

SOECA Membership Meeting 5/19/2025

Youtube video of meeting: <https://youtu.be/E62qgW4uP2I>

Presentation Slides:  SOECA Meeting 2025-05-19

Quick Recap

The SOECA neighborhood association held their monthly meeting to conduct Board elections and discuss upcoming community events, including a block party planned for June 21st that will feature various activities and entertainment. The group approved funding for historical preservation projects and discussed neighborhood beautification initiatives, while also reviewing the current budget and financial status. Updates were provided on local infrastructure projects, road closures, and community events, along with discussions about environmental initiatives and historical preservation efforts in the area.

To Do List:

- Chris Reynolds to take the idea of setting aside money for neighborhood beautification projects to the Board for discussion.
- Environmental Committee to continue working with the Department of Natural Resources on tree planting initiatives near the Purple Line construction area.
- Matt and Angie Hood to organize volunteers for the block party on June 21st.
- Chris Reynolds to follow up with his wife about potentially doing face painting at the block party.
- Neighbors to submit ideas for the Hastings neighborhood conservation area to Chris Reynolds or the Parks Department.
- Chris Reynolds to convey any community input on the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Master Plan to the planning committee.

SOECA Neighborhood Board Elections

The SOECA neighborhood meeting began with introductions and attendance verification, with Chris Reynolds (President) noting that Mike Tidwell had to cancel due to an opportunity in New York. The meeting focused on Board elections, with Diana Rowny volunteering to replace Charlie Demma as Secretary, while Elicia John and Matt Murawski would stay on as Vice Presidents.

Block Party Planning and Budget

Current SOECA funds are around \$10,000, with \$800 saved for improving meeting technology. A \$1,500 budget was approved for the block party, with a \$900 grant already secured for the band and bounce house. The group discussed food options for the event, considering a repeat of last year's sandwiches and drinks, with Floyd Starnes again providing free snow cones. The block party is scheduled for June 21st (with a rain date of June 22nd).

Historic Gate Restoration Funding

The neighborhood association discussed a request from Grant and Mercina Hodgson to fund the restoration of historic Spanish colonial gates on public property. Chris proposed contributing \$265 (10% of the \$2,650 restoration cost) and the group agreed to support this donation with a straw vote. While

some members expressed concern about setting a precedent for future community funding requests, the group decided to proceed with the donation as this was a unique historical feature that benefits the entire neighborhood. The group further discussed and voted on a donation amount, ultimately deciding to contribute \$500. The vote was conducted both in person and online, with 20 votes in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions. The donation will be made to a private effort by the Hodgson family; SOECA is not directly associated with or responsible for the restoration.

Neighborhood Beautification Budget Plan

The membership raised the suggestion of setting aside a portion of the budget for neighborhood beautification projects, with a neighbor suggesting \$2,000 to be allocated for proposals up to \$500 each. Chris shared that the organization's monthly income is around \$300-350, which primarily covers expenses like the block party, bookkeeping software, website, and newsletter. The board agreed to consider this proposal for next year, with plans to establish a committee and set deadlines for project submissions. Chris also mentioned a previous significant expense of \$5,000 in 2019 for legal and tax-related work to update their charter and tax exempt status.

Tree Planting and Infrastructure Planning

The Environmental Committee is working with the State Department of Natural Resources to coordinate tree planting efforts in the area, including securing grants and navigating various land ownerships. While the Purple Line construction promises to replace lost canopy with smaller trees near the roadways, the committee aims to supplement this with larger trees in suitable locations. Additionally, plans for new sidewalks around Purple Line stations are in development, with a process for neighborhood input expected to begin in late 2026, though concerns about tree preservation and utility relocation remain.

Block Party Volunteer Coordination Meeting

The block party scheduled for the 21st will require volunteers for one-hour shifts in activities including running the bounce house, raffle sales, setup, cleanup, and food service, with volunteers also needed to provide tents and tables. Jon Bernstein announced that Celtic Coffee in Silver Spring is donating two certificates for a pound of coffee, and Floyd Starnes is sponsoring the shave ice. The event will include a native plant giveaway, games, and activities for children, with additional entertainment to be confirmed.

Construction and Other Local Updates

Chris discussed several road closures and detours in the area, including the closure of Wayne and Fenton intersections for the summer, affecting access to parking lots and local businesses. He also mentioned updates on the Spring Street bridge and Wayne Avenue closures, noting potential challenges for commuters. Chris provided information on the opening of the Citronia Childhood Development Center and the delayed demolition of the Seabury building, expected to happen between November and December. He concluded by highlighting the Eastern Silver Spring Communities Master Plan, inviting community input on local park improvements and housing opportunities, and promoting local events like the T-Bolts baseball games.

Other Brief Updates

The group discussed a study regarding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Colesville Road, which included an assessment of potentially historic sites along the corridor. Chris explained that while the study was funded with Federal pandemic-era money, there are currently no plans or funding for actual construction. The meeting also covered updates about the Silver Spring Historical Society, which maintains a collection at the railroad station, and announced upcoming recreational events including a pickleball tournament and senior prom masquerade at the Silver Spring Recreation Center.