

Friendship Heights Climate/Environment Committee, February 22, 2024 : Minutes of the Meeting

Persons in attendance: Martha Solt (FH Liaison)

Members: Patricia Canessam, Christine Knauer, Joyce Mushaben, Sonya Starnes, Emmanuel Dsilva

Unable to attend: Aleisha Bynum, Philip Yin Lu

The meeting convened via Zoom at 8:02 pm.

1. The first order of business was the selection of a **regular chair**. There was some discussion as to whether it would be useful to have a rotating chair. The committee nonetheless cast a unanimous vote, electing Patricia Canessam as Chair, with the possibility of revisiting a possible rotating-position in six months. There is also a need to find a **permanent note-taker**, delayed until the next meeting. Mushaben agreed to serve in that capacity for the February 22nd meeting.

2. The next item centered on a brief discussion as to a **regular day/time** for future meetings. The members in attendance agreed to meet on the first Tuesday of each month, beginning at 7 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for **March 5, 2024**.

3 The committee then engaged in a longer discussion of **composting options** for residential buildings. Knauer reported that Willard Hall has already instituted a composting system, although the number of participants has been limited to about 25 households to date, at the cost \$7 per month per household. She indicated that Montgomery County will collect the contents of the larger bin at no cost. According to Mushaben, the Willoughby is currently soliciting proposals from three composting businesses, though Compost Crew provided a very reasonable estimate. The Willoughby plans to have the condo association pay for all residents; the initial cost will run about \$250 for a single large bin, to be located in a common area.

4. There was general agreement on the need to forge some kind of **communication link** among the building complexes to share information and experiences regarding this particular issue. Members also concurred that all of our buildings and perhaps the FH Council need to undertake effective **educational/informational campaigns** to make residents aware of the existing programs (e.g. regarding plastic-bags), as well as new recycling possibilities.

5 Chairwoman Canessam raised the need to put various **recycling and disposal ideas into a broader framework**. Individual members began brain-storming regarding issues for our future consideration.

Knauer expressed her concern about the potential harm resulting from **overgenerous use of salt** on the sidewalks and roadways in anticipation of snowstorms. This seems to be affecting Little Falls Creek which might call for physical testing of the water quality. It was duly noted that both Montgomery County and the state of Maryland have formal guidelines for treating sidewalks in front of public buildings, as well as roadways, but that other areas are the responsibility

of the individual residential complexes. Dsilva held that salt was not a major issue for “D.C.” Starnes later advised that there are two courses available that cover “smart salting.”

Salting might nonetheless be a topic we could raise with the **newly appointed FH Climate Change Officer** who will also address larger waste management , recycling and composting issues. There was a reference to a **County Pilot Project** which will be generating a preliminary report.

Mushaben raised the possibility of establishing a once-a-year opportunity for Friendship Heights residents to deposit all types of **small electrical gadgets and appliances** (e.g., lamps, computers, mountains of unidentifiable electrical cords, small sound-system components) at the Community Center, using a truck capable of transferring the collected items out to the Shady Grove Transfer Station and Material Recovery Facility. Many of our neighbors are elderly and/or do not own cars, which makes it impossible for them to travel out to the site in Derwood, MD. Solt agreed to bring this to the Council as soon as we have a concrete proposal along these lines.

Canessam thought this would also be a good strategy for getting residents to **recycle lithium batteries, clothing/textiles** and other small items. This would also require creating easily digestible educational/ informational materials for distribution among Village residents.

Dsilva returned to a topic raised at the previous meeting regarding **biodiversity**, citing a Japanese initiative (Miyawaki Forest Method) that involves the dense planting of native trees for purposes of carbon sequestration. It would be worth considering potential FH green-spaces for this kind of Village planting project.

6. The final substantive topic involved existing **County and State mandates in relation to “benchmarking” and the Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS)** now facing all residential complexes. Some in attendance were unfamiliar with the looming deadlines, while the Carleton (average score of “50”) and the Willoughby (“57”) have submitted their first/preliminary reports. Older buildings from the 1960s are going to have a tougher time meeting the standards and deadlines, but this is another area where members felt it would be useful to have us **exchanging information and potential solutions** between and among the neighboring buildings.

The meeting adjourned at roughly 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Joyce Marie Mushaben, The Willoughby