Federal Hill Neighborhood Association
General Meeting Minutes
January 21, 2025

Date: January 21, 2025
Meeting called to order at 18:30 by Locchanan Sreeharikesan
December Meeting Minutes adopted

Note: All those at the meeting (including virtually) need to sign in so that they can participate in the upcoming vote regarding the virtual parking permits

11th District City Councilman Presentation + Q&A [Zac Blanchard, City Councilman]:

- Has been involved in the local community for a few years, was also the president of the neighborhood association for some time
- Particularly invested in public safety in the neighborhood, working closely with many other city officials
- Planning on also working with Digital Harbor
- Working towards bettering the Main Street/entertainment area
- A member of various committees
- Can be reached at zac.blanchard@baltimorecity.gov or (410) 396-4816

- One resident has been struggling with getting responses from city agencies when it comes to renovations, the specific question was how long a reasonable time is to wait for a response
- Answer: about five business days, feel free to reach out to his office at that point

- One resident asked if there is any way a grocery store could be pushed for in Federal Hill
- Answer: currently having conversations with a property owner in the area, and is actively being looked into, but can't elaborate on it much yet

- One resident raised that they could likely incorporate a produce stall into Cross Street Market, but it would likely have to be subsidized because of the rent
- Answer: Cross Street is no longer a public market, so involvement is a little more limited

- Noted that he has also reached out to the parking authority regarding the virtual permits, and is of the opinion that it would benefit parking enforcement (particularly at night) and that people would still be able to audit parking with the virtual permits (via an app) as well as the fact that, in a small trial, the combination of stickers and virtual permits did not work well for the ticketing, with the app it would also be made known how many tickets are being written

CAS Homecare Health Services (904 Light St.) [Cynthia Swann, the owner]:

- Could not make it

Yard Restaurant [Najee, the owner]:

- New restaurant on 1026 South Charles St.
- Also has a food truck
- Looking to see how they can play a bigger role in and give back to the community
- Currently only doing dinner
- It's a Caribbean restaurant, also offering vegetarian and vegan options

Thread [Aaron Walker]:

- Mentorship organization for kids
- Working closely with several city high schools, including Digital Harbor
- Working particularly hard to help kids that are less likely and struggling to graduate high school
- Have a ten-year commitment for these kids, including beyond high school
- Looking for local volunteers for the program, especially at Digital Harbor
- If you're interested, check out join.thread.org

Light Street Presbyterian's Plastic Project [Kathie McCleskey]:

- The church now has a green community
- There is a nation-wide challenge to collect 1,000 pounds of plastic by October of this year
- The organization repurposes the plastic
- When the goal is met, the community wins a park bench
- They are collecting things like bubble wrap, grocery bags, etc.
- There is a bin that sits downstairs at the church that people can drop their plastic off in
- There is also a webpage [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScJ3jGkYZefC6fzgaDqDv7Ef83NNgRBHS0w5jQAiTlOdDRuXQ/viewform] where you submit a picture of and the estimated weight of your plastic, and then drop it off at one of the grocery stores listed on the webpage

Public Safety [Nigel Crocombe]:

- Got a $40,000 grant to fund overtime for the sheriff's office
- Working on a deployment plan with the sheriff's office, the grant runs through the end of June and covers the entertainment district
- The officers would be able to write parking tickets
- Taking input on problem areas to account for in the deployment plan, reach out to publicsafety@federalhillbaltimore.org
- Likely focusing the majority of the deployments towards the end of the spring/summer
- Have met with many city officials over the past few months
- The police commissioner will be at the next general meeting
- Questions, comments, and concerns for the commissioner can be sent to publicsafety@federalhillbaltimore.org
- The camera network is now over 330 households, thanks to many volunteers doing canvasing
- There has been a recent uptick in car break-ins and the theft of airbags

- Community members are welcome to do a ride-along with the police/parking enforcement/etc. and you can reach out if interested

Federal Hill Prep [Celine Plachez]:

- Bingo night this Friday at 6pm at Prep, all are welcome
- It's $2 for ten games
- There will be drinks and food
- It is not a fundraiser, it is a community event
- Prep Winterfest will be February 22nd and it will have things like dancing/singing/etc.
- Tickets for it will be $65 dollars

Parking and Transportation/Virtual Permits Q&A:

- A voting link will go out and be active until midnight on Sunday, January 26th
- The votes will be cross-reference with those that actually attended the meeting online + virtually

- Resident asked how this program would help with after-hours enforcement (like what Zac stated)
- Answer: the program is supposed to allow license plates to be scanned from inside an enforcement vehicle, which could allow for covering more ground, as well as letting the officers feel safer

- Resident asked how the plates are actually scanned, especially with closely parked cars
- Answer: scanning is done with a camera, and parking enforcement has stated that, through mounting the cameras higher on their vehicles, they have had success in scanning closely parked cars

- Resident asked how to determine whether someone is legally parked in the neighborhood
- Answer: there is an app where you can look up a license plate number and see if it has a valid permit, however, the app does not specify which zone the permit is for

- Resident asked about data/privacy regarding the system
- Answer: have not asked the parking authority about that, do not have an answer

- Resident asked if parking enforcement would actually issue tickets with the new system
- Answer: it's up to the resident to decide if they believe that the parking authority would actually ticket anyone

- Resident asked about how many vehicles a virtual visitor pass can extend to in one day (ex. someone coming in the morning, someone visiting in the evening, etc.)
- Answer: you can only register one visitor pass at a time

- Resident asked whether this system would increase enforcement presence
- Answer: That is the goal, but no certain numbers

- Resident asked if they would still be using paper tickets

- Answer: still paper tickets, they would still have to get out of the vehicle to give them out

- Resident asked how long a visitor pass can be valid for
- Answer: the last vote resulted in one week, you will have to re-register them if they stay longer

- Resident asked if it is possible to go back to the stickers eventually if this doesn't work out
- Answer: probably? Uncertain, but, with a fair amount of effort, it would likely be possible to go back to the stickers

- Still taking questions via email, also reach out if you have not received the voting link

Misc.:

- Next month's meeting will be mostly dedicated to public safety, with certain special guests (in response to the letter sent out a few months ago)
- Looking into modifying the by-laws to update them, reach out if you have concerns/suggestions in need of change
- There is a transportation centered grant that opens in February that could go towards furthering parking enforcement, but someone still needs to volunteer to write it
- This coming Saturday, there is a forum on transportation in the city/neighborhood
- February 2nd is Trolley Tour, they are trying to sell neighborhoods to prospective home buyers, and volunteers are welcome to table at the event

Meeting adjourned at 19:44 by Locchanan Sreeharikesan