

Apr 8, 2026

Oak Hill Park Association Open Meeting

Attachments [Oak Hill Park Association Open Meeting](#)

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Prior to meeting existing board (Lisa Garland, Jessica Gashin, Sarah Cohen, Eduardo Morales) voted in 3 new board members (Pamela Burton, Janna Snyder, Victoria Drizen)

Summary

Oakhill Park Association reviewed recent community events, confirmed playground redesign and city council advocacy, and proposed a significant dues increase for Schuman Center upkeep.

Events, Advocacy, and Leadership

The new leadership introduced themselves and confirmed the association's mission is building community through events and providing local advocacy. Several successful community events, including a movie night and a chocolate dipping night, were recently hosted by the association.

Playground Redesign and Branding

Advocacy efforts continued for the playground redesign, which has been identified as a top city priority, prompting a request for a formal timeline. Branding efforts, including a new website and logo, are underway to increase the association's visibility.

Dues Increase and Board Expansion

Due to exponentially increasing costs, the association decided to approve a significant increase in annual dues to cover the Schuman Center's \$750

estimated monthly expenses. The board expanded, adding roles focused on membership recruitment and coordinating high schooler events.

Details

- **Introduction of the Oakhill Park Association Leadership:** The co-presidents, Jessica Gashin and Sarah, introduced themselves, noting Jessica has lived on Spire for nine years, and Sarah, who is also the PTO president of Memorial Spalding, has lived on Myers Lane for three years. Ed Morales was introduced as the treasurer as of the beginning of the year, and Lisa G was introduced virtually as the clerk, noting they have lived in the park for most of their life ([00:06:20](#)). The association's mission is twofold: to build community through events and encourage connection, and to provide local advocacy for issues relevant to Oakhill Park residents ([00:07:30](#)).
- **Review of Recent Community Events:** The association has hosted several events in the first couple of months, including a movie night geared towards elementary-age children that had about 30 attendees, and a chocolate dipping night run by Vicky Frasca with 20 to 30 participants ([00:08:52](#)). Other events included a Little Beads class by Emily Davi, with another coming soon, and an "Everybody Dance" event across all ages, which was well attended ([00:09:48](#)). Additionally, seagull ran a "Meet the Counselors" event last week or before, with plans for more throughout the year ([00:10:49](#)).
- **Playground Redesign Advocacy Efforts:** The association has been working with Aaron from Parks and Recreation to finally get the playground completely redone, noting this has been an ongoing project delayed since 2020 ([00:10:49](#)). Jessica Gashin reported sending two emails to Aaron asking for a formal timeline, seeking concrete dates for the start and bidding process, because Aaron has identified the Oak Hill Park playground as the top priority across the city ([00:12:10](#)).
- **Dog Park and City Council Advocacy:** The topic of the dog park was discussed with Aaron from Parks and Recreation, who did not give a formal answer but is looking at other potential sites in South Newton, specifically near Nanton and Winchester ([00:12:10](#)). Stephen Frell, a city councilor, has been supportive and available, offering to be included in communications to lend influence to efforts. The group also met with another brand-new city councilor who seems focused on working on traffic, congestion, and making the streets safer ([00:13:10](#)).

- **Rebranding and Infrastructure Updates:** The association is working on branding efforts, including the development of a website through Leah and a new logo with Pamela, aiming to make the association more modern, visible, and cohesive within the greater Newton area ([00:13:10](#)). Wi-Fi was installed in the community center, which was Jessica Gashin's first project, to facilitate more virtual and in-person meetings and events ([00:14:05](#)).
- **Upcoming Building Restriction and Advocacy Needs:** Discussion briefly touched on a new building restriction enacted in Newton in March regarding head walls that is impacting the value of small 7,000-square-foot lots ([00:14:05](#)). The topic was tabled as the intended speaker was unable to attend, but the association welcomes residents to bring forward any issues on their street for which they want advocacy ([00:15:18](#)).
- **Upcoming Events and Volunteer Recruitment:** The Little Beats class is scheduled to return on the 18th at 9:30 a.m., and the annual spring picnic will be evolved into an International Day to celebrate the neighborhood's diverse cultures ([00:15:18](#)). The association will need many volunteers for the International Day, which is scheduled for June 20th, to help with setup, cleanup, running games, and hosting cultural tables; the association will send out emails asking for volunteers and sponsors. The association is also seeking sponsors for the International Day, to help make the event bigger and potentially fund items like pony rides ([00:16:30](#)) ([00:21:05](#)).
- **Schuman Center Rentals and Communication:** The Schuman Center is now open for select rentals, such as meetings and low-key organizational events, though not for children's birthday parties at this time ([00:17:48](#)). Renters should contact the general Oakhill Park Association email, as Ed Morales and Jessica Gashin confirmed they check it, and the rental rate has been set at \$100 per hour, which is determined on a case-by-case basis. It was suggested that the rental policy should be published on the website ([00:18:59](#)) ([00:33:02](#)).
- **Library Reopening and Board Expansion:** The association is planning to reopen the library and is accepting gently used books for all ages and looking for donations of bookshelves ([00:22:20](#)). The board has expanded, adding new members, including Pamela, who is helping with organization and liaison with the city, particularly regarding the playground ([00:23:43](#)). Victoria prison is taking on membership and will be leading a hard push to recruit new members in the spring before the picnic, including sending out welcome packets and mailings to all residents ([00:26:19](#)).

- **Volunteer Roles and Recruitment Strategy:** Jenna Snyder is taking on the role of Teen Liaison and organizing events for high schoolers, and they will be looking for assistance ([00:26:19](#)). Other needed volunteer roles on the board include a marketing coordinator (including newsletters), an adult event coordinator, someone to coordinate the Schuman Center physical space (rentals, snow removal, landscaping), a librarian, and a lawyer ([00:27:35](#)). The association is attempting to reach the majority of households that are not current members (117 out of 500 households), by using the website, welcome packets, mailings, and a flyer distribution effort via door-knocking ([00:33:02](#)) ([00:35:44](#)).
- **Proposed Dues Increase for Operational Costs:** The Oakhill Park Association is responsible for the upkeep of the Schuman Center, and due to exponentially increasing costs for utilities and insurance, a dues increase is necessary. The treasurer has estimated the building's monthly expenses to be \$750, which cannot be covered by current dues ([00:29:43](#)). Proposed annual dues are \$100 for families, \$75 for couples, and \$40 for seniors, which would cover the basic running costs of the building, including electricity and insurance, and allow the association to build a reserve fund for future needs like a new roof ([00:30:53](#)).
- **Community Preservation and Cultural Grants:** The association was encouraged to consider applying for a Community Preservation Grant from the city to help maintain the Schuman Center ([00:45:29](#)). Additionally, the group was advised to explore grants from the mayor's office of cultural affairs and the Cultural Council, as these organizations give funding for cultural events, which could apply to the International Day ([00:46:32](#)).
- **Addressing Maintenance and Safety Concerns:** A concern was raised regarding property on Spire where overgrown hedges block the sidewalk, and it was noted that while 311 works for issues like snow shoveling and potholes, it does not seem effective for shrubbery and overhang; residents were advised to contact Parks and Recreation directly for such matters. Concerns about pathways being non-wheelchair accessible and barely walkable were also raised ([00:41:28](#)) ([00:44:23](#)). The association announced that the bulletin board will be replaced through a generous donation from a construction company ([00:45:29](#)).

Suggested next steps

[Sarah] Secure Playground Timeline: Harass Aaron from Parks and Recreation. Obtain formal start and bid dates for the playground project.

[Jessica Gashin] Select Logo: Choose final design option for the Oakhill Park Association logo.

[The group] Recruit Event Volunteers: Send emails asking residents to volunteer for the International Day picnic. Recruit sponsors for the International Day event.

[The group] Organize Event Signups: Send out email shortly to recruit International Day committee members. Create a signup genius for specific volunteer slots.

[The group] Acquire Bookshelves: Try to get bookshelves for the Schuman Center library room. Arrange pickup for any donated extra bookshelves.

[The group] Publish Budget: Make the estimated monthly budget of 750 dollars available on the association website.

[The group] Publish Rental Policy: Publish the Schuman Center rental rates and policies on the association website.

[Victoria prison] Recruit New Members: Execute a hard push for recruiting new Oakhill Park Association members. Send a mailing to all residents within the park boundaries.

[The group] Facilitate Welcome Packets: Maintain extra welcome packets so neighbors can easily distribute them to new residents.

[Ed Morales] Distribute Flyers: Print and distribute informational flyers door to door across the neighborhood.

[Jenna Snyder] Investigate Teen Service: Look into whether high school students have a civic duty obligation. Potentially enlist high schoolers to distribute flyers.

[The group] Implement Signage: Put up signage including QR codes linking to the website on Spires and near Denim. Use low cost handwritten poster board signs.

[The group] Apply for Grants: Investigate and apply for Community Preservation and Cultural Affairs grants. Secure external funding sources for the center and events.

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