

SESNA Minutes for March 23, 2021, Board Zoom meeting -- approved

Present: Tom Andersen (City Councilor), Shannon Priem, chair; Bill Smaldone, acting vice-chair; Jeff Leach, member; Seleste Liyanage, member; David Tompkins, member; Dave MacMillan, neighbor; Melanie Zermer, neighbor.

Shannon opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. and welcomed the “crowd.”

The minutes of the January and February meetings were approved unanimously.

Neighborhood Concerns: Clean up responsibilities near Richmond Park/Geer Line. We suggest that Evelyn Herczeg, who raised the issue, contact Councilor Andersen.

Guests: Tom Andersen/City Council Update -- Tom thinks that Public Works will probably come back to work on neighborhood trees damaged by the ice storm once the public parks are dealt with.

- In light of the mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder Tom expressed a range of concerns about gun policy. The City cannot make gun laws because these are preempted by the state. Just like the real estate transfer taxes at the city level (a possible revenue stream for housing needs) are preempted by state law. There is proposed legislation in the Assembly and Senate that would give localities more rights to control the possession of weapons within city limit. Tom thinks there is support for this bill in the Council. Tom will send us the bill numbers if we wish to weigh in.

- **Homelessness:** The city is giving a lot of attention to this matter (as reflected in the Mayor’s recent State of the City address). The Fair Grounds will no longer be available on April 1. One city response is that the city is building “pallet villages” for homeless people (20-30 pallets per sites) at locations throughout the city. The point person is Gretchen Bennett.

- The Council passed a Flood Plain Ordinance yesterday that should reduce the costs of people’s flood insurance if you live in the flood plain (from a 20 to a 25 percent discount).

- The Council approved 3 hours of free parking for patrons at the Salem Public Library when it reopens.

- Tom is optimistic about the ongoing audit of the City Police Department.

Old Business

SPIF Grant: We got it and it covers the needed amount when combined with Parks Foundation money. It will cover the basic repairs we were concerned about.

We can now apply for additional park amenities from the Parks Foundation (e.g., possibly lighting in Lee Park, the construction of a dog park, environmentally sound trash collectors, exercise equipment for the elderly, new picnic tables).

- **Action item: Shannon will contact principals of the two school near parks to see what they might need. We can put the final decision on the May agenda.**

New Business

- Dave Tompkins offered the Capital Park Wesleyan Church sanctuary for our May 25 meeting with the new Police Chief Womack. **We agreed unanimously to reserve the room.**

Project and Committee Updates: Very few this month.

- Dave Tompkins noted that the Habitat Houses are moving forward.

For April

- There was a question about the types and amount of detritus people can accumulate on their porches and immediately around their houses. **Shannon wants to look into it.**
- **Summer meeting schedule, pending Covid restrictions. Aldrich (June), Lee (July), Richmond (August)**