community. This project will have a big impact on the Fourth Street revitalization plans and on nearby neighbors. The Development Oversight Committee will be following this closely and the Board will bring to you information and any proposals for ECA action as they develop.

Safety is a high priority issue for 2005. While there is much more crime than most of us think, Eastport is still a relatively safe community – and we want to keep things that way. We have developed the crime statistics and will continue to collect and monitor that data. In the meantime, we need to work on positive actions to make and keep things as safe as possible in Eastport. To that end, the Board is setting up a Safety Committee. That Committee will be charged with reinitiating street watch programs and a system of block captains to keep neighbors informed. Your help and participation is vital to the success of this effort.

The last of the three items the Board identified as issues for 2005 is the need to strengthen and reengage the ECA membership. Our membership numbers are down to the mid 400's from a high of over 500. Attendance at membership meetings is also down.

The Board plans to address this decline to determine why and what can be done to correct the situation. A first step will be to talk with you (see the December Membership Meeting Agenda). We also want to spread out the ECA fact-finding and decision making process by expanding and strengthening the

ECA Committees (see "Eastport Needs You" elsewhere in this newsletter). The Board will be reconstituting the Membership Committee, which will be developing plans and programs to regrow the membership numbers and to encourage attendance at ECA functions. Once again, your help is needed for this to be a success for you.

The three areas of focus above are important but just a part of the ECA agenda for 2005. It will be another busy and hopefully productive year for ECA. For now, from the Board, Happy Holidays and New Year! See you at the 16 December membership meeting.

Alderman's Notebook

Bay Ridge Avenue Traffic Calming

At press time the city is putting the final road surface on the Bay Ridge Avenue traffic-calming project. Some cosmetic work is scheduled for spring to add landscaping, improve striping, and downsize the signs.

Community input played an important role in the design. For years, residents along Bay Ridge Avenue have endured speeding, vehicle crashes and a tragic fatality along that stretch of road. In the 1990's the ECA developed concept plans for traffic calming which served as the basis for the final project. Then-Alderman Ellen Moyer secured funds in the city budget for the work. In 2002 when the design money became available, the city held several public meetings and refined the plans based upon community input. The final project represents the fruits of this labor.

Any change in traffic patterns is bound to create some heartburn, especially among long-time locals. Some people think the project is too extreme and only half-jokingly refer to it as "a slalom." Others think it is not extreme enough. I would simply ask for some

patience and understanding from everyone as we get used to the new pattern. If it works as intended, the adjustments in our driving will be a small price to pay for improved safety.

225 Severn Avenue Appeal

On November 17th the city's Board of Appeals overturned [P&Z's approval of] plans to replace the burned structure at 225 Severn Avenue. The plans would have turned the four one-story apartments into four two-story townhomes. This would have almost doubled the size of the structure. In my opinion the plans did not comply with city code. Specifically, they violated the RC Overlay's requirement that new construction be compatible with the existing scale and character of the community.

Many in the community were opposed to the project not only because of its impact on the neighborhood, but also because of the precedent it would set for the rest of Eastport. Dozens of residents wrote letters opposing the plans, and the ECA membership voted in October to oppose the project [as approved by P&Z]. At the Appeals hearing, I joined with the ECA and other residents to testify in opposition to the project.

As this newsletter goes to press we are still waiting for the Board's written decision. It is possible that the property owner will appeal the decision to court. My hope is that the owner will work with the community instead to develop more suitable redevelopment plans. Although the fight may not be over, for now at least the community should be encouraged by this important outcome before the Board of Appeals.

As always you can reach me at 410-216-9449 or eastportjosh@yahoo.com to discuss these or other issues.

Josh Cohen



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