Ghent Neighborhood League Minutes
March 15, 2018

*N.B.: Before the meeting the Board voted to approve the minutes for January and February.

Next Meeting: April 19, 2018, 6:30 PM, The Williams School

I. Call to order and introductions

President Mike Spencer called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm. After welcoming the membership, those in attendance introduced themselves. Guests included: Winn Lewis, Christ & St. Luke’s, Nate Kinnison, candidate for School Board; Tanya Bhasin, candidate for School Board, Mark Babashanian of EVMS, and EVMS’s architect, Dan Hickok with RRMM Architects.

Board members present: JR Montalvo, Catherine Kilduff, Nat McCormick, George Kello, Emily Birknes, Paige Rose, Tyler Sherwin, Larry Brett, Dan Ross-Li

Absent: Ben Crumpler, Karen Reynes

II. Safety Report – Community Resources Officer (CRO) Samantha Perez

a. Report – The statistics are fantastic. One robbery that was already closed by arrest on scene on Feb. 21; two larcenies others; three larcenies autoparts (tags); some additional larcenies; one motor vehicle theft. Police are on roofs on the 21st St. corridor and Monticello corridor; roof access allows for surveillance to try to curb some of the larcenies. Reminder: Keep everything out of the cars, keep cars locked, and keep no spare keys in the car.

b. Schools – For the last month police have been heavily in schools: public, private, and religious schools. It helps to be familiar with the layout of the schools should a critical incident occur. Police were also on hand to make sure walk-outs went smoothly this past week.

c. Active threat training – March 24, from 9-1 at Calvary Revival Church in the first precinct. Must register for it at crcglobal.org/activeshootertraining/. There will be a scenario live in the training to get a sense of how fast it occurs and how much information is easy to miss.

d. Crosswalks – Today she got a report for 2015-2017 traffic study. She will review it to find out any information specific to Ghent. No bike or pedestrian fatalities occurred in Ghent in that time, according to her skim of the report.

e. Cell Phone: 757-409-0028; please don’t call after 8 pm.
III. Guest Speakers

- **Mark Babashanian, EVMS**, There’s a big project in the pipeline at 315 Colley Ave. We are in a growth mode at the medical school, almost 2000 medical and health profession students. This is the gateway to the campus.
  
  - EVMS is planning to vacate Smith-Rogers Hall (off Mowbray Arch near the Chrysler) and sell the land. The occupants of that building will be going into the new building.

- **Dan Hickok, Architect**: They are halfway through the construction documents. Have been before the design review board twice. Last month we were there to do the presentation to achieve final approval. We’ve been before City Planning Commission and Design Review Board, twice, as required.

  - The 280,000 sq ft. building is designed for three occupants: administration and education departments and parking. The parking building will be above-ground, but below three floors of administration offices.

  - Construction has started: pre-test pilings are getting ready to be driven. Each is 80-feet long pre-cast concrete. It will take a month to finish driving them in. Vertical construction is slated for September. It will take about two years to build with the intention of occupation by fall 2020.

  - Traffic on Colley and Brambleton will be impacted at times. A staging area will be set on opposite corner, “Hague Park,” with a temporary road to the site. The big impacts will happen after hours as possible.

  - Green spaces through campus will connect. This is a prominent site; it will be an iconic image of EVMS. Students, faculty and visitors will use light rail, so will have pedestrian “landing zone” across from the light rail, with a pedestrian walkway to the rest of campus. There are no public entrances from Colley or Brambleton into the building, which was specifically requested by EVMS.

  - The sign facing the road will say EVMS. Back of building will face existing Andrews Hall. Service entrance will be hidden partially behind the fire department and partially shielded by a wall with evergreens.

  - A cistern several feet below grade will capture and filter stormwater, as required by city regulations. The footprint of the building is 20,000 sq ft. All of that is now paved parking. The building will actually reduce the impervious surface.
Native plantings that are drought-resistance will be used to provide greenery 12 months a year. Amenities for bicyclists and student gatherings outside will be provided.

A roof terrace on the three stories of academic spaces is still being considered, pending the budget process.

The existing parking lot is at elevation 8 ft.; prone to flooding. Norfolk requires building above 100-year floodplain. EVMS is raising it 4.5 feet above what the parking lot is now so the site will not flood anymore.

They have natural gas for the boilers for the heating system. Solar panels on building top and anywhere on EVMS would be helpful; this is a budget consideration now. We have solar hot water panels on the lower roof level above the education wing.

Winn Lewis, Christ & St. Luke’s -

Renovation of the church has begun; scaffolding is up. Repointing, roofing, and downspouts will cost in total 1.5 or 1.6 million. The organ is being repaired for 1.5 million. Over all, we are looking at environmental sustainability, considering a hydrothermal heating and cooling system as well. In total, expecting outlay of $7M over the next few years.

His appointment to be rector followed a controversial period of the church. An architect was hired to build a parish hall in the place of the Guild House, which pre-dated the church. If he had been around, he would have opposed its destruction. The project as a whole failed; the hall was far too large, expensive, and didn’t fit with the design ethos of the neighborhood.

As rector, he has tried to reconcile relationships within the church and between the church and the community. A year in, the board determined it was not feasible to build anything new. His predecessor though, had received a certificate of appropriateness to demolish the Guild Hall under the condition of storing the stone, retaining the fireplace and a few other things. A replica of that would be reconstructed across Bossevain in its original style. When we determined it was neither financially feasible nor advisable to build a new building because of the loss of trust within the parish and because the historic building left was literally crumbling, esp. the historic tower, it made no sense to build a new building.

Instead he embarked a lengthy process of listening to come up with a plan. They have hired Hartman Cox. Building will be ongoing for 4 or 5 years.
What happened with the agreement with the City to store the historic building? It cost $10-12,000 a year to store it. The City suggested a compromise – if the stone was used for a historic building and was donated, it would release the church from the proviso in the agreement because building a replacement was not financially feasible. The City helped the church locate a historic home and the stone was donated, as was the fireplace and other pieces. The City released the Church from the agreement in 2012. There was a Planning Commission hearing. In 2012, the major problem seemed to be the construction of the “cathedral” rather than the disposition of the stone. The decision to tear down the Guild House was a tragic one, in his personal opinion. It is done.

Candidates for Norfolk School Board

- **Tanya Bhasin**: She is a current School Board member and running for Ward 2 seat on School Board. Next year her children will be in elementary, middle, and high school in Norfolk public schools. Her husband is a cardiologist. When she moved here, she refused to believe that the suburbs are the only place to find a good school. She quickly realized that NPS had a lot to offer her family. She started Norfolk GAINS, a local non-profit advocacy group. It got increased school board terms, to make better decisions. It also advocated for a tax increase to improve schools. She has also served on a number of NPS committees, including development of the 3-8 grade city-wide choice program at Discovery at Lakewood. Every child deserves a strong public education, regardless of zip code or capabilities. In 2015, several members in the community said that given her involvement, it would be good for her to contribute stability as a School Board member. She was appointed. She is looking at data in a different way, beyond accreditation. She is breaking barriers for students with mental and health issues. She is championing later start times for high school students. She is breaking barriers for students from low income families by targeted resource allocation. For teachers and other staff, she is advancing improved pay and professional opportunities. She holds office hours for parents and community members. Tackling barriers takes strong leadership. She asks for your vote and thanks GNL for the opportunity to speak.

- **Nate Kinnison**: He is running for the NSB, Ward 2. They have 5 children. He’s taught 10,000 students as a fine arts teacher. He’s been in the classroom as a teacher and a student; he’s a product of NPS. He talked about the highlights of NPS – orchestra, medical program at Maury, and more. Problems, though, include that the real estate values are tied to reputation of NPS. Enrollment in NPS is down 10% in past few years. Budget is being cut, which hurts equity and access for kids. Accreditation is about at 70%. To fix this: Retain teachers; Make capital improvements; Hire great principals and assistant principals that will support teachers. Introduce technical education so that kids are work-force ready with a marketable skill or plans to continue their education. This
means improving relationships with business and educational communities locally. We need improved school safety, and better transportation. He asked for your vote on May 1 and extended the invitation to call or email him.

- **Brittany Shearer:** She is running for School Board at Ward 2. She is an academic advisor at ODU. She is the daughter of a teacher, first in Norfolk, then in Chesapeake. She is a graduate of Granby. She’s worked at Thomas Nelson Community College to retain students. Her perspective as a higher education specialist is important. She has about 174 students assigned to her; she advises in biology and psychology. Of 1800 students who identify as pre-health, about 80 actually apply at the end of college. In part this is due to instead of taking calculus the first term at college, they are taking algebra or remedial algebra. She knows those students are unlikely to continue. Sometimes after two years of college, they drop out to work at the shipyard because they like working with their hands; yet they have spent a lot of money on their education at that point. This is an important experience for someone on the Norfolk School Board because preparation occurs in NPS. Her connections to the area include performing at Push Comedy Theater in Norfolk; her parents own an Escape room in Virginia Beach; she lives in an owned home in Norfolk. She asks for your vote on May 1.

- **Q:** Nate Kinnison’s sister-in-law is on the school board. How does this affect having elected officials? **A, Nate Kinnison:** We are both consummate professionals in our own careers and not affected by personal relationships.

- **Q:** What will change in the budget for school safety funding? Some schools do not have safety resource officers. What is the response? What is the requirement for a substitute teacher in Norfolk in terms of educational background? **A:** For a substitute teacher, you have to have a high school degree. With respect to safety, whether the current events translates into additional safety measures allocated via the budget is unclear. Currently no recommendation has been made. That said, we do have policies in place like buzzing in that keep our students safe. The mental and emotional health aspect is something we’re continuing to work on.

**IV. President’s Report:** N/A

**V. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees**

- **Treasurer Report** – Submitted via email.
- **Membership Report** – It is membership renewal time. Right now we have 236 active members; hope to retain all of those. Dues payable by April 1. Those with dues expiring have received notification that dues are payable. Presently 103 are due for renewal, about 43%.
c. **Project Review** – Last month three projects were going to the ARB. All three have been continued for additional information (design details). Only one residential project in the works, likely on April 9 ARB agenda (landscaping improvements on 500 Pembroke, a pervious drive). EVMS came to the last meeting. Wed., Apr. 4 is our next meeting across the street at the Williams School library.

d. **Community Improvement** – 426 Mowbray Arch has recently gone on the market.

e. **Neighborhood Watch** – With weather improvement, pedestrian traffic will increase and neighborhood watch activity will increase as well.

**VI. Reports of Special Committees**

a. **Dog Park** – Kaylie, dog park Vice President. Hours for dog park now are 7 am – 7:30 pm on a tentative basis until April 15, when they will meet with the City. A soil sample taken indicated the dog park needed aeration, two applications of lyme, and closure. The expert did not recommend reseeding because it would crowd the roots and risk losing the Bermuda grass currently there. Please reach out over Facebook or email.

b. **Flood mitigation report, Mike Spencer.** Two initiatives: “Adopt a storm drain” is being piloted on Fairmount park. It means that you keep a drain clear and if you see an obstruction, call the city. “Retain Your Rain” mini-grant for rain barrels, retention ponds, etc. to retain rainwater. The City resilience did presentation at Ghent Task Force meeting. Google “retain your rain” and there is an app that if you type in your address, it will bring up your address and tell you your flood zone. It will give you a number of bathtubs that come off your house and gives you a personal solution of how to store the rain. It will suggest different projects for you and many of those are under $100.

c. **Tree report** – Find out which trees will help you retain rain. We discussed getting more trees with Michael Nentwich. We’ll need more volunteers.

d. **Emily Birknes, Leadership Committee** – The committee is receiving nominations through April 1.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm