



NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

SPRING 2015

FROM THE PRESIDENT

It seems that more than bears come out of hibernation this time of year. The Martha Jefferson Neighborhood Association has been busy as the days lengthen and the weather warms. Here are some of the things on our active agenda:



- Pushing the city, and Dominion Power, to move towards environmentally-, sky-, and resident-friendly street lighting. Harry Holsinger and Bill Downes are working hard to overcome institutional inertia.
- Helping MJ residents in “dark spots” to get new streetlights. St. Charles Avenue now has one after we figured out how to navigate the city’s approval process.
- Working with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Board of Architectural Review to consider how better quality motion-activated lighting in the Maplewood Cemetery, and perhaps better perimeter lighting, could be done in a manner that both discourages nighttime trespass and preserves the historic character of this very special place.
- Engaging with the city on the “Streets That Work” project. For us in the MJ community, that means finding practical solutions to calm traffic and make our neighborhood safe for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Rick Zeller’s Streets & Traffic Team are taking the lead.
- Urging reforms in the city’s planning process. We joined with a dozen other neighborhood associations in pressing for more effective engagement by the city. MJNA will help screen finalists for a new Neighborhood Development Services chief this spring.

Residents of Locust Avenue’s 800 block (from Hazel Street to the bypass) petitioned the city for an enhanced speeding fine zone. City measurements found—not surprisingly—that the volume and speed along this stretch supports the case for the additional \$200 fine, and City Council is scheduled to take up the matter on May 18. Once in place, whether the new speed zone really slows traffic will of course depend on police enforcement. If this works, MJNA probably will ask the other residents of Locust Avenue from Hazel Street to East High Street if they wish to have the enhanced fines applied there as well.

I last reported to you in January that we hoped the city would be able to purchase land for an eventual mini-park in the neighborhood. Complications have arisen that now make this unlikely. MJNA will continue to work with Parks and Recreation to identify other options, but with so few parcels available this will be very challenging.

This will be my last letter to you as MJNA President. It has been my great pleasure to serve our wonderful community, one of the very best—in every sense of the word—in Charlottesville. ■

By Bruce Odell, MJNA President

UPCOMING EVENTS



SPRING PICNIC and ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, May 17

5 to 7 pm (rain date, Sunday May 31)
In the side yard of 810 Locust Avenue

Please feel free to bring a dish to share—sweet, savory, or salad—and, if you wish to sit, a chair.

MJNA will provide pizza, wine and beer (donations welcome), and soft drinks.

CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE FORUM

Immediately before the Spring Picnic

Sunday, May 17

4 to 5 pm
In the side yard of 810 Locust Avenue

Candidates for City Council have been invited to speak and answer questions.



MJNA IS ON FACEBOOK

Join 88 (and counting) of your neighbors in the MJNA Group on Facebook. Search Facebook for “Martha Jefferson Neighborhood Association” and click the “join group” button in the top right corner. We invite you to use the MJNA FB Group to post your own items of general interest, such as lost pets, household services or yard sales, upcoming community events, neighborhood-related questions or concerns, or simply to reach out to folks with similar interests. ■

JOIN ONE OF OUR TEAMS

What do you most value about the neighborhood? What would you most like to see changed? MJNA has set up “Teams” by subject matter, dealing with streets and traffic, zoning and development, communications and outreach, block captains, and events. This is a great way to get involved in the community without a big time commitment, and the Teams are informal and open to all views.

We especially need to build up our Events Team, since the two individuals who sparked most of the activities (picnic games, Easter Egg Hunt, etc.) have moved from the neighborhood. The Events Team will let you show off your creativity while supporting these very popular activities that glue our community together. The Communications Team also needs creative help on the newsletter and MJNA website and if there are any computer geeks reading this, the Communications Team would like to hear from you. Sign up for any of the teams by emailing info@mjna.org. ■



NEIGHBORHOOD TREE PROJECT

Last fall, Martha Jefferson Neighborhood Association was awarded a \$2500 grant from the City of Charlottesville to plant 10 large shade trees in the public right of way throughout the neighborhood.

Syd Knight, a neighbor and landscape architect with Van Yahres Tree Company, walked the neighborhood with us to select locations and species. Locations were selected based on available land within the city easement, no planned sidewalks through 2021, and space available for a large shade tree. A variety of native, long-lived, disease-resistant trees have now been planted throughout the neighborhood, such as American Beech, Black Gum, Honey Locust, London Plane Tree, Sugar Maple, and White Oak. Look for these new trees across the neighborhood on Hazel, Grove, Locust, Poplar, and St. Clair.

The MJNA matched the grant at 10% and was able to purchase almost 100 young/small trees, known as whips. Neighbors from all over the neighborhood have adopted American Beech, Green Ash, Little Leaf Linden, Red Maple, and Swamp Oaks. If you planted a tree, and are willing, please post a photo on our MJNA Facebook page.

Thanks to everyone for your support with this project. We are hoping to do it again in the fall or spring of next year. If you would like to be involved, please email info@mjna.org. ■

By Jacqueline Dugary and Melanie Miller

PICNIC AND CANDIDATE FORUM MAY 17

The annual MJNA membership meeting and spring picnic will be held on Sunday, May 17 from 5 to 7 pm in the yard of Gail and Downing Smith’s home at 810 Locust Avenue. Pizza and soft drinks will be provided, as well as beer and wine (donations welcomed). Feel free to bring a sweet, savory, or salad and perhaps a chair if you need to sit. All residents of the Martha Jefferson community are most welcome. Members will also elect a new MJNA Board for 2015–2016.

Before the picnic, from 4 to 5 pm, MJNA will host a city council candidates forum. Each announced candidate will make brief remarks, and then we’ll have a Q&A session. If you have questions for either a specific candidate or for all, you can submit them in advance to us at info@mjna.org. You also will be invited to ask questions from the floor (or perhaps that should be “from the grass.”) ■

GOT A NEW NEIGHBOR?

Has a new family moved in on your street? Please drop us a line at info@mjna.org with their new street address and someone from the Association will follow up. Have you yourself moved out of the neighborhood? Please let us know. Last year, Martha Levering led her team in contacting virtually every household in the community and we now have a great spreadsheet with names, addresses, emails, etc. But these data will get “old” fast if we don’t keep up with comings and goings, so please give MJNA a heads up.

JOIN US / UPDATE US

MJNA dues are \$10 for two years and we depend on them for our picnics, newsletter, and other ongoing activities. If you are not sure if your dues are up to date, please email Harry Holsinger at hholsinger@aol.com or ask at the membership table at the picnic. If you want to join MJNA or want to be sure our contact information for you is current, please complete this form.

Name Family Members’ Names

Street Address

Phone Number home cell Email

- Exclude me from the MJNA directory distributed to neighbors.
- I am content with an electronic copy of the newsletter, emailed to the email address above.

Bring to the membership table at the picnic or mail to Harry Holsinger, Treasurer, 709 Grove Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22902.