

Annual Meeting of the Southampton Citizens Association was called to order by President Frank Dorman on Tuesday, October 18, 2005 at 7:27 PM.

Board Members Present: Tim Fite, Sue Stewart, Bob Scott, Mary Frances Kastelberg, Jon Young, John Cardwell, Mary St. Louis, Mary Blanchard, Jean Marie Hay, Wendy Inge, and John McGrann.

Excused: Jeff Donahue.

Contributors and Guests in Attendance: Approximately 80 neighbors.

Guest: Curtis Jones – Richmond Fire Department

Guest Speaker – Mark Holmburg – Richmond Times Dispatch

President's Report:

Frank Dorman introduced the board members, thanking them for their work, much of which occurs outside of the regular monthly meeting and gave a brief report noting the following:

- The association raised dues to \$15 this year.
- E-mail notification is now possible by signing up at www.scarichmond.com. Tim Fite noted that this system will be used for e-mail of important news, alerts, public meetings, and similar unique messages. There will be no commercial use. Recognized Bob Scott for his work in creating and maintaining the association's website.
- Riverfest was a great day and a great turnout in June. Attendees include Mayor Wilder and Council Representative Graziano. Recognized Mary Blanchard, Caitlin Zettl and everyone else who volunteered their time and efforts to make this event a success.
- Urchie Ellis not only got the Huguenot Bridge repainted and the potholes repaired, but continues to pursue the Commonwealth Transportation Board, VDOT, and the General Assembly making sure they stay on track for the replacement project currently on tap for 2011.
- Worked with Kathy Graziano and the city to get the new lights on Forest Hill synchronized and lessen the problems with cut-through traffic that resulted when they were first installed.
- Continued to work with Kathy Graziano and the city regarding traffic issues, including the possibility of closing Riverside Drive during certain times during the warm months to cut down on cruising, addressing speeding on Cherokee Road.
 - Question from the floor regarding the ditches on Cherokee Road, which the speaker considered to be a problem. School busses have difficulty navigating some sections of the road when there is oncoming traffic. Fire department representative noted that he has to stop and allow opposing

traffic to pass. The association is on record as opposing widening of Cherokee Road and removing the ditches, and the speaker asked why the association was opposed to safety. Frank Dorman noted that the issue was discussed in the past at several monthly board meetings that are open to all neighbors, that the decision at that time was to oppose an improvement that would increase traffic and serve to raise actual traffic speeds, and that the association is certainly open to resuming discussions on this issue.

- Complaint from the floor regarding Rockfalls Drive, noting that vegetation had become overgrown and mailboxes were located too close to the road. Also a comment that swales were in bad repair. Frank Dorman noted that there is a new on-line system to report such problems, but that he has found the system to be non-responsive.
- Comment from floor regarding reporting such items to Linda Dunham, who authors the “Stuff to Fix” column in the Richmond Times Dispatch.
- Question from floor regarding association's position on Cherokee Road asking how input was gathered. Frank Dorman noted that while the association did not conduct a poll on this particular issue as they did with the proposed traffic light at the intersection of Cherokee and Huguenot Roads, that it was based in part on a study of all roads in the neighborhood undertaken several years ago. Nothing further became of this particular study because funding for improvements was not available.

Election of Board Members / Election of Officers

The nominating committee presented a slate of directors consisting of Jeff Donahue, Tim Fite, Bob Scott, and Sue Stewart for re-election to a three-year term. Elected on motion by Inge and second by Cardwell.

The nominating committee presented slate of officers for a one-year term consisting of Frank Dorman as President, Caitlin Zettl as Vice President, Sue Stuart as Treasurer, and Jean Marie Hay as Secretary. Elected on motion by Inge and second by Scott.

Frank Dorman concluded this portion of the annual meeting by encouraging everyone to attend and participate in the monthly association meetings.

Introduced W. C. (Curtis) Jones with the Richmond Fire Department. Mr. Jones noted that it was time for everyone to change the battery in and test their smoke detectors, and noted that the fire department was ready and willing to help residents do so. The Richmond Fire Department has a free smoke detector program available to all citizens.

Frank Dorman presented Barnes and Noble gift cards to Mary St. Louis for her many years serving as the association's treasurer, and to Tim and Sara Fite for their outstanding work on pulling together and publishing the association's newsletter.

Speakers:

Kathy Graziano reported the following

- Wal-Mart had donated a computer to Southampton Elementary School, and that the school needs tape recorders for use in their reading program. The school plans an open house (continental breakfast) and volunteer fair – watch for upcoming announcement in her newsletter.
- Town meeting is scheduled for November 16 at Thompson Middle School at 7:00 PM.
- Speed checking has been underway in the neighborhood based on complaints, and results indicate some problems (West Cherokee reportedly came in with 14% over 35 mph, one at 69 mph). Where speeding is a proven problem the community can petition for enhanced traffic fines.
- Working towards establishing a conservation easement for James River Park.
- Also working towards establishing a separate storm water management utility to create established funding source for infrastructure to provide for repairs and maintenance of drains and ditches, funded by fees on utility bills that are expected to range between \$60 and \$90 annually.
 - Question from South Drive resident regarding cut-through traffic from Forest Hill Avenue, and requesting speed bumps. Kathy requested an e-mail so she can initiate a request with the city for speed checking on South Drive.
 - Question from resident regarding police enforcement of traffic laws. Kathy noted that this concern has been expressed to the police as being one of the biggest issues in our area, and she's keeping after the police regarding traffic enforcement.
 - Question from citizen regarding installing sidewalks on Cherokee. Kathy noted that if this is something the community desired she can start the planning process to put it in the capital improvement budget.

Frank Dorman introduced Mark Holmburg, a reporter (primarily a police reporter) for 20 years and a columnist for the past 8 years at the Richmond Times Dispatch.

Holmburg noted that recent news had centered on the arguing over the proposed performing arts center and the meals tax, and began his discussion by asking if everyone liked the city (yes) and then asking “what’s wrong?” Responses from the audience included education, poverty, social issues, abusive tax abatement, taxes, and crime/murders.

Holmburg then asked if anyone knew why the crime rate in the city was down. Reasons given included crime moving out into the surrounding counties, the change in drug use from crack cocaine to heroin (a less confrontational type of addict), rehabilitation of neighborhoods, and a demographic shift resulting in a low population of 16 to 18 year olds.

Holmburg expressed his opinion that illegitimacy played a large part of the problem. There is little commitment in society towards raising children. Not sure what the rate is, but he expects it may be as high as 2/3 or 3/4 of all births in the city. For the fathers it's a badge of honor – how many can one father. Looking back through the Hill Directories from the 1950's married couples predominated, even in poorer sections of the city. This marital foundation no longer exists in society, and it hits the poorer community hard. Education can't work if the children are not parented, either mentally or physically. The Armstrong High School project undertaken by the paper the last year classes were held at the school showed that there was no consistency in children's lives.

Noted that subsidized housing was a problem, and that Richmond has the greatest number of subsidized housing units of any city in the country. Holmburg referred to them as concentration camps, and that Richmond should follow the lead of other cities (Norfolk was a later given as an example) and take them down. Private organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the Interfaith Housing Coalition, and the Better Housing Coalition offer viable alternatives. Holmburg expressed an opinion that the taxpayers should be charged with child abuse for allowing this situation to continue, and that the situation needs an answer now. Holmburg noted that Richmond is a residential city, with a great deal of residential development occurring downtown. He suggests starting with the removal and redevelopment of Gilpin Court because of its adjacency to the downtown area. He also called for the citizens to force Mayor Wilder to go after the fathers of illegitimate children.

Q&A session followed.

Adjournment: 8:55 PM.