

Severn River Association Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, January 15th, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Vice-President Bob Whitcomb

Guest speakers:

The previously announced speaker, **Steven Giordano, Director, NOAA** Chesapeake Bay Office Field Science Program **Ecosystem Sciences Group**, Annapolis, MD was to speak on **NOAA's Restoration Efforts in Chesapeake Bay**. He was unable to attend, so that talk will be rescheduled, and will highlight how NOAA is directing its resources, in collaboration with its regional partners, to habitat and living resource restoration efforts throughout the Chesapeake Bay.

Instead, we were fortunate to have **David Prosten** of the **Sierra Club** give a synopsis of environmental issues related to the **Crystal Springs Development**. Although this development is in the South River watershed which is the responsibility of the South River Federation, some aspects of it could set undesirable precedents for future development in the Severn River Watershed portion of Annapolis.

The Sierra Club is the nation's largest volunteer organization, with only one paid person in all of Maryland. All other workers are volunteers.

Crystal Springs is on 110 acres on Forest Drive and will add 240,000 sq ft of commercial, including a spa, 5 restaurants and many other possibilities), 140 Townhouses, 3 apartment buildings, and a continuing care facility. The development is aimed at senior citizens, but the details have not yet been decided – only broad-brush sketches have been publicized, and the developer is seeking input from potential residents to decide what businesses should occupy the commercial space – the Developer is talking to West Marine and probably others. The land is now old-growth forest and drains into Crab Creek.

The Sierra Club feels the development is simply too big. It will destroy too much forest – 40 acres is now forest and much of that will be removed. Many groups including the SRA had signed an earlier letter opposing it, and another 2500 letters were generated from a petition opposing the development. Roads and schools are also a concern – Forest Drive is already jammed in the morning and evening. It will be an environmental disaster, probably completing the destruction of Crab Creek and Harness Creek. The City's comprehensive plan would leave much more wooded area – no construction would be permitted beyond 1/3 of the depth from the road. The Maryland Forest Conservation Act (FCA) also prohibits this degree of deforestation. No formal plan has yet been developed despite 2½ years of discussions with Annapolis. The developer has made no concessions in those discussions, and is now applying political pressure on Mayor Cohen. Annapolis pretends to be "green", but the Planning and Zoning Department is acceding to all of the developer's proposals. The Forest Conservation Act has some fuzziness in its interpretation – This development proposes 1.25mm sqft developed on 110 acres; the development of Parole allowed 2 million sq ft on 35 acres. The FCA requires a minimum 50' stream buffer, with more in critical areas. Annapolis is interpreting this to the 50' minimum. The Critical Care Facility will be a 7-story building in the middle of the most sensitive area. The Environmental Commission asked for a 100' buffer, but 300' is really needed. The Developer is proposing a 25' buffer. The development is not in the Critical Area.

There are 3 developers working on this project. Alvin Hyatt represents the townhouse developer, a church is doing the Continuing Care facility, and another developer is doing the commercial portion.

There is more info on the Sierra Club website. They organized a demonstration on 12/28 on Forest Drive.

Questions:

Kurt Riegel noted the newspaper article stating that the South River Federation has endorsed this development in exchange for the Developer's agreement to correct a long-standing storm drain problem near an adjacent school, and asked if the Sierra Club had any opinion on the merits of this endorsement. The Sierra Club thinks this is not helpful & gave the developer an unwarranted "green stamp".

Dick Spencer asked how long ago was this area farmland? Ken Hatch replied that the Moss Farm owned it and used it for Christmas trees up to about 25 years ago. Have there been any studies of benefits to wildlife – counts of deer, foxes, etc? Answer – the AA Bird Club spotted 220 different species in recent years, about ½ in the conservation easement.

Walter Jacobs, who is a member of both the SRA and the South River Federation, noted that when he first saw an ad for CS he called and still gets mail to get back in touch. The SRF has not been as tough as he would like. The Annapolis Neck Peninsula Federation, represented by Scott Mobley, is objecting to the increased traffic the

development would bring to Forest Drive. Ken Hatch noted that the area by the gas station used a 10 yr old traffic study and the City agreed to it, ignoring the effect of all the development in that time. The SRA fought the Quiet Waters development and the Board of Appeals killed it.

Lee Meadows asked how many aldermen support this development? 4 are supporting the Sierra Club, the other 5 are uncommitted but probably are actually in favor of the development.

Sierra Club's next meeting will be a potluck supper 1/26 at Calvary Methodist Church. The speaker is Peter Franchot, comptroller.

Business Meeting:

Minutes of the December Board Meeting were Approved with the following amendments:

- Old Business – Lee Meadows' Membership Committee report – Chris Martin has volunteered to help with some of the grant writing and publicity.
- New Business – New member Cindee Funk has just moved to Arden but will not represent Arden. There is no meeting night conflict with the Sierra Club since their meetings are the second Tuesday each month.

Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Lynne Rockenbauch reported balances of \$27,672.13 in the checking account and \$45,061.50 in CDs, a net gain of \$3488.68 in 2012.

Old Business:

- Dinny White, 2nd Vice President, has resigned. Lee Meadows has agreed to accept this position. Ken Hatch nominated Lee Meadows for 2nd VP, seconded by Dick Spencer. Lee was elected unanimously.
- Dick Spencer reported that there has not been much more activity on inspections. We are talking to Chris Soldano of AACo, but have not yet gotten good guidance on how best to interface with AACo on BMP inspections. Richard Klein sent an email reminder that new (more stringent) regulations for Construction site stormwater management went into effect 1/1/2013. We need to clarify the grandfathering provisions of the new regulations. We can help enforce the new regulations by inspecting facilities and notifying facility managers. We need a volunteer to coordinate this activity. Most of the activity is in West County – Odenton and west. Most of Route 170 is under construction – Miramar buildings are now gone, and new apartment buildings are going up. This development drains into Severn Run. More construction is coming in the Odenton Town Center. We need better organization – some volunteers have signed up with CEDS (Richard Klein), but we need to build our own Database for both New Construction sites and existing BMPs. We need records of inspections, and corrective actions taken by the responsible party.
- Dick Spencer reported that he attended a meeting of the State Water Quality Advisory Board, which has 30 members. The speaker gave a good presentation on the sediment behind Conowingo Dam. This is a major potential pollution threat. There is only about 15 years left before equilibrium is reached and sediment will no longer be trapped – all new sediment will continue downstream to the Bay. The trap is now stopping about 3 to 4 million TONS of sediment per year. The State has some leverage with relicensing in the next few years – Exelon is the operator / licensee. They are working hard to resolve the issue, but the existing basin is huge and disposing of the spoil is a major project. Many Eastern Shore communities are saying they won't fix their storm water sediment problems until Conowingo is settled, since their pollution is negligible compared to the potential from Conowingo. There are actually 4 dams at Conowingo, not just one. Kurt Riegel noted that the silt is a result of tree destruction upstream. Walter Jacobs noted that Delegate Dick D'amato spoke to the SRA about the Conowingo problem many years ago, and suggested that an update would be a good topic for a future SRA meeting.
- Dick Spencer reported that the MD League of Conservation Voters sent several letters about an "Environmental Summit" – a meeting on 1/29 at 4:30 at the Miller Office Building. We need a crowd to show interest. Security to enter the meeting takes time, with long lines. MLCV has 4 items each year they push – this year they are promoting offshore wind farm development, more study of Fracking the Marcellus Shale formation, statewide plastic bag and bottle deposits, and better pesticide regulations including licensing applicators.
- Waverly Farms – no report
- Jonas Green Park project (Bob Whitcomb) – the signs are now complete in draft form – please go look at them and comment on the display in the Visitor's Center. Especially check the Spanish translations. The

Center is open most weekdays. AACounty Trails staff mans the office. There is a 3 week comment period.

Stream Cleanups (Bob Whitcomb) – we plan to clean up 2 streams this year. Chris Martin and Matt McGarrity walked Maynadier Creek and we plan to make that one cleanup (we have oral permission only and are seeking written permission). The second site is probably Luce Creek behind the Quaker Meeting House, and there are a couple of other potential sites in Odenton. The Midshipmen Action Group will help as in the past. Date is 4/6/2013. The Churches will provide access. Maureen Burt & Chris Martin are in charge. Last year we had over 50 volunteers (over 1000 in the whole Bay), and this year should be as good.

- Stormwater Action Fund – Ann Jackson – No news – still looking for more projects.
- The LOG – Kurt Riegel has sent the file to our publisher, and some have been mailed.
- Fundraising letter – Lee Meadows is targeting mid February for the first of the 4 mass mailings of 1,000 each to boaters, waterfront property owners, and SRA communities. We hope to increase our annual operating budget to about \$120,000. We also want to target the business community and churches.
- Charlotte Lubbert – Jabez Branch behind Strayer Business School and B&B Refrigeration. This stream was last cleaned up in 2006. Road water from Rte 32 & I-97 goes thru a pipe to Jabez Branch. The area is very deteriorated – the drain pipe is scoured out and is eroding the streambed – an island has formed. She contracted MDE – Adrianna Franco. They wrote up their findings and sent them to John Peacock and the AACo Roads maintenance division. Charlotte sent a copy to Ron Bowen.
- Charlotte also looked at River Road between Manadier Creek and Generals Highway. She found heavy erosion and sent pictures to AACo (Ron Bowen). There is no shoulder any more, making the road dangerously narrow. It flooded after Superstorm Sandy and was closed for a while. From Bayberry to General's Highway, the right side of the road touches the stream. The stream is brown with no life. We Need to follow up with AACo DPW to push for remediation.

New Business:

- Mike Robinson is planning to resume future SRA Nature walks. He plans to start with the first Saturday in March, with another in June and quarterly thereafter. He plans to start at the Headwaters, and then use some of Arlington Echo's excellent walks. Dick Spencer pointed out that this conflicts with a Watershed Stewards event, so the Nature Walk will change to the last Saturday in February. Parking is available on Route 3 – details to follow.
- Community News – Ann Jackson – Severn will make a presentation on 3/5 at the Annapolis Maritime Museum on alternative stormwater management. SRA is co-sponsoring. No cost. Need publicity.
- Community News – Need funding to hook up waterfront properties to sewers – this is much better than just upgrading septic systems. Bob Whitcomb noted the Bay Restoration Fund can be used for Communities, but is not sure it can be used for individuals. He suggested talking to the Health Dept. This was tried years ago – Tax districts can be created to fund hookups, but it is very expensive and may open up additional development in sensitive areas.
- Community News – Lynne Rockenbauch – Dredging has started between Pointfield Landing and Ben Oaks, and is heading to Indian Landing. They are barging material out, we think to Carrollton Manor. Good weather has helped the schedule. Bob Whitcomb stated that Saltworks Creek is next.
- Charlotte Lubbert – John PageWilliams will talk on Feb 1 about Rules of Practice & Procedures for the Board of Appeals. Must submit proposals 2 wks prior. Suggest expanding “standing” to include others such as SRA.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Next Meeting: will be on **February 19**, with a presentation by Colleen Rutter, Master Watershed Steward, on USNA Environmental Projects (Past and Present)

Respectfully submitted,

Bob vom Saal