

Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)
March 21, 2016
Central Asheville Community Meeting
Public Works meeting room

Members present: Alan Escovitz, Joe Fioccola, Spencer Hardaway, Teddy Jordan, Philip Lenowitz, Barber Melton and Elaine Poovey.

Members not present: Greta Bush, DeWayne Barton and City Council Liaison Gordon Smith. Also present: Ken Putnam, Todd Okolichany, Christina Hallingse, Lucas Lovelace and Kelley Klope.

Welcome by Elaine Poovey, NAC Chair at 7:02 pm. She asked members and attendees to introduce themselves and name the neighborhood they call home.

Strengthening Neighborhood Organizational Development: Teddy Jordan, NAC Vice-Chair referred to a detailed handout with details on the subject and then went off script. She asked how many people were happy with their neighborhood organizations and how many needed improvements on their organization. She asserted that neighborhoods aren't just geographic areas—that they are the heart and soul of the people who live there. And organized neighborhoods can get things done. We must find out what people in our neighborhoods value and make sure that what we do is consistent with and represents it. They are our greatest resource. Community building is learning. It is the first step to participate in living democracy. It is a challenge as well as an opportunity. Who doesn't want more voice in decisions affecting their neighborhoods? There needs to be a method for neighborhoods to participate in the process. Plan on a Page is one way to participate. Change is coming to Asheville in the coming years. We decide how and when to respond to it. She began and closed with a quote from Judith Glaser an Organizational Anthropologist: *"To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of the culture, which depends on the quality of relationships, which depends on the quality of conversations. Everything happens through conversations."* --which means us, the people. NAC members are a resource as well as Marsha Stickford, Asheville's Neighborhood Coordinator.

City of Asheville Updates

Comprehensive Parking Study: Ken Putnam explained the rationale for a new study to address parking needs in several areas of the city. It is a systematic approach in the ten year capital improvement program and funded by the parking enterprise fund and not by taxpayer dollars. Three decks are fully paid for. The first part will provide background and collect all state laws and local city ordinances related to parking. The second part will collect benchmark data from 50 cities of various sizes comparing parking rates and types of offerings and what works in different areas with what we are doing in Asheville. Next it will look at parking strategies and pros and cons and costs of each. Next it will explore the benefits of a downtown shuttle beginning with the Central Business District and expanding to Biltmore Village, River Arts District, West Asheville Haywood Road, etc. Asked about a study of the impact of downtown parking on neighborhoods he noted that there is another study of Haywood Road Parking that will be looking at options such as residential permit programs and guidelines.

Update of the Comprehensive Plan: Todd Okolichany explained the reason for having a comprehensive plan which is that it guides policies for future development. It is the initial document for future development. The 2025 Plan was written in 2003 and needs to be updated to address changes that have occurred since then. He will recommend a consultant team to City Council on April 12 which will begin a 12-15 month process to focus on 6 facets of sustainability: Connecting Land Uses, Addressing Climate Change, a Resilient Economy, a Healthy Community and Local and Regional Partnerships. He noted there will be 5-10 workshops throughout the year possibly focusing on the 5 major districts of the city. One of the ways to be involved was Plan on a Page—a tool designed to build consensus on priorities and vision for the

future that each neighborhood should be working on and submit by July 1, 2016. Another way is the interactive city website Open City Hall which can accept comments and surveys. An important question was raised about the effectiveness of the previous plan: will it be evaluated? What were the results? It points to a need to include a matrix of ways to track or implement or evaluate policies. The size of the 2025 plan was also mentioned. The hope is to make the new plan more user-friendly. There will be links on the website. The legal implications were also questioned and Todd explained that while the plan itself is not a legal document that code and zoning ordinances (which are legal documents) mandate alignment with adopted city plans. He also noted that he will appoint an advisory team of stakeholders and also receive steering guidance from Planning and Zoning. Another idea is to explore the concept of an ongoing planning process for a more living document updated in a shorter timeframe than every 10-15 years. Marsha announced a walk-in workshop with city staff for Plan on a Page on April 19 from 5-8 pm at the Dr Wesley Grant Sr Southside Center.

Nextdoor Notification: Christina Hallingse, Public Information Officer, Asheville Police Department explained the safe, secure and no cost social media site Nextdoor.com which is available to residents of neighborhoods (Renters as well as homeowners--verified by utility bill, credit card info or other ways such as referrals.) It can be used as a way for police to push information when needed about crime activity in specific areas such as car break-ins and preventive actions residents can take. It is also not restricted to organized neighborhoods—smaller groups can be formed. The Fire Department will be using it soon. She emphasized that the police department cannot access or monitor conversations on Nextdoor but can respond to messages directed to them through the site.

Asheville Police Department: CRO Officer Lucas Lovelace attends several neighborhood group meetings each month. Together with the other CRO Sgt. Sean Davis and under District Commander Lt Gary Gudac, and with 4-8 officers on duty in addition to the Downtown Units they are responsible for the newly realigned North and Central Police district. Police Chief Hooper has made several changes in the last 8 months including ComStat which looks at crime statistics and tracks trends in each district and sets monthly focus areas to address them. To contact a CRO go to the city website, find your district and see who your Community Resource Officer (CRO) is and how to contact them (email or phone) or you can call the non-emergency police number 252-1110.

Asheville Fire Department: Kelley Klope, Public Information Officer for Asheville Fire Department explained the need for a new fire station. The Fire Department's response time to any point in the city should be less than five minutes for 90% of the time. In order to achieve this, a new Five Points Station will be built on city land on Broadway. Requests for Proposals will be issued soon and neighborhood input will be taken regarding drive through bays, a meeting space, safety issues, traffic lighting, etc. She looks for it to be operational by 2017. She was asked about a schedule for hydrant checks and stated she can look up information on the 3600 hydrants in the city and the other 6000 in the area.

Reports from Central Asheville Neighborhood Groups:

East End Valley Street Neighborhood Association: Renee White raised three issues: first was the delay in badly needed repaving of Martin Luther King Drive. Second was the frustration in getting permission for a neighborhood identifying sign. Third was that they had completed a projected plan on record and it is possibly obsolete and there is a breakdown in communication with the city which needs to reach out more to neighborhoods.

Albemarle Park: Jane Mathews reported that they were working on their Plan on a Page and they really want to preserve the residential character of their neighborhood faced with ADU's and vacation rentals. They have serious storm water problems. They are a strong neighborhood and a vibrant community but are inundated with speculative buying and short term rentals and traffic which even impair their ability to walk to downtown.

Five Points Neighborhood: Billie Lofland and Judy McAfee also want to preserve the residential character of their neighborhood. Short term rentals are a big discussion issue as are ADU's and home stays.

It frustrates their planning because their homeowners association can't come to consensus. They really need help on sidewalks. There is no money to back up the comprehensive plan. Parking is a big issue because off street parking is not currently required by the UDO for home stays and ADU's. The commercial development of Harris-Teeter and Trader Joe's in a residential area caused a lack of privacy, storm water and all the good things that are in the comprehensive plan are not in the UDO.

Grove Park/Sunset Neighborhood: Alan Escovitz identified a critical problem with storm water which caused mudslides on Sunset and loss of several trees. Drainage ditches which direct to culverts are often clogged with leaves and not cleared by the city causing a lot of damage. He wants to put forward a plan for regular maintenance of the ditches. Another problem is speeding. There are winding streets and on street parking. They have a good two way communication with the police department with email and Next Door.

Chestnut Hills: Cissy Dendy questioned the pressure to increase additional density. Madison Avenue is too narrow and more density means more cars on the narrow streets which could block fire truck access. She heard about lowering the speed limit on Charlotte St but there is also the problem of people running through stop lights. Cars parked on Chestnut St half on the sidewalk block traffic turning from Merrimon and some residents park their cars to slow down cars speeding at 55 mph on Madison Ave and running stop signs. A priority need is for safety lighting on Central Avenue underneath the I-240 overpass. They are working with DOT on that. The speed limit on Charlotte St will be lowered to 25 MPH and get some restriping.

Downtown Asheville Residential Neighbors: Sue Robbins and Diane Davidson want to maintain the residential nature of the neighborhood. Downtown is also residential but it is different than other neighborhoods. They are concerned with all the building going on. The comprehensive plan is a chance to help. They are concerned and interested in the upcoming library meeting on conditional zoning. They are happy downtown is booming but have a problem with the overuse of downtown crowding and deteriorating sidewalks also crowding around all the buskers and at the park. The problem will increase with the scheduled closing of Pritchard Park. There has been an increase in 'travelers' with their attitudes and behaviors. They are concerned about the impact on the Haywood Street area. There is a problem with crosswalks on Biltmore Avenue because tourist traffic piles up and buildings shake with the large trucks and the lights are badly timed. There is a problem with noise from the many breweries, so there needs to be a better noise ordinance that is consistent and enforced. Byron Greiner added that parking will continue to be a problem with the Civic Center Deck approaching the end of its lifespan especially with no parking required for new buildings. Sidewalks and crosswalks are a problem. There have been two studies by the Downtown Association which identified deteriorated sidewalks and were noted in the five year plan. The 'travelers' are being more disruptive and arriving earlier each year and sleeping in Pritchard Park which is a major concern being closed from April to August and impacting Haywood Street.

South Slope Neighborhood: Imke and Inge Durre agreed that the traffic lights on Biltmore Avenue back up traffic to Hilliard every day. Traffic speeds on Hilliard at Coxe and there is more traffic now. Traffic needs speed limit reminders and more pedestrian awareness. People using the new crosswalk on Hilliard at Ravenscroft can't be seen by the eastbound traffic coming up the hill around the curve. There needs to be a crosswalk warning. Every day cars park to block the sidewalk on Ravenscroft. There is a lot of debris, trash, broken glass, cans related to the breweries. There needs to be trash cans and trash needs to be picked up especially in the area of Coxe and Hilliard. They need more police patrol in South Slope as vandalism has moved into the neighborhood. They are a forgotten part of downtown and have loud noise from the pubs with outdoor speakers facing residences. Parking in the neighborhood is also a problem.

West End Clingman Avenue Neighborhood: Byron Ballard a resident since 1984 began by noting some successes: They have an engaged core of neighbors. She is happy about the coming needed

affordable housing on Hilliard and Clingman and the community garden next to Asheville Transit which functions like a community center. We have great support from our CRO Lucas Lovelace, from Mountain Housing Opportunities and Laura Loftis at the Aston Park Tennis Center. Marsha Stickford is also a great resource and listens to a lot more crap than anyone should. She noted that WECAN has about 200 households and is looking at some 350 more in the next few years and a possible Hotel. Infrastructure sucks-- a sidewalk on Roberts Street is desperately needed with the increased tourist foot traffic to White Duck Taco. West Haywood is a winding curvy street and gets a lot of cut-through traffic and is very dangerous. There is bus and staff speeding at Asheville Transit. She observed that WECAN has effectively lost the gentrification wars. A recent house sold for almost a million dollars. Also between DOT and the City it has been several years that the fence at the top of the hill on Hilliard has been falling down. Stormwater runoff continues to be a challenge at new developments and New Belgium Brewery across the river is bringing noise, smell and traffic as other events and construction blocking traffic at the river. We need help updating our fifteen year old WECAN Citizen's Master Plan. The stairs that go to the Hillcrest pedestrian crossover bridge are deteriorating. We are losing green spaces and older trees to more development.

Montford: Susan Eggerton observed that neighborhoods really make the city and make it interesting. Montford has many of the same problems and some slightly different. She pointed to one which was the slowness of working with the city. They raised money to do some things such as a new smart light and it took seven years for the city to get it done. Montford has a vacant lot owned by the Historic Resources Commission which has no interest in maintaining it or managing it but it can't be sold. They want to develop it as a park with planting and some benches and a maybe bocce court. It has been sitting for a year delayed by the city calling for insurance and insurance companies not having a product to use. It is frustrating because it shouldn't be so hard to get permission to create a plan and put in a bench. Chestnut Street needs repaving--there are a lot of potholes.

South French Broad Avenue Neighborhood: Mike Wasmer noted that the Central Business District backs up to their residential area. A CPL substation going on the corner of Asheland and Hilliard may have an effect on cut through traffic.

Beaucatcher Mountain: Geoff Kimmish identified a problem with speeding on the switchbacks on Windswept Drive and College Street cars going 60 mph. The problem is worsened with skateboarders and bicyclists coming down the hill. Trash is being dumped such as a toilet and computer monitors along the edge of Beaumont Street. He observed the critical state of Helen's Bridge. It has been attacked by vandals knocking off one rock at a time. The bridge needs help. One very large stone even blocked the road until some neighbors moved it.

Other Issues:

Raised crosswalks were offered as a possible solution to speeding when placed judiciously.

NAC vs. CAN: Barber explained the difference between the Neighborhood Advisory Committee and the Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods. NAC advises City Council on issues affecting neighborhoods. CAN is able to take a position on issues and will advocate for them. They have taken a stand and advocate on Home-stays and ADU's. They meet at the Oakley Community Center on the second Monday from 7-9 pm.

Noise Ordinance: Renee asked the City Council to define the noise ordinance. It is so vague now you can't tell what is too loud, or who to call or when it is in effect. They had to go to the business to get them to turn it down. Council needs to be specific about what is too loud and who and when to call and how to enforce it.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:58

Minutes submitted by Joe Fioccola