

Federal Hill Neighborhood Association
General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, November 17, 2020
(via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER:

Beth Whitmer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
Approximately 45 participants were in attendance via Zoom

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

Rash Field Update- Laurie Schwartz of Waterfront Partnership shared the status of the building of a new park in Rash Field. She said that this park was designed with Baltimoreans in mind. The construction of Phase 1 has begun with the grading of the land. There was some soil contamination that caused a delay. They will begin working on utilities in 2 to 3 weeks. Phase 1 of the park is expected to open in October 2021. There will be a pavilion with space for a café, outside tables, skate park, and 2 children play areas. The first phase of the project is fully funded and will cost \$17 million. They are starting to fund raise for Phase 2 which is budgeted to cost \$15 million.

A neighbor asked Laurie what the plan is for patrolling the park. She indicated that there will be safety guides and they are working on a management agreement with the City to define responsibilities. It was suggested to include FHNA in the conversation about security around the park.

Federal Hill Main Street (FHMS) Update- Cathy Rosenbaum, Executive Director of FHMS, shared an update on FHMS and the businesses. This week Blue Agave's parklet was destroyed by a car. Cathy said that they are working hard to make sure parklets are safe. She is working with Blue Agave, DOT and Eric Costello to find ways to ensure it doesn't happen again.

There will be 2 events coming up for the holidays which will mainly be social media events. Small Business Saturday will be held the Saturday after Thanksgiving and is sponsored by American Express. FHMS is encouraging people to shop local. The retail shops plan to do sidewalk sales and the restaurants and bars will offer discounts for those who shop local. The Business Association is also planning on holding Midnight Madness to also promote local shopping and dining.

The State of Maryland has allocated \$5 million in grants to any of the 41 main streets in the state of Maryland. The grant application is due this week. The Main Streets will apply for a bucket of funds that they will be responsible for granting to local businesses in their district. Each main street can apply for \$75k to \$500k in grants. FHMS is going to apply for as much as possible.

The City of Baltimore is offering grants to restaurants and bars that generate greater than 50% of their revenue from food sales.

Cathy shared that FHMS has a grant from the state of Maryland, Community Investment Tax Credit. If an individual donates \$500 or more, he/she can deduct 50% of the donation on their state taxes and also deduct it as a charitable contribution. Donations need to be made to FHMS by the end of the year. Cathy is encouraging everyone to help FHMS and take advantage of this benefit.

Future of Shofer Furniture Location- Beth shared that there has been a lot of interest in getting a Trader Joe's or similar grocery store to take the space where Shofer Furniture is vacating. Hank Shofer will make the final decision about what goes into the location. He has been working with Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) to identify possible businesses. BDC has shared that the City has been trying to get Trader Joe's for a while but they are not interested. One issue with the Shofer Furniture location is lack of parking. BDC is going to explore possible grocery stores for that location. Zac Blanchard has begun a petition signed by neighbors to encourage Trader Joe's in the space and has received over 500 signatures.

Public Safety Committee Update- Brad O'Brian, FHNA Public Safety Chairman, shared the FHNA effort to create a neighborhood camera network. Flyers have been sent out and it has been promoted on social media to encourage neighbors to purchase and/or register their cameras on the new network. No private information is shared and no one has access to footage unless you provide it. Brad encouraged neighbors who don't have cameras to purchase them now while there are Black Friday deals and the City rebate program is still in place.

There is a Baltimore Policy Department Community Relation Council meeting held every month where interested neighbors can participate to learn about crime in the neighborhood and get involved.

Pablo Padin of FHNA has been working to analyze the crime data in the neighborhood to understand trends in crime. The purpose is to understand the actual crime data instead of focusing on people's perception of crime. Pablo has built a multitude of reports that show crime trends since 2015. A neighbor shared that even though the trends show declining crime in the neighborhood, it is important to remain vigilant.

Major Conaway of BPD shared that it is important for the neighborhood to remain hyper vigilant. He stated that most of the violent crimes in Baltimore are drug related. However, robberies, car jackings, etc. are crimes of opportunity. He shared crime statistics indicating that crime is down significantly in Federal Hill and in South Baltimore. Homicides are up 50% in the Southern District due to a series of incidents in Cherry Hill, Pigtown and Brooklyn.

One neighbor shared that he has seen a significant improvement in Federal Hill Park. The park has been cleared each night.

Block Captain Committee Update- Zac Blanchard, Chairman of the Block Captain Committee, shared that knowing your neighbors and having cameras installed is very important to safety. He said that there was an incident on Poultney last week and because the neighbors were in communication, footage was provided the next day.

Zac is working to identify block captains for each block in Federal Hill. Before October, of the 54 blocks in Federal Hill, there were 8 block captains covering 15 blocks. We now have 8 new volunteers and 6 possible new volunteers. We need block captain volunteers for William and Cross Streets. The purpose of the block captains is to facilitate social connections, welcome new neighbors, and communicate to/from FHNA.

Nancy Gordon shared that 301 Warren (Harbor Hill Apartments) is looking for a block captain.

We are having a Thanksgiving Food Drive. Your block captain should be sharing the details and providing the drop off location and times. If you don't have block captain, feel free to start one on your block or reach out to other blocks.

Beth will send out a list of blocks and the block captains on each block.

Digital Harbor High School (DHHS) Update- Brooke Shird, Community School Coordinator for DHHS shared that they are having a Winter Blanket Drive. For information, go to the FHNA Facebook page or email Brooke. Donations can be dropped off at the school and it ends in January. It was suggested that the block captains share this information through flyers to the neighbors to get the word out.

Brooke also wanted to thank volunteers who participated in the Bmore Votes Campaign. They provided coffee, donuts, and music for those waiting in line to vote.

The Holiday Student Family Council meeting will be held December 22.

Thread- Owen Stone of Thread shared that they are a volunteer organization that serves 6 different high schools including DHHS. They match community members with students to help build relationships. Currently the volunteering is done virtually. If anyone is interested in joining, contact owen.stone@thread.org.

NEW BUSINESS:

NONE

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.