

2023-5-18 Old Southwest Community Meeting MINUTES

Board Attending: Bill Dandridge (President), Terry McGuire (V-P), Mary Anne Mather (Secretary), Julie Mugford, Annemarie Drake, Richard Normand, Elaine Fleck

Absent: David Jeavons (Treasurer), Lynn Speno (illness)

Submitted by Secretary: Mary Anne Mather

Meeting facilitated by OSW President, Bill Dandridge

Welcome & Who's New (Welcome to 4 newcomers. 25 attendees.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS REVIEW

- **SOCIAL:** Thank you Lynn & Dave Speno for hosting tonight's refreshments. June volunteers: Gary and Betsy Nixon.

- Last Sunday's OSW Neighborhood Appreciation Family Festival was fun! TY to On the Edge Salon & Sunnyside Market for planning, participation, donations. ~100 attendees even with rain

- OSW Historic Preservation Committee has created a letter for new home owners & realtors to raise awareness of ARB guidelines & offer resources to new neighbors. Sample in foyer.

• UPCOMING OSW EVENTS

--**POCKET PARK:** Occultation Workshop, Sat 5/20, Day Ave & 8th St. Learn a process to eradicate weeds naturally & sustainably while helping to "get it done" at our new Pocket Park! RSVP Terry McGuire to attend (stephen.terry.mcguire@gmail.com)

--**BS & Beer:** Tues 6/13, 5:30-8pm, Twin Creeks Brewing Company, Vinton. Speaker: City of Roanoke code inspector, Nancy Morgan. First round of drinks hosted by Better Building Works, an OSW business.

--**OSW Summer Block Party, 7/1, 3-8pm, Argonne Circle/King George Ave.** Contact Terry McGuire (stephen.terry.mcguire@gmail.com)

GUEST SPEAKER 6:45-7:05

Sarah Baumgardner, Roanoke City elected representative to Blue Ridge Soil & Water Conservation District, Public Relations Manager, Western Virginia Water Authority.

Learn how WVWA operates (where our water comes from!) and some upcoming innovative projects in Roanoke. Sarah will also put on her Soil and Water Conservation Director hat and share information about the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, a state-funded effort that provides financial incentives and technical/educational assistance to property owners who install eligible Best Management Practices (BMP).

7:05-7:15 Q & A

Highlights: *(Follow-up: add link to their website on OSW website for resources. Bring up the idea at next OSW Board meeting to create a running resource list with links based on meeting presenters.)*

- 19M gallons treated per day. Roanoke City water from Carvin’s Cove Reservoir. 2nd largest city-owned park in U.S. Open to public for recreation. \$7 per car, per day. No camping or swimming, except for annual ironman competition. Brings 2500 people to Roanoke.
 - Discovered “forever chemicals.” Identified source & now treating it.
 - Antique Crystal Spring steam pump open Sat & Sun afternoons after Memorial Day.
 - Coordinates with city betterment projects for replacing pipes (dig once accomplish two projects).
 - Cast iron lines from early installation are still in use from the 19th century. Have found no lead pipes. Ask people to self-report about the types of pipes (explained on their web site).
 - WVWA has vetted an insurance company that sends a solicitation quarterly. Covers cost of pipe replacement between meter and house.
 - Do not flush: flushable wipes, grease, medicines (cannot remove these chemicals – can end up in drinking water).
 - Treated water returned to Roanoke River is cleaner than the actual river water.
 - Constantly test waste for drugs, caffeine, illnesses (e.g., diabetes, COVID). Low metal content.
 - VCAP Program: Financial incentives on public or private property for removal of impervious pavement, replace turf grass with native, non-invasive plants, etc. 80% cost share. Must be maintained for 5 years or money must be returned. vaswcd.org/vcap
- Idea for OSW: help with water installation at Pocket Park?
- Soil and Water Conservation has a rain barrel program (make and take using plastic pickle barrels). Cover it with a screen to avoid mosquito breeding and contamination. This could be a possible workshop event in Old Southwest.
 - Roanoke tap water is good drinking water. Buying bottled water means you are drinking someone else’s reclaimed water put in a bottle.

OSW BUSINESS (7:15-8:00)

Approval of minutes from 4/16/2023 PASSED

Announce: Interested in what OSW has been doing on behalf of our neighborhood? All

Community Meeting minutes are available at: <https://oldsouthwest.org/osw-minutes>

Make sure to sign in to receive monthly email announcements.

1. Proposed Projects in Highland Park (Terry McGuire, OSW Board)

Katie Slasher, Roanoke Parks and Rec.

Discussion & feedback about 3 park projects being considered by the city.

A. Sustainable vegetable gardening with Highland Park Elementary School located near the historic fountain for full sun and water (Shawn Jadrnicek, Virginia Cooperative Extension). Katie explained this needs an MOU between city and city schools. City attorney’s office involved. Specific to school gardens. OSW raised awareness about certain concerns when the project was first proposed (see details below).

--Made Katie aware that Julie Mugford is OSW, Inc. liaison with Highland Park School
-- Made Katie aware that there is a new principal at the school (city was unaware). Is school still actually interested in this as an educational program? What is their commitment?
--OSW concerns previously discussed: maintenance during summer months when vegetables are at peak, removal/general maintenance over time if interest wanes, proximity to historic fountain area as an aesthetic entrance to the park and a photographed area (request some thoughtful distancing that still allows access to sun and water—not running alongside the fountain area fencing).
--Katie indicated that MOU would address these issues and City would monitor compliance.

B. Josh Yerkes, Roanoke Disc Golf Club, requesting to expand disc golf in Highland Park from 9 to 18 holes. Propose adding a second basket to each existing location. Highland Park is most played disc golf in 40 miles. RDGC has 120 active members and FaceBook presence. Already lining up sponsorships. They are a nature-loving group and interested in preserving the trees and the park, as well as enjoying it recreationally. OSW felt putting new baskets using the same footprint is a good compromise. Asked if Roanoke Disc Golf Club is willing to volunteer to apply mulch at least twice a year around trees to encourage growth and mitigate soil impaction. Josh agreed. OSW, Inc. can get mulch donated. **Suggested that this be put in writing with the city as a commitment.**

C. Pollinator plantings on Walnut Avenue slope. Difficult to mow. Supports Roanoke's Bee City designation. Swath at curbside will remain mowed turf grass. Photo of plan was shared. There seemed to be no objection.

2. Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (Mark Kary & Cheryl Hilton, RNA reps)

Brief overview about their work. Extension of the city manager's office to facilitate the growth of neighborhood communities and associations. Mark was previously an OSW resident and business owner. Interested in hearing how they can help facilitate our OSW mission. Mark was very encouraging about the pending OSW Neighborhood Development grants to support the Pocket Park (\$5000) and 5/20 Occultation Workshop (\$1000). Grants will be decided soon. Their May 10 meeting failed to attract a quorum.

3. Committee Updates as needed/available

A. Gish House (Julie Mugford)

Purchased 19thc drop leaf table for foyer. Promotional rack cards available for Gish event rentals. Encouraged promo of event rentals to raise funds to maintain a historic house owned by the city, but leased to OSW, Inc. at 5-year increments. OSW is currently responsible for all maintenance of the house and immediate grounds. OSW, Inc. was the organization that saved the structure by demolition by the city.

B. Historic Preservation (Annemarie Drake)

Beginning to keep track of vacant properties. Looking for OSW walking tour brochure to share. Mentioned downloading iRoanoke app to report issues (anonymously) about code or ARB infractions. Neighbors are encouraged to report for the beauty, health, safety of Old Southwest.

C. Community Outreach (Stephanie Bilbrey)

Pick up an OSW frig magnet in foyer with QR codes to OSW resources.

D. Safety: Safety brochure will be posted on OSW website soon, rather than reprinting.

E. Environmental Protection, Parks, Greenspace (Green Committee) (Terry McGuire)

--5/20 Occultation Workshop at Day Ave. Pocket Park

--Workday TBA: invasives removal at the end of Woods Ave.

--Two grant applications submitted to support Pocket Park development: Neighborhood Development Grant (\$5000) & Spark Plug Grant (\$1000) (for water & plant installations, occultation workshop event). Awaiting outcomes.

F. OSW Events Line-up:

All are invited & encouraged to get involved! (Mary Anne Mather)

- Summer Block Party: 7/1, 3-8, Argonne Circle (City permit attained)
- National Night Out: August 1. Details TBA.
- Pocket Park Fundraiser Gala: Sept Date TBD
- Fall Block Party: Oct. 7, Day Ave. May include live music & contra dance!
- TBD: Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner, Thanksgiving Day, Gish House
- TBD: Holiday Social in place of December Meeting, Gish House

OTHER BUSINESS

Neighbor on Allison Avenue expressed concerned about brush clearing that OSW volunteers have been doing at the end of Woods/Allison. Explanation: OSW, Inc. owns the lots/feels responsible. Roanoke Storm Water likes this area because it catches debris/trash before flowing into Roanoke River (City drinking water source). OSW is removing invasives to preserve tree growth and discourage homeless encampment/use of area for drug/alcohol activities by making it less secluded. Goals: Maintain a green buffer to RR tracks. Create inviting and safe walk-through between Allison and Woods Ave. Future considerations: Possible native plants planted along RR fence. Possible ADA walk-way installation that allows walk-through even when flooded. Katie Baumgarten suggested possibility of supporting OSW with this through vcap funding (80% reimbursement) for bioswales, ADA walkway, plantings.

Adjourn 8:04 PM