

**Minutes**  
**Springfield Civic Association Meeting**  
**May 18, 2010**  
**Crestwood Elementary School**

**OPENING:** Pending the arrival of President Tawny Hammond from Frying Pan Farm Park, 2d Vice President Bruce Waggoner opened the meeting at 7:30 PM.

**Board of Directors Officers Present for the Meeting:**

President Tawny Hammond  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Jennifer Moody  
2d Vice President Bruce Waggoner  
Treasurer Bill Gaylord  
Secretary Alice Merrill  
Director at Large Gail Nittle  
Director at Large Bonnie Pritchard

**Also Present:**

Hospitality Chair Sandy Frieswyk  
Door Prize Chair Diane Boughton  
Newsletter Chair Lee Paulson  
Website Administrator Yasuko Riggs  
Sign-in Volunteer Floyd (Fred) Cline  
Past President Rick Renninger  
Ron Paulson

**ATTENDANCE.** Approximately 87 (79 on sign-in sheets plus Fred's 10% estimate of those who bypass signing in).

**ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Tawny made or invited others to make the following announcements:

a. **Lake Accotink Park Activities.** James Fish, Asst. Park Supervisor: Repairs to the dam prevent holding the cardboard regatta this year, but summer classes, camps, birthday party scheduling, pavilion rentals, and Braddock Nights concert series are all scheduled. Amusements, currently open on weekends, will be open daily when the school year ends. A new group, Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP), has been established in this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the park to help ensure the park's future. Home-owners, businesses and organizations are invited to participate; for further information, see [www.accotink.org/FLAP/FLAP.htm](http://www.accotink.org/FLAP/FLAP.htm).

b. **Inaugural Springfield 15K/5K Race.** 2d VP Bruce Waggoner: The race, being held on the anniversary of D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup> had to be changed from a start/finish at Lee HS with the course running through the downtown community, to a start/finish in Accotink Park with the course taking a small loop into the Crestwood area and returning to the park to nearly circumnavigate the lake. Planning next year's race will start earlier with a goal of guaranteeing a course that runs through Springfield's commercial district. Sponsors include Marriott, T-Mobile and others. To register to participate or help sponsor it, see [www.runspringfield.org](http://www.runspringfield.org).

c. **Springfield Swimming & Racquet Club.** Club President, Joe Milligan: The County Board of Supervisors approved the special exception that allows a T-Mobile cell tower to be built on club grounds and is grateful for the support of SCA and Supervisor McKay. Some residents oppose it and he's meeting with them. He wants to keep the pool alive, and revenue from the tower will help. The pool will open Memorial Day weekend. A cleanup day is scheduled for this Saturday at 1PM.

d. **Door Prizes.** Chair Diane Boughton: There's a list posted at the sign-in table of businesses that donate our meetings' door prizes. Many have donated multiple times. She asked members, when stopping by these businesses, to let them know they're SCA members and appreciate their support.

f. **Springfield Bridge Walk.** Linda Waller of Supervisor McKay's office: Springfield Days opens summer and the Springfield Bridge Walk closes it. The Walk from Kinko's to the American Legion is scheduled for Tues., Aug 31<sup>st</sup> this year and has always had SCA participation.

g. **Springfield Days.** President Tawny Hammond: Residents who complain about the bad things, saying they want good things here, should take note because here it is: Springfield Days, June 3-6, the community's biggest "block party". There's something for everyone over these four days at five venues, even a wine tasting this year, so come out and support it. Find information on all activities at [www.springfielddays.com](http://www.springfielddays.com).

h. **Next Membership Meeting.** President Tawny Hammond: With the usual pause for summer activities, the next meeting will be held September 21<sup>st</sup>. In the interim, join your neighbors at Springfield Days and National Night Out.

i. **Retirement.** President Tawny Hammond: Ms. Person, Principal of Lynbrook Elementary School, is retiring at the end of this school year and SCA will be recognize her service to the community with a Certificate of Appreciation.

**NEW BUSINESS.** Two items on the agenda: **Election of Officers and Guest Speaker, Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay.**

**Election of Officers.** Treasurer Bill Gaylord announced the slate running for office for 2010-11 and, after asking for further nominations from the floor, the following officers were elected by acclamation:

President Tawny Hammond  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Bruce Waggoner  
2d Vice President Jennifer Moody  
Treasurer Bill Gaylord  
Secretary Alice Merrill

Director at Large Gail Nittle  
Director at Large Bonnie Pritchard

Guest Speaker, Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay focused his remarks on what's been accomplished and where we're going as a community as follows:

Chi Chi's Restaurant Site. He worked to get the owner to demolish it or for the County to place it on the county blight list and charge the owner for demolition. The owner has now demolished the building. There's a proposal to build a hotel there but the zoning application has not yet been filed. That decision will involve a long hearing process, but getting that blight removed was a major turning point in moving forward on community improvement.

Circuit City. The county bought the property. Before the tear-down, the Fire Department will use it for interior live-fire training. Funding limitations prevent immediate development of a structured parking facility, so the initial plan is to develop it as a surface commuter parking lot. This will accommodate commuter parking and also provide a safer slug operation than now exists. He'll continue to pursue getting a TIGER grant application approved to build structured parking that could also incorporate rooftop community athletic fields.

Springfield Mall. That redevelopment falls under a 10 year plan. The rezoning approval process is done. The permits and site plan approval process is underway as is renegotiation of the terms of the financial package to make it affordable to renovate the entire interior in a single phase. Groundbreaking is expected in 2-3 months.

#### County Budget.

Zoning Enforcement was a big issue. It's staffed by 46 people, the highest ever, which were saved from cuts. Being considered now is the merging of this department with others, e.g., health and safety, so they can work together like a Strike Team on these related issues.

Property Assessment. The average assessment will decrease by about 9% despite the rate increase. Property values are stabilizing and home sales are occurring faster.

Mortgage Fraud/Overcrowding. Of those arrested as a result of the recent investigation, Mr. Ruben Rojas was sentenced to a 5 year jail term to be followed by deportation. The sentence, by exceeding what was recommended by the prosecution, holds him up as an example of the consequences of committing such fraud. Others have been charged or sentenced; there are more to come.

A Q&A period following his presentation elicited the following:

Abandoned properties. **Q:** What can be done about a house that's partially built/rebuilt and now abandoned? **A:** An abandoned/uninhabitable house is held to the same standards as a habitable house, and a vacant property is still subject to code requirements on maintenance and appearance (e.g., mowed grass). If a house doesn't meet those standards, report it to his office. A problem with major changes to the permit process is that, once a permit is issued to build a home, it now must be built in 5 years and, if there's no building activity for 6 months, the permit can be revoked. But with a house half built and the permit revoked, it's harder to get the building completed. In extreme cases, the county can put a lien on it and destroy it, but doing that is difficult. If it's called in, the county has an obligation to look at these sites for appropriate action, so call his office and report these cases.

Paved front yards. **Q:** Is it appropriate in a subdivision for half a front yard to be paved for parking? **A:** It's inappropriate but if it was built before the new regulations of 2006, it's legal. There's no permit required for a driveway, but there's now a rule about how much can be paved. And if the house is on a corner lot, it has the equivalent of two front yards which can make it legal even under the new guidelines.

Back Yard Dumping. **Q:** Can anything be done about a back yard filled with tires? **A:** Report it to Christina Manning in his office to check whether it's in violation of zoning rules. It gets complicated, but you can't just store anything you want in your back yard. Note that you can make your complaint anonymously, but the quality of effort given it is based on the quality of the information you provide, e.g., the best time of day to see the questionable activity, the questioned license plate numbers, etc.

Frequency of Property Assessments. **Q:** As a newly arrived resident noting that the county reassesses property values annually, it seems like those assessments lead the market rather than follow it. Why are assessments done annually here when other places do it less often? **A:** We get an adequate number of transactions to make those valuations each year and more accurately reflect market value; many other places don't have our sales volume. Also, we are required by state law to value property at full market value while some other places aren't. With that said, our valuation process could probably be more transparent.

Long John Silver Property. **Q:** Will it be taken down in conjunction with the Circuit City tear-down? **A:** No, but he's been trying to get it on the county's blight list. Learning of that effort, the owner is looking into tearing it down and redeveloping both it and the adjacent gas station. He'd rather work with them on redevelopment action than blight action.

The old Shoney's Property. **Q:** Status? **A:** To qualify as blight, a property must meet many criteria, and the initial inspection of that property is yet to be done. Complicating that process is that the site is an active police case since the last tenant gutted it, taking everything, which slows down other action on the property.

**Adult Video Store/Paper Moon.** Q: Can anything be done to remove these from the community? A: While he doesn't like them either, they don't legally qualify as blight. Since we can't use blight rules to remove them, his method is to encourage high quality competition in need of space to come here, like the Marriott that replaced the vacated Houlihans. By increasing the price of space, we accomplish by economics what we can't by regulation.

**Loose/Snapped Utility Pole Wires.** Q: Last year, the county was very helpful in getting telephone and cable companies to clean up many of the loose and dangling wires or snapped pole-support wires coiled at the base of 75 poles that were reported by the community, but there are still some twisted and folded up wires at various poles. For safety, how can we get all of them cleaned up? A: Utility guidelines are not set by the county, but by state and federal law. The power companies are regulated by the State Assembly. There's little we can do locally beyond having the County Consumer Affairs Office report them to higher government levels for action.

**Torn/Tattered Business Banners.** Q: Can something be done about the 10' tall vertical banners standing (like a stake in the ground) in the VDOT right-of-way that have become weather-torn and tattered (eyesores)? A: If there's no line-of-sight issue, no permit is required and, thus, no violation, but the State General Assembly just passed some new laws on road side signs. However, like many things, it's not among the highest priorities for enforcement by the VDOT manpower available, e.g., if we can't get them to mow the grass, we won't get them to challenge these signs.

**Vacant Office Building Adjacent to the Adult Video Store.** Q: Status? A: Vacancy alone does not meet the legal definition of blight.

**Vacant Space in the Building Housing the Paper Moon.** Q: Status? A: Paper Moon is not illegal, not blight, and does not want to use or rent the remaining vacant space in the building. He's watching this property.

**BRAC/Engineer Proving Grounds Redevelopment.** Q: Status? A: Amazing architecture is going up, but there are still road issues to be addressed. The Telegraph Road to Rte 1 cut-through by Woodlawn Plantation will probably open in 2012 as part of the last phase of getting Mt. Vernon and Springfield connected. If not for BRAC, our progress would be stagnant like the rest of the county. Most of the county's development right now is happening here.

**C-SPARC.** Q: What happened to it? A: It's not county funded, so he doesn't know. He's had no meeting with them in a long time.

**Snow Plowing.** Comment: Thank you for posting the phone number for getting residential streets plowed. Making a call to the right number got it done.

**Springfield Gardens Apartments Redevelopment.** Q: Status? A: The property owner is working with the appropriate County entity on the affordable housing unit issue. Because of market conditions, the property owner wishes to build fewer affordable units than currently required. There will be public hearings on it.

**Adding Another Hotel.** Q: Do we really need another one? A: BRAC will bring more people to Springfield and, economically, they wouldn't build it if they didn't forecast a need. New hotel vs. Chi Chi's equals new hotel.

**Homeless Occupying the Parks.** Q: The vagrants/homeless people taking up residence in public spaces are spreading to more areas, now being found in Lake Accotink, Lynbrook, and Monticello Parks. Can you speak with CPT Bennett at the Franconia District Station about putting these sites on his officers' check list? A: He'll follow-up with CPT Bennett, but he also needs citizens to report these incidents. No one is allowed in the county's parks after dark, so trespassers can be arrested. Call both the Police Station and Supervisor McKay's office to report these incidents.

**Trash/Recycle/Yard Waste Totes.** Q: Having seen totes so overstuffed the lids are propped open, trash larger than totes can accommodate, and big piles of branches filling curb lanes, can you do a public announcement addressing the issue? A: Residents needing additional containers need to call their trash company.

**CLOSING and ADJOURNMENT:** At 9PM, the President closed the meeting by thanking Supervisor McKay for coming to update members and respond to our concerns. She emphasized to members that his prime take-home message tonight was for us to "call his office" to report our concerns. She then drew the names of the winners of tonight's door prizes which were:

Two certificates from Backlick Self Storage at 6880 Commercial Drive (off Industrial Road) for 3 months rental of a storage unit at half price.

\$15 certificate from Austin Grill at 8430A Old Keene Mill Road.

Certificate for a written appraisal of one item for insurance purposes from Eddie Greenan Jewelers at Springfield Plaza.

Certificate from Springfield Massage Center for Women at 5417C Backlick Road.

Gift bags and certificates from Shadowland (laser tag) at 5508 Franconia Road.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Merrill  
Secretary