

**Neighborhood Advisory Committee of the City of Asheville Community Meeting**  
**Central Asheville Community Meeting**

March 24, 2014

Public Works Building 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

**Committee Members Attending:**

Saul Chase (Chairman), Alan Escovitz, Bob Roepnack, Barber Melton, Carmen Ramos-Kennedy, Elaine Poovey, DeWayne Barton, Joe Fioccola, Pastor Spencer Hardaway, Chris Pelly ex-officio, Asheville City Council

**City Staff Attending:**

Marsha Stickford, Neighborhood Coordinator; Asheville Police Department Lt. Mark Byrd; Lt. Jamie Crawford, District Commander; Community Resource Officer Evan Coward, Officer Keith McCulloch, Officer Mike McClanahan; and Public Information Officer Kelly Klope, Asheville Fire Department.

Also Attending: Byron Ballard, Bob Barry, Eric Bradford, Mandy Broderick, Sharon Burton, Kate Fisher, Jonnie Grant, Roy Harris, Larry Holt, Jan Howard, Michael Johnson, Jon Kenske, Rachel Larson, Kim MacQueen, Marian Patten, Lou and Jessica Popovitch, Jeff and Sue Robbins, and Carolyn Tingle.

Councilman Pelly welcomed everyone and briefly explained the importance of the committee in assisting City Council to reach out to neighborhoods in all parts of Asheville. He requested each person present introduce himself and identify his neighborhood.

Chairman Saul Chase explained the Neighborhood Advisory Committee's Vision and Mission statements and made comments.

**Updates from the Police Department and Fire Department were given:**

- Asheville Police Lt. Mark Byrd stated his squad represents public housing and the downtown areas. The officers have put a lot of time and effort into monitoring and halting the spread of graffiti. He explained the Division-wide plan of action-encouraging victims to document and report incidents of graffiti (because it establishes a baseline that can be tracked across the city and with the help of the crime analyst may predict where it will happen next.) Lt. Byrd shared the downtown enhancement plan to deal with the influx of transient people and aggressive panhandling. A new homeless policy and initiative will assist the Police Department in dealing with the problem. Securing help for the population is a part of the policy. The homeless population has been reduced by about 40 people over the past year. In assisting the hard-to-house population, Asheville Police Department is working with the Asheville Housing Authority. The panhandling program is focusing on "spare change for real change". On April 1, the downtown enhancement plan for homeless will be launched. Beginning on April 7 there will be volunteers stationed at 29 Haywood Street on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 12 noon-4:00 p.m. to assist tourists with educational information. In response to a question about the availability of a mental health component, Lt. Jamie Crawford stated Parkway Behavioral Health along with Neil Dobbins and RHA Health Crisis are partnering to help with this area. Wet shelter beds are available through Mission Hospitals and Buncombe County. There are two male and two female 24-hour holds at the Buncombe County jail.

Lt. Byrd further commented about the transition and improvement on South French Broad Avenue area. The Sex Worker Diversion Program has been effective in providing counseling and advice to get prostitutes off the streets. The Police Department is also actively working with the people in the South Slope development area. The Hot Spot on Asheland Avenue is under going renovation and trying to revitalize the property. Regarding special events, the Moog Festival on April 23-28 will require some street closing over the weekend for the outdoor concerts which are expected to draw several thousand attendees. The police staffing will be similar to the Bele Chere Festival. He responded to a question about participation with regional task forces and stated they work with BCAT on drug enforcement operations.

Responding to a question about how young people selling drugs might be helped, Lt. Byrd mentioned activities such as public housing units taking young people to the recent SoCon Tournament and other outreach such as partnering with WalMart for a day of fishing. Officer Keith McCulloch is the leader of Explorer Post 57, a free Scout Explorers Program with 27 youth enrolled on Tuesday nights at the Police Department for age 14-21 from 6:00-8:00 p.m., mentoring one-on-one, and ride alongs.

- Asheville Fire Department Public Information Officer Kelly Klope shared ongoing community relations activities. The Fire Department is visible at festivals and in the schools, there is an after-school program called In Real Life. They work with the Scout Explorer's Program, holding a free fire camp, participate in the city's CAYLA (City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy) program and work with Goodwill through internships. She stated 24 new recruits will join the force on Sunday, March 30. The Fire Department responds to 17,000 calls a year. She briefly explained the "standard of cover", the ability to respond quickly anywhere in the city when a call is received from 911 through staffing and station locations. A question from the audience asking why a fire truck and ambulance are dispatched when a 911 call comes in provided the opportunity to learn of "team focused CPR". In life threatening situations with this approach, there are additional personnel to help.

#### **Presentations by Central Asheville Neighborhood Associations:**

##### **Downtown Asheville Residents Neighborhood (D.A.R.N.):**

Kim McQueen stated that the neighborhood has issues with graffiti, lack of cleanliness, homelessness and drunkenness. They adopted Prichard Park as a neighborhood park and have raised money for enhancement in a public-private partnership: installing planters, a shade garden and bird houses. An anonymous donor established a perpetual fund for upkeep of the park. They are a dog-friendly neighborhood.

**Concerns:** Lack of a vision from the City "of what we want to be and how we will get there". They expressed support for independent retail, farm-to-table dining and craft breweries, but felt more development was not sustainable. She felt the trend was toward ultra tourism with five new hotels in the works. They need the city's help to develop a road map to get where they want to be.

##### **East End/Valley Street Community:**

Mandy Broderick said the community really came together about four years ago. They are working on communication, learning the history of the neighborhood, establishing a community watch, getting to know their neighbors, establishing parks and developing public spaces, researching significant African Americans. Homeless initiatives were welcomed to deal with camps in wooded areas. They are learning to work closely with developers. The Brew Grass Festival was an importance issue and they appreciated the assistance in relocating this festival.

They came together with St. James Church with the Martin Luther King Peace March. They use [nextdoor.com](http://nextdoor.com) as their primary social media site for communicating within the neighborhood. They are currently planning a door-to-door canvas and voter registration. The community center, Stephens Lee, is a tremendous resource with youth programs, a garden club, and a community garden. Attendance at community meetings is increasing.

**South French Broad Neighborhood:**

Roy Harris stated he does a lot of walking in the neighborhood and had seen a lot of changes but not a lot of kids. He takes that as a sign of the neighborhood's health. He had walked the boundaries of Census Tract 9 and has seen the neighborhood change from predominately African American. He has learned how to use public transportation and noted room for improvement. He shares the concerns of his neighbors in the River Arts neighborhood with affordability and stated that community is people, not just places, houses and streets. Other participants commented the neighborhood association had not met for a few months. Several homes were under restoration and that was exciting.

**Concerns:** Dog poop on the sidewalks; buses

**West End/Clingman Avenue Area Neighborhood (WECAN):**

Rachel Larsen shared concerns from her neighborhood. The previous plan called for infill of the many vacant properties. She questioned how much infill was going to happen and requested some open space as well. There was a lot of vacant land owned by DOT. The community was seeking space for a garden. She felt there were infrastructure needs as well. For example, Roberts Street needs a sidewalk for pedestrian safety. She questioned the affordability of the River Arts District and noted that the City was putting out request for proposals to study the gentrification and how other communities have dealt with it.

**Concerns:** gentrification/affordability, infrastructure needs, community garden

**Northside:**

Kate Fisher commented there was no organized neighborhood association in this area (Madison Street, Broad Street, Chestnut Street and the corridor between Merrimon Avenue and Charlotte Street, also Greenlife, Harris Teeter and Trader Joe's neighborhood) She is a runner and feels kinship and ownership of all neighborhoods. She loves that we still care about each other and say hello on the streets.

**Concerns:** Cut-through traffic, trucks, speeding, potential need for stop signs

**Eric Bradford, Greenworks Volunteer/Clean Communities Coordinator**

Eric Bradford, Asheville Greenworks, announced the month of April is the great Asheville-Buncombe clean-up. He stated the organization can provide tools, equipment, trash bags, and connections with city and county residents. April 1, the kick-off party with free food and team sign-ups for river clean up, tree plantings and park clean up, will be at Asheville Pizza and Brewing at 77 Coxe Avenue. April 16 is Downtown Lunchtime clean-up starting on Coxe Avenue from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Mr. Bradford reiterated we do not have a dirty downtown but there were numerous cigarette butts to pick up. April 26 is Hard-to Recycle Event for spring clean-out. Large items can be brought to the Public Works parking lot from 8:00 a.m.-1 p.m. for recycling.

**Central Asheville Neighbors Public Forum:**

1. Sharon Burton stated the property in front and behind her residence on Carroll Avenue had been developed by Sky Loft. Trees were cut and only a few were replanted. The storm drain was a concern as well. Marsha was checking with the arborist and will respond to this concern.

2. A downtown resident expressed concern regarding the senior citizen high rise buildings. The environment needed to be friendly to residents as well as visitors. The blue stone and brick sidewalks need attention.

3. In the South French Broad Avenue area, sidewalks were needed beyond Phiffer Street. Mud covered the sidewalks on Choctaw Street and created a pond on Carroll Avenue. Mr. Harris asked that the neighborhood knows how the requests are prioritized when city services are needed, such as storm drain cleaning. A duck pond grew behind a house on South French Board Avenue. He questioned why developers who caused problems were not required to fix them.

4. Larry Holt, D.A.R.N. community, acknowledged that storm drains were full of trash, sediment and mud. He was concerned about building projects that were ongoing and planned for the downtown area. He said to remember that neighborhoods are people and downtown is a neighborhood and people live there.

5. Byron Ballard, WECAN community, said there needed to be a streamline process between the City and the community. The Chamber keeps pushing tourism and development but citizens would like to know how to leverage more money for infrastructure.

6. Another participant inquired about the priority of street repaving. Mr. Pelly noted that the City Council's Governance Committee established the Asheville app to report pot holes and water leaks. Broad Street and Washington Road were noted roads that need traffic calming and further that Annandale Avenue was growing potholes. He also noted that this year saw the first property tax increase in ten years and that for eligible people on fixed incomes, many just need help filling out the forms to apply for waivers.

7. Jan Howard shared that hers was the only residence on Reservoir Road. She was trying to sell her property and felt isolated.

Chairman Chase thanked everyone for attending and the public meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

NOTE: Immediately following the meeting, NAC members met briefly to consider the May 2 breakfast with community leaders. Elaine gave the sub-committee report. With the question of breakfast in doubt, the name was changed to Coffee and Conversation. *Bob moved that we move forward with this event.* The motion was seconded and approved. The business meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Elaine Poovey  
Secretary