

CROFTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD and GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ZOOM MEETING
May 17, 2021 – 7:30 PM

Present:

Board Members: Martin Simon, Brian Riley, Renee Speer, Daria DeLizio, Charles See, James Harvey, Robert Kendall and Hal Sheldon.

Staff: Larry Schweinsburg, Susan Myers, Earl Fox

Larry Schweinsburg opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Martin welcomed the guest speaker, County Chief of Police Amal Awad.

Guest Speaker: Amal Awad, Anne Arundel County Chief of Police

Chief Awad first requested a moment of silence for two Charles County Deputy Sheriffs injured this evening.

Chief Awad has been the Chief of Police for Anne Arundel County since December 17, 2020. She spoke about the recently revised Covid-19 regulations, and our return to normalcy. She spoke of her pride in the work that officers perform daily. The Chief spoke about the items she plans to focus on this year. She referred to them as the three “C’s” and has submitted them for approval by the County Council. The first is Community Engagement. Anne Arundel County will create a Bureau of Community Services to accomplish this. She stressed the importance of communication with the public.

Within the Community Engagement program is the Crisis Intervention and Response Unit. During the pandemic there has been an increase in emergency evaluation petitions. The number of suicides, suicide attempts and domestics has increased. More and more demands are being placed on our crisis response system, therefore more resources are needed. Chief Awad mentioned that the County’s Crisis Intervention Team is nationally recognized for its effectiveness and has received the Crisis Team of the Year Award. Several area jurisdictions reach out to our team for services such as training or additional incident assistance. This sometimes involves officers who are in need of assistance following traumatic incidents. It is critical to ensure that officers are mentally and emotionally fit.

The third “C” is Communication. Post pandemic, it is important to rebuild interpersonal communications, and to report information to the community in a timely manner.

Lieutenant Matt Snyder announced some upcoming events. National Night Out will take place on August 3, at the Crofton Library. They are working with the Crofton Chamber of Commerce on this event. More details will follow as the date gets closer. The Lieutenant also mentioned

the monthly Police Community Relations Council (PCRC) meetings. These meetings constitute a public outreach effort allowing the police to share information with the public about things going on in the area. The next meeting is scheduled for June 9 at 7 PM via ZOOM. He will forward the link for distribution to anyone who wishes to attend.

Chief Awad reported that crime in our area is down, stating that this is a result of effective police work. She thanked all our officers for their hard work.

Martin introduced Chief Earl Fox of the Crofton Police Department. Chief Fox worked with Lt. Snyder for many years with the Anne Arundel County Police. Chief Fox was with the County police for twenty-eight years. He was assigned to the Western District for twenty years before he joined the Crofton Police Department. Chief Fox spoke favorably of the relationship with the County Police Department. He looks forward to meeting Chief Awad in the future. Brian Riley, Public Safety Committee Chair, thanked the Chief and the Department for all their difficult work especially during the time of Covid.

Citizen Questions:

Linda Derringer formally thanked the Crofton Police for all they do. She asked about the possibility of obtaining speed bumps for Crofton Parkway to deter speeding vehicles. Martin responded that the roads are County owned, so any requests would go through them. He commented that the residents on Urby Drive were able to campaign for their speed bumps. He continued, stating in the past the County was reluctant to install speed bumps on the Parkway due to emergency vehicles that need frequent access. He asked Larry to confirm who to reach out to. Larry said that the Traffic Engineering Office in the County Department of Public Works would be the office to contact.

Henry McGowan, a new resident of five months, thanked Chief Awad and Chief Fox for keeping the area safe. He agreed with Linda regarding the dangerous situation created by speeding vehicles on Crofton Parkway. He urged the Crofton Police to increase patrols. Chief Awad said that County Police can coordinate with Chief Fox regarding additional patrols during rush hours.

Jim Harvey asked Chief Awad about the body cameras needed by police officers, and if we will have to provide our own resources or if there might be resources available from the County. Chief Awad said that it is likely that the resources would have to be provided locally by the CSCBD and the Crofton Police Department. Jim asked if that would include evidence retention. Chief Awad said she assumes that each jurisdiction would be responsible for its own evidence management and retention.

Karen Nelson also thanked Chief Awad for her attendance. She asked how citizens can help the Police. Chief Awad responded saying perhaps a kind word or gesture of appreciation would be appreciated by our officers.

In closing, Chief Awad announced the "Coffee with a Cop" program. The Department has reached out to local Starbucks locations and she will announce dates when they become available. She thanked the CCA for the invitation to the meeting.

Announcements by the President:

Martin announced the final budget approval vote by the County Council will take place on June 14. There will be several meetings and hearings before the final vote. Please see the schedule on the County Council's website.

There is a forum this Thursday evening May 20, at 6 PM that is open to the public at North County High School. Participants may attend in person or watch on Arundel TV live. The CCA Summer Concert Series returns this year beginning June 6th featuring Pocket Change. Seven concerts are scheduled from June through August. All concerts are held on Sundays from 6-8 PM. The concerts on June 6 and 13 will be held in the backyard of Crofton Town Hall. The remainder will be held at the Crofton Country Club.

The Crofton Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring a Blood Drive on June 10 beginning at 10 AM at 2126 Espey Court. Additional information can be found on the Chamber's website.

The next CCA Board meeting is scheduled for June 14 at 7 PM via ZOOM.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Hal to approve the minutes from the CCA Board meeting of April 12. The motion was seconded by Renee. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Update on the Enclave Property Purchase: - Martin-

This evening the County Council introduced legislation, (Bill 51-21) which will ultimately enable the CCA to move forward with this project. The bill reads as follows: "An ordinance concerning the Crofton Special Community Benefit District and approval of loan and assignment agreement for the purpose of obligating the County to levy the special tax known as the special community benefit assessment on the Crofton Special Community Benefit District, in an amount sufficient to repay a loan from Severn Bank to the Crofton Civic Association, Inc., in each of fifteen (15) fiscal years during the term of the loan."

The legislation will be advertised for a fourteen day period and the final hearing for a potential vote will be as early as June 7. Updates will be provided.

The CCA's property vote process will now be entered into the record of this meeting.

On October 6, 2020 ballots were sent via US Mail, to all 2,644 property owners in the Tax District. The ballot was a one page ballot on green paper, and reads as follows:

"Enclave Property Ballot."

Dear CCA Property Owner:

Recently, the Crofton Civic Association Board of Directors conducted an online survey of the community seeking the level of interest by residents for gaining control of the 7-acre parcel of land south of our main entrance on Route 3 that has come to be known as the "Enclave Property". Over 90% of those responding were in favor, at least conditionally, of purchasing the land in order to save it from unwanted commercial or high-density residential development.

As a result, the CCA Board of Directors voted to enter into negotiations with the property owner and that process is now complete. We have agreed upon a maximum purchase price of \$2,656,250. As a result, if this initiative passes, the average single-family homeowner in the Crofton Special Community Benefit District (CSCBD) would pay an approximate additional \$93 per year in local taxes for a period of 15 years. The average townhome owner would pay an approximate additional \$54. The exact amount will depend on the interest rate available at the time of underwriting the loan, which has to then be approved by the County Council and County Executive through legislation authorizing the loan and tax increase.

In order for the CCA to purchase this property, we must first certify to Anne Arundel County that a majority of property owners within the CSCBD is in favor of this action. Therefore, please cast your vote below and return it in the enclosed envelope or hand-deliver to Crofton Town Hall by the close of business on Oct. 16, 2020.

In order for your vote to count, you must also provide your name, address, signature, and date in the fields provided. Only one vote per property owner is allowed, per CCA by-laws.

There were two check boxes at the bottom of the ballot that read Yes, I am in favor of the proposal, or No, I am not in favor of the proposal. Beneath the check boxes there are lines for the signature of the property owner, address, and date.

After the ballots were mailed, there were significant problems with the mail delivery, and many residents complained that they had not received their ballots. The deadline was then extended several weeks, however ballots were still not reaching residents. On the advice of the County Office of Law the deadline was removed. The Office of Law stated that no imposed deadline was needed, and that they would be satisfied with a definitive vote in either direction, yes or no.

In the interim, staff initiated a process to reach out to property owners who had not returned ballots, to ensure they would have every opportunity to cast their vote. After multiple vote counts a final certification of the vote count was conducted by the Town Manager on February 10, 2020. Following that certification the following message was sent out to the residents via email on the Listserv, and posted to our website:

Enclave Property Vote Update

The Crofton Civic Association's Board of Directors has concluded its vote by the community regarding the purchase of the 7-acre parcel of undeveloped land at our front yard known as the "Enclave Property".

*Having reached a definitive vote (1,322 or 50% + 1) of property owners in the Crofton Special Community Benefits District (CSCBD) in **favor** of the proposal, the measure is adopted.*

On the date the threshold was met, the verified count is as follows:

"Yes" votes – 1,329

"No" votes – 200

This equates to an 87% favorable vote.

As a result, the Board of Directors will be moving to the next step in the process - securing a letter of commitment from a commercial lender and negotiating a contract of sale with the seller. Assuming satisfactory completion of both, the proposal then goes to the County for its various layers of approval. We will keep you posted throughout the process.

To those that cast a ballot, we thank you for making your voices heard on this important issue and guiding our path forward.

CCA Board of Directors

Since then the contract of sale was signed on May 10, 2021. The County Council has moved forward with proposed legislation. The next step is to certify the increase of the CSCBD tax rate as a result of the loan. Treasurer Renee Speer and President Martin Simon have signed off on the increase last week. The annual loan payment for the first year will add \$240,535 to the approved FY22 Budget, thereby requiring the amendment to the tax rate. The previous tax rate of 0.074% has been increased to 0.093%. Susan verified the amount increase. Renee made a motion for the Board to approve the increased tax rate. Jim seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

James Kitchin predicted that all steps as outlined by the County are completed.

Update-Main Entrance (Crawford Boulevard) –Rob

Rob reported on the status of the project. Ideas and proposals from Board members and volunteers have been consolidated in order to obtain estimates on planting and landscaping plans. Several holly trees will be removed soon. Larry has obtained two estimates for this work. Once the trees are removed, a plan will be finalized for the new plantings. Martin commented that he is in search of estimates for new landscape lighting.

Committee Reports:

Maintenance and Operations – Rob -

Rob reported that the spring park clean up was a success. Volunteers, with Charlie's assistance, spread mulch and helped with painting at Swann Park and Hardy Field. Rob would like to schedule an additional clean-up in the fall. Rob reported on the first official meeting of the Parks Rejuvenation Committee. Rob and four volunteers from the community plan on having monthly meetings on Tuesdays before the next Board meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June 1 and will be held via ZOOM. If anyone is interested in attending they can contact Town Hall to get in touch with Rob. Rob reported on the items that were discussed at the last meeting. Volunteer Patrick Mooney will begin replacing the rail road ties at Willows Park as part of an Eagle Scout project. The work will take place on May 22-24. The Committee also discussed signs that will put up identifying the name of the park. The Committee discussed Swann Park playground equipment replacement and getting cost estimates for this along with ways to increase funding. Advertising park events was also discussed. The Committee will also update the Parks Master Plan.

Public Safety Committee

Brian reported that the next Public Safety meeting will be held on May 19 in the back yard of Town Hall. Brian asked for volunteers to participate on the Committee. He asked that interested parties contact Town Hall.

Recreation Committee – Daria-

Daria had nothing to report.

Education Committee – Hal-

Hal reported that County schools are still virtual two days per week. Arundel High School and South River High School will be having their graduation ceremonies at Crofton High School on June 7. County schools will be fully open in the fall.

Greater Crofton Council- Jim-

Jim had nothing new to report. The GCC is still not holding meetings. Jim offered to volunteer on the County bike path project. James Kitchin commented that the County Recreation and Parks Department has projects in the budget for the end of summer. The new budget has not yet been approved by the County Council. He is aware that the County Executive had a meeting with the Director to see what can be done immediately. Jim commented further that he could coordinate fund raising for signs or materials needed. Martin clarified that this is the area adjacent to Swann Park which is County property. It is called the Crofton Natural Area. There are bike and walking trails back there. The goal is to accommodate both activities. The Bacon Ridge trail in Crownsville is an example of how to do this with County cooperation and support. Rob asked to be kept in the loop on this project. Larry asked about the Flags for Heroes for Memorial Day. Jim said yes they will go up May 29 and come down on June 5. These are flags that were sponsored in November. The Crofton Kiwanis sponsors the annual Flags for Heroes program. People can sponsor flags that will be displayed in front of Lake Louise. The proceeds go to the AVFD. Dedications are accepted for First Responders and Military personnel. If anyone wishes to sponsor a flag they can contact Jim at james.harvey@n2pub.com and he can provide a form. They will advertise the program again in the fall.

Finance Committee – Renee-

Renee had nothing additional to report.

Planning & Zoning – Chuck

Plan 2040 was approved by the County Council on May 3rd. The County Executive signed it on May 13th. The next phase is the development of the regional area plans. Pat and Marcia will be involved and hopefully participating in those efforts. James Kitchin explained that this is being done after the plan because of timing, but in the past they were done beforehand. He believes that area planning afterwards gives more power to the people rather than to the County Council regarding any amendments. He feels this process is more beneficial. Martin mentioned a meeting of the CCA Board with Andrew Pruski. The Board made their feelings known regarding the passage of the Lucas regarding the development of Route 3.

Covenant Review Committee - Anna- No report.

Police Chief Report – Chief Fox –

The Chief reported that there will be a high school graduation drive around Crofton Parkway on June 5. He is coordinating this event with Kathy, and currently does not have the time of the event. The Chief also mentioned that the Pride Parade on Crofton Parkway will be held on June 27. Anne Arundel County Police will assist the Crofton Police Department at this event. The Crofton Kiwanis will be holding its annual 10K event on Crofton Parkway on October 2. National Night Out is scheduled for August 3. James Kitchin mentioned that as of Saturday all restrictions for outdoor events have been lifted.

Resident Sherlin Larsen asked if the Chief has a liaison that she could reach out to. He said she could email him directly. She can also email Sgt. Cabraja.

Town Manager's Report – Larry-

Larry reported on tree maintenance issues in the community. Several trees in Swann Park have been trimmed. The large tree covered in poison ivy has been removed. The large fallen pine tree on the side of the path has been removed. All debris has been removed, as well as some brush at that location. Several limbs from a tree on our property adjacent to homes on Freemont Court have been trimmed. Several trees growing on CCA property that were posing a threat of damage to nearby townhomes have been removed from the area behind Walleye Drive. During the last windstorm a large oak tree in the common area of The Orchards came down. Part of the tree fell into a resident's yard but there was no damage to the home. The fallen tree has been removed. A large branch in the wooded area of the Willows fell during high winds. It landed on the boardwalk and damaged one of the steps. An unknown resident cleaned up and repaired the damage to the boardwalk. Larry notified County DPW about nine trees growing on County property (curb lawns, medians) that are dead or have large dead limbs that need to be removed or trimmed.

Larry is trying to determine the best and most cost effective way to repair a swing set at Swann Park. He and Charlie will discuss this upon his return from vacation.

At the request of John Maloney, Larry contacted the Director of County Public Works regarding trees that needed trimming near the spots where the Kiwanis Club places the flags along Crofton Parkway. DPW performed that work in a timely manner and the flags have been installed by Kiwanis volunteers.

The State Department of Agriculture will provide mosquito control beginning in our area Tuesday June 1. The frequency of treatment will depend upon testing results. Spraying will be done between 7PM and 2AM. The County has asked residents to remove any areas of standing water in their yards to make the spraying more effective. Residents who wish to opt out of the spraying program can go the MDA Mosquito Control website and submit a request. There are also forms at Town Hall or residents may call MDA Mosquito Control at 410-841-5870.

Citizen Questions or Comments:

A resident asked if the CCA or the Board have any say in the upkeep of the property belonging to the Crofton Country Club. Her property borders the Club and she complained about rotten falling trees, poison ivy, trash, and the disrepair of the tennis courts. She asked if there is a way to communicate these problems to the Club. She has called them directly with no results. Martin confirmed that although the Club is part of the Tax District it is a private business, and is not subject to the covenants. Martin encouraged her to contact the Country Club manager, Ray Saucer, directly.

Karen Nelson thanked the Board for the update on the Enclave Property purchase. She asked if the \$93 per year increase still stands. Martin said yes, and that it will continue to decrease as the note is paid over fifteen years. She asked about plans for the Country Club building additional structures on their property and how that is involved in the Enclave purchase. Martin clarified that the additional buildings are not part of the current agreement. As far as he knows, there are no further plans to expand the Country Club. She asked when the hedges will be trimmed as they are encroaching onto the sidewalk. Larry commented that he will ask them about it.

Bob Brannan spoke about a letter he sent to the Town Manager and the Board about a resident's six foot high fence that goes to the edge of the property ending at the sidewalk. The fence blocks views from the street. He stated that the height does not conform to the covenants, which state that the maximum height is 42 inches. He believes this fence creates driving, and biking hazards. He is concerned for the safety of the many children who live on the street. He is aware of a past issue with another home on the other side of the street where a fence was not allowed by the Covenant Review Committee for this reason. He is aware that the current fence was approved by the CRC, but is unsure if they know that according to zoning laws, the edge of the fence must be fifteen feet from the sidewalk. It is only nine feet according to his measurement. Martin commented that the CRC chair, Anna O'Kelly, is not present at tonight's meeting. Martin said his understanding is that the County is coming out tomorrow to inspect the fence. Additionally, Martin clarified that it is not the Town Manager who is responsible for the covenant enforcement; it is the Covenant Review Committee. Debbie Brannon is asking for consistency on the fence decisions, and stressed the safety concerns. Residents "G&S" commented that there is no way any vehicle coming past can see children on bicycles on Rochester Street. He feels that an accident will definitely occur. The "Slow" sign that was posted is ineffective. He mentioned that the County did approve the permit for the fence.

Mr. Brannan asked how the notifications to neighbors are made by the CRC, stating that he was never notified. Larry responded that the usual process is that the resident doing the project, if it is new construction, would obtain permission from adjacent neighbors regarding the project. Mr. Brannon stated that this was not done. Debbie Brannon stated that according to her conversation with Anna, the resident's application stated that the construction was for the replacement of an existing fence, and that was the reason that no neighbors were notified. Martin will reach out to them as progress continues.

Lyra Sjoberg of Rochester Court commented about the safety hazard caused by the fence coming out to sidewalk. Her son was almost hit by a car because he had to ride his bike in the street so his fishing pole would not hit the fence while riding on the sidewalk. She appreciates the Board working on this.

With no other questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned for an Executive Session.

Meeting minutes completed by Tara Gottschalck, Receptionist (June 3, 2021)

LS/SM/EF(tg)