

**Neighbors of Northwest Branch  
Minutes of Board Meeting  
June 7, 2022**

**1. Welcome**

Present on Zoom: Nora Swisher, Kem Morawski, Rebecca Henson, Kristin Backert, James Graham, Matt Boyer, Melissa Schweisguth, Ben Simasek, Michael Evans.

**2. Treasurer's report**

The treasurer's report from Larry Hush shows a balance of \$8,241.08. We received \$100 from the Audubon Naturalist Society for our participation in the State of the Streams project. We also received \$500 for our participation in the Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK) water quality monitoring project last summer.

**3. Anacostia Riverkeeper water quality monitoring—Kem**

Kem explained what the stream monitoring involved. ARK had trainings in May. Kem, Anne and several members of NNWB participate in this program.

**4. Springsong Museum update – Rebecca**

Rebecca reported that they were able to raise \$35,000 during the period of December to May with 260 donors. All of this goes to architects and engineers to deal with site proposal issues (asbestos, lead removal, plans) A document was sent to Montgomery County Parks (MCP). They are also looking for state support.

The project has received some publicity lately as it was written up in the June issue of The Washingtonian Magazine and Springsong board member and Blair HS teacher Elizabeth Levien of WJLA talked about the project. Rebecca had a table at the Blair HS Fair and talked to people about the project, the NW Branch, Rachel Carson, and indigenous history. Rebecca has reached out to the National Museum of the American Indian for contacts and guidance.

Springsong would like organizations to endorse the project—there is a tab on the website for support. Audubon has already endorsed the project and Rebecca ask that NNWB endorse it as well. There was a unanimous vote to endorse the Springsong project and Nora is to fill in the endorsement tab.

**5. Forest Knolls Pool grant update--Nora**

The Forest Knolls Grant is for “stormwater runoff reduction projects.” Not much to report. We are still waiting on the MOU (memorandum of understanding). Nora sent an email to Kate Cummings, our point person for the pool and is waiting to hear back.

**6. Werrlein’s Suffrage Point development impacts on NWB floodplain in Prince George’s County—Greg Smith of Sustainable Hyattsville**

Greg provided an update on the development’s impacts and discussed potential ways for NNWB to engage. (Some of this information is in previous 2022 minutes, including a footnote, if members are interested in the details). Key points Greg raised:

Werrlein has two lots for house/townhouse development, an upper lot that's under construction and a lower lot that's partly in the 100-year floodplain. Legal challenges have stalled construction in the lower lot, which the county rezoned from open space to residential to allow the development. A recent verdict of the Court of Appeals reverses the Prince George’s District Council’s ruling on the zoning issue.

Sediment regularly runs off of both lots after heavy rainfall, entering the NWB through two small tributaries that run through Driskell Park. Werrlein also initiated demolition of an historic building and grading before obtaining proper permits, including a stormwater permit. Though Sustainable Hyattsville has documented and reported these violations to the Maryland Department of Environment and the County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement, there has not been perceptible improvement in the situation. (Nora noted we might look up and track violations in the EPA's (Enforcement and Compliance History Online database).

The City of Hyattsville, ARK, Sustainable Hyattsville, the Sierra Club and other organizations oppose the development. NNWB also has sent letters asking county officials to deny approvals, and expressing concern about impacts. Sustainable Hyattsville would like NNWB to engage more. There was discussion about how NNWB could do this and the Board will consider these options further

**7. Values discussion**

There was discussion of our guiding principles and many values discussed. Nora will put together everyone's thoughts and send us something.

**8. Next meeting/misc.**

There is no July meeting—we will meet again August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

If anyone has any ideas for summer activities, let Nora know. James suggested posting a link to the Anacostia Watershed Society connecting to their list of weekly boat tours out of Bladensburg. ARK also has occasional boat tours (next one July 12) and a Kingman Island exploration for families on June 22 if we want to post links to those as well.