

## SOECA MEETING MINUTES: February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

\* Remote Meeting via Zoom \*

Prepared by Claire Zietz, Secretary

32 in attendance.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

The current account balance is \$11,417.67. This higher balance is due to the lower costs this year (less printing, no meeting room rentals, and no fall neighborhood event).

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Committee Announcements: Chris Reynolds shared that there is still an open chair to lead the Social Committee and to contact the Board if you are interested.
- Mr. Reynolds said that the SOECA Downtown Committee has been very active and looking at the Thrive 2050 plan.
- Mr. Reynolds mentioned that there is a petition against gas powered leaf blowers. SOECA can get our own petition together if anyone would like to be a part of that initiative: if so, contact the Board.
- Mr. Reynolds then gave a summary of some key points from Councilmember Will Jawado's "missing middle" plan.
  - There was a question from a caller: can we get some specific language to protect current homeowners and build without harm?

### GUEST SPEAKER: COUNCILMEMBER WILL JAWANDO

Councilmember Will Jawando began his presentation with his personal background: where he lives, his family, and his work experience.

Councilmember Jawando said more than 200,00 people are estimated to come into the area in the next 20 years. In the region we need 40,000 new housing units, and 10,000 in the next ten years. Supply of housing at different price points is one goal of his proposal. This "missing middle" or More Housing For More People plan aims to help with this problem, near metro stations, in desirable places to live - providing small apartments, duplexes, triplexes, quads – that would conform to the specified lot set backs and height restrictions. This proposal will not get all 10,000 units needed and will be a slow initiative, focusing around metro stops. Developers approve of this plan. He said the people who want this type of housing are elderly who want to downsize and age in place, and millennials.

The three P's of his plan are:

- Produce more housing
- Preserve existing affordable housing
- Protect renters in that housing

The second main part of his plan is to protect renters and rent increases – the anti-rent gouging bill. There are those who are rent-burdened, those who spend 30% or more of their income on

rent. The number one correlating factor of increase to rent is proximity to transit. The anti-rent gouging bill would prohibit increases larger than the rent guidelines. The Sierra Club, Renters Alliance, Action Committee for Transit, are all in support.

Both bills have a public hearing on February 11<sup>th</sup> and there will be committee sessions sometime in March.

A Q&A session followed. Highlights:

- Many people are concerned about affordability. What is the interplay between affordability and increased housing? Councilmember Jawando said he could see, while not ideal, two townhomes on one lot. “Affordable” is dependent on the person, and something is always affordable to someone, he said, and it frees up other housing for people farther away. He is looking into other models, but still his aim is to increase density near transit.
- Rent control is critical and one piece, but there is concern about how this initiative really makes things more affordable and ownership more affordable? Why can’t we put a cap on prices? Not \$800,000 and up, but maybe more around \$350,000? There is a lot of space in downtown Silver Spring to build housing. Councilmember Jawando said affordability is one of many goals, but that kind of affordability will not be achieved by this missing middle housing. But he thinks if someone combines 3-4 lots, and turns it into an 8-9 apartment complex, that will definitely be cheaper at around \$600,000-\$700,000 per unit and create more housing in a desirable area. He also thinks we should increase requirements for MPDUs (moderately priced housing units), but that would have to be a separate bill.
- Is there a way for the county to make this both attractive to builders and also affordable to people in the lower and middle income? Are there any kinds of reassurances on resale, such as with MPDUs? Councilmember said there is a balance with tax breaks to builders and subsidies to buyers, and he is open to ways to look at this, but he thinks since these are such desirable areas, there will definitely be an increase in resale values.
- Is there a way to keep architecture in line with the current neighborhood? Are there ways to ensure the style fits in? Councilmember said there are ways with setbacks and lot coverage and imposing height restrictions.
- With this new zoning, will there be any protection to Sligo Creek and the environment? A reduction in impermeable surfaces? Councilmember said he is not against looking at that, but he really does not think there will be much change with this bill, only a “trickle”. Since the requirements of single family homes will stay in the bill, he anticipates that any changes will still be up to code, but he is open to looking at other ideas.
- Why not develop other neighborhoods as well, and make other neighborhoods desirable with increasing important green spaces and transit? Councilmember said we will need that as well and to upgrade schools all across the county, and it is going to happen but there is an opportunity here near transit and he would like to take advantage of it now.

Councilmember Jawando ended his session by saying to please reach out and email him with any thoughts and questions: [councilmember.jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:councilmember.jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov)

Mr. Reynolds encouraged everyone to be a part of this process and reach out, to make our voices heard. Michael Gurwitz said it is a benefit of SOECA that we can also speak as one, powerfully, as an organization.

There being no further business, Mr. Reynolds adjourned the meeting at 8:52pm.