

Neighborhood Advisory Committee Minutes

November 24, 2014

Public Works Building, 6:30 pm

Committee Members Attending:

DeWayne Barton, Saul Chase, Alan Escovitz, Joe Fioccola, Pastor Spencer Hardaway, Teddy Jordan, Barber Melton, Elaine Poovey and Bob Roepnack

City Council Liaison: Chris Pelly

Neighborhood Coordinator: Marsha Stickford

Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chairman Elaine. Inspired by the recent CAN meeting, she set the tone to keep discussion focused on the agenda. Chris noted the two and a half year contribution to this committee by first ever chair Saul Chase and presented him with a recognition plaque.

Item I: Approval of Minutes from October 27 Meeting: The minutes of the October 27 meeting were approved as distributed on a motion from Barber and seconded by Bob.

Item III: First Draft of Annual Report: Joe prepared a draft of NAC activity in 2014. It included very brief notation of each meeting and a paragraph on three events: Coffee and Conversation, Area Community Meetings (3) and the Planning Retreat. It also contained a paragraph on the report from the neighborhoods which mentioned some of the topics discussed. Details for these items were directed to an addendum.

Alan raised the open ended question: looking at our mission does the report actually advise the city on issues? Saul expressed the need for something like this but with some modification since some places need more. He said we should base the report on more than what we heard from neighborhoods but also what we think about it. His assertion is to elevate neighborhoods in the city government process and identify things we think are important (for example: to improve the condition of sidewalks in neighborhoods.) He noted that the list of recommendations will become a record of what we advised and consolidate key issues that Council should prioritize. Alan encouraged providing general directives based on overarching issues and present suggestions of policies to consider over the next two years. Chris agreed that such a list would be helpful for Council and he suggested adding the things we want to achieve in 2015. He suggested that characterizing an issue as ‘pedestrian safety’ was a better way to frame the aspects of sidewalks, traffic calming and multi-modal. He also suggested that it begin with a positive note such as liking the direction of say- transit improvements and that this is a report of what we heard. Spencer asked about specific neighborhood recommendations. Saul suggested that recommendations should be more general and not pit one neighborhood against another, but seeing that all neighborhoods get what they want. He noted that the report gets on the public record what this committee thought. He was looking for increased financial commitment to address the problems of neighborhoods. If everything was okay we wouldn’t be here. Alan clarified that what we want is not just financial but better ways to communicate with neighborhoods and better processes communicating with city staff . If we collect information so the city can use it we can also use it and facilitate communication. Teddy agreed that communication is the key: especially in consistent messaging, informing and educating and that a consistent, reliable method to communicate to neighborhoods in Asheville was needed. She asserted that we should facilitate. Elaine noted that we do assist neighborhood groups trying to organize or revive such as Lakeshore, Royal Pines or Beaverdam. Spencer asked the question: what is our responsibility to the neighborhoods that feel underserved? Chris answered that some departments responded to specific questions in the area meetings, but also by outreach and assistance to previously unorganized neighborhoods. Spencer expressed the concerns he has heard from the Shiloh community that there is a history of the city hearing their voice but they feel they don’t receive the attention that other neighborhoods get. They seem to have a place at the table and an organized community but when it comes to receiving services they get a low priority. Marsha described the current process each year establishing a list and budget and ranking of priorities for street paving, sidewalk repairs—things that the city used to do in-house but now have to bid out. Spencer said he was talking about equity and asked how can we be assured that City Council can make communities feel more equitable. Chris noted that one such contract was signed at the last Council work session. Spencer made the point that elevating neighborhoods is being an advocate and bringing neighborhoods into the fold of planning. Marsha said a laundry list is important but we need to add what our goal is and what we want to accomplish in our purpose of elevating neighborhoods. Not just identifying priorities but why they are important. Alan asked. “Could we create an action plan to Council for the next two year cycle recommending where to put their emphasis?” The addendum should include comments collected from all the area meetings and the Coffee. Joe will email them to committee members for review. Joe and Alan agreed to meet sometime in December to try to collate and assemble all the information we have into a neighborhoods matrix.

Item II: The State of Black Asheville(conversation continuing): DeWayne shared some statistics on housing, criminal justice and school achievement. He urged us to be aware of strategies to reach all of our communities based on need and historic aspects of community to restore itself. We represent communities throughout the city. We should be aware of the situations and what communities are doing to make them better: such as addressing youth

violence. There are a number of groups trying to come together to address shootings in Hillcrest and Southside. What's needed is to be thinking about strategies—to have a toolbox of strategies addressing their needs and this body supporting communities who are trying to help themselves. Joe asked, “How should we seek out neighborhoods without being judgmental?” Dewayne said it was important to seek out individuals on the front lines who are doing things over time and develop a relationship. Joe asked if it would help to invite potential leaders to some of our meetings. It is important for them to be aware that NAC exists and what we are trying to do. Joe asked if he could suggest an appropriate person to contact. He said that a good start was Sir Charles Gardener, Chair of the Housing Authority Resident's Council. He has been to two of our area meetings so far and has a good support team rebuilding themselves. He noted that Hillcrest and Burton Street were doing an assessment of their strengths and several organizations and non-profits to express why they are there and what goals they have and how to get on the same page and work together. DeWayne explained that we can't speak for the community. Neighborhood solutions have to come from the neighborhoods. We can give advice and assistance and get some traction, but we have to tap into what is going on and keep our distance and let them do their part. The first step is relationship building then NAC can give specific help and advice. It will be good if we, as a board, can listen to the conditions and know why there is a disconnect and feeling of disenfranchisement. UNCA Political Science students have been generating annual reports on the state of Black Asheville since 2007. The next report should come out in February 2015. The statistics are troubling—they keep getting worse. Strategies need to be developed which address the statistics that are unique to historical neighborhoods. Marsha asked for future consideration if it is important to have a housing authority representative on the NAC. Just to be aware of what's happening will take some time. Chris noted that cross fertilization of neighborhoods helping each other was a good thing.

Item IV: Website Profiles Report: Elaine asked for progress reports on getting profiles. Both Teddy and Spencer contacted their assigned list but only received one response so far. Joe emailed his list and received two. Many on his list have no contacts or are public housing. Barber received one from Haw Creek but has to re-contact two. Saul contacted four and got one and some grateful compliments. Alan called his contacts first and explained what we wanted and why and finished his list. DeWayne talked to the Resident's Council but another scheduled meeting was canceled, so he has to do more follow up. Elaine got positive responses from West Asheville Estates and Lucerne Park. She is working on 5 more. She also has some phone numbers for several groups who attended the Festival. Bob had none to report yet. Elaine requested they be completed and emailed to her by our January 26 meeting and she would forward them to Marsha. She reminded us to encourage people not to provide information that they do not want posted. Chris asked for a total number of neighborhood groups from whom we have heard.

Item V: Festival of Neighborhoods: Elaine, Chris, Teddy and Joe met to begin organizing an event as a follow up to the Festival of Neighborhoods and Coffee and Conversation. Elaine outlined the proposal as a response to what was requested most: workshops. The proposed date is Sunday March 22 from 2-4:30 pm. (If unavailable then March 15.) The location suggested was AB-Tech. Workshops suggested were: 1) **Developing a Neighborhood Newsletter;** Montford editor 2) **Communication;** Robert Maddix KRA 3) **Crime/Safety-CPAC;** Jay Gurney 4) **Grassroots Fundraising;** Alan and Suzanne Escovitz 5) **Creating a Vision for your Neighborhood;** Chris and Teddy-Neighborhoods often begin reacting to a crisis; try to find a way to come together pro-actively and ask the right questions: What do we want? How to grow? What do we want to look like? What we believe? Saul suggested **First Steps in Neighborhood Organizing.** Alan suggested more fundamental topics such as **How to develop a neighborhood esprit and a sense of community? What kinds of activities bring neighborhoods together? How to develop by-laws? How do you organize yourself? How to become a non-profit 501(c)3 and fill out IRS Form 401.** Chris suggested developing a checklist of what highly organized neighborhoods look like. Teddy noted that the profiles we are collecting will help identify some neighborhood topic needs. Marsha will start a resource list. Joe suggested the checklist be inclusive of several alternatives and options, not a one size fits all approach. DeWayne suggested **Introduction to Circle Forward:** The dynamic governance model is refined as a way to get communities talking to each other. He was confident a leader from the Housing Authority Residents Council would be able to lead it. This was approved by acclamation as topic six. The next thing discussed was the name. *F.O.N.: 'How Do I Find My Voice?'* was one that was not embraced. Others suggested were *'F.O.N.:What we love and what we would love,' 'F.O.N.:Making them Great'* or simply *"F.O.N.:Workshops. 'F.O.N II Workshops for Building Your Neighborhood"* was also suggested. Next addressed was turnout. A notice will be sent by email after the January 26 meeting to “Save the Date.” When groups are contacted we will ask them to send a delegation. Elaine will encourage attendees to bring the tri-fold displays created for the original Festival or make one for the workshop. Teddy will work on a script of talking points to address the question why it is in your interest to attend. Saul suggested listing the workshop topics along with a brief description. DeWayne suggested that in future it may reflect better to meet in community centers such as Shiloh, Burton Street or the Grant Center rather than UNCA or AB Tech to build momentum around what we are doing. He suggested checking the Edington Center (formerly the Reid Center.) Both of them have advantages. Chris will check availability from AB Tech and DeWayne will check on the Edington Center by our January 12 Meeting.

Item VI: Meetings Attended by Committee: Bob met 2-3 times with Multi-modal establishing criteria for the next phase of sidewalk construction and identifying missing links. The next step wants to use NAC area meetings to get feedback from neighborhoods. They are creating a survey showing criteria and seeing what is emerging as the priority. Marsha is developing an input plan that will clarify NAC's role. DeWayne has attended Good Talk Meetings; Stop the Violence meetings/Rally. There are four different groups and each group is creating a strategy with partners to present to community members. The idea is how to work together to stop the violence. Alan attended the City Council meeting on October 28, the CAN meeting on Affordable Housing on November 10, and the Mayor's Task Force on Development and Permits 3rd meeting on November 13. Their final meeting will be December 11. On November 24 he met with some officers of the Five Points Neighborhood Association about traffic problems and have come up with an idea for a "shareway" which calls for signage or pavement markings indicating use by pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles.. Chris had good thing to say about the CAN meeting and will be at the joint P&Z--City Council Meeting on December 16 to try to work together better. Barber led the CAN Meeting and has been to two HCD meetings about the Housing Trust Fund Policy. The Haw Creek Association is planning several activities such as another yard sale, hiking club and dog show. She also noted that CAN is not through with the issues of Affordable Housing or Short Term Rentals. Joe was also at the CAN meeting and wants more numbers to better understand the actual size and numbers of the housing problem and not just the percentages. He met with Marsha, Teddy and Dan about the redevelopment of the city website and with Jay Gurney about the CPAC. Teddy was also at the awesome CAN meeting and a two hour meeting with Cathy Ball, Alan Glines, Shannon Tuck and Marsha on a KRA issue with the planning process and communication how to smooth out the process to avoid community blow-ups. About the Website Meeting she added that there should be a content manager hired by January and what we want is not a problem. We are being brought in for usability testing. Marsha is creating a map to connect to the profiles we are collecting and make it interactive. Elaine was also at the CAN meeting

Item VII Citizens Police Advisory Committee: Joe, Teddy, and Elaine met with CPAC Chair Jay Gurney. Their goal was to get the Police Chief to interface with the community more. (Shortly after that meeting the Chief decided to retire.) Jay agreed to lead one of the FON workshops. Elaine agreed to come to CPAC's next meeting to explain what we do and how we could interface.

Item VIII Agenda Items for January 12, 2015 meeting: Report from the Neighborhoods; Festival of Neighborhoods II: Workshops Planning; APD Strategic Plan: Lt. Janice Hawkins (*The Quality of Life committee is focused on better communications with neighborhoods and are working on a survey. The city is also planning a survey in January and there is the question should the two be separate or incorporated?*); State of Black Asheville: Hood Talk Meeting: Reaching out to young people and engaging future community leaders (possibly for February)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 pm by Elaine.
Minutes submitted by Joe Fioccola, Secretary