

# Minutes from RNA Meeting on August 8, 2018

Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building  
Room 159 (EOC) at 5:30 PM

## **Committee Members in Attendance**

Kate Lewis, Chair  
Charles E. Wilson, Vice-Chair  
Ellie Rigby, Secretary  
Bill Houck, Jr.  
Jamaal L. Jackson  
Cindy Pasternak  
Russell E. Thomas

## **Committee Members Absent**

Barbara Evans  
David Parr  
Dwight Steele, Jr.  
Johnny Williams

## **Guests**

Kathy Coats – Descendent of the Huff Family  
Wayne Leftwich, Senior City Planner, City of Roanoke

## **Welcome to Members and Guests**

Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and welcomed all members and guests.

## **Adoption of the Meeting Agenda**

Mr. Jackson moved to adopt the August 8, 2018 RNA Meeting Agenda. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion after asking if Ms. Coats could be added as a guest speaker. Hearing no further discussion the motion passed unanimously.

## **Reading and Approval of Minutes**

The July 11, 2018 RNA Meeting Minutes were distributed for review. Ms. Pasternak made a motion to approve the July 2018 RNA Meeting Minutes as presented. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion to approve the July 2018 RNA Meeting Minutes passed unanimously.

## **Guest Presentations**

- **Kathy Coats – Descendent of the Huff Family**

Ms. Pasternak introduced Ms. Coats who she met at the memorial held following the demolition of the historic Huff-Rutrough House located in the heart of the Riverdale Farm neighborhood. Ms. Coats advised she is the great- great-granddaughter of Issac Huff who occupied the house between 1874 and 1891. Ms. Coats said that she did not know until the demolition of the house who her family was. She became very interested in the history of the area – particularly the Gainsboro area that was established before Roanoke and the Southeast area that at one time was occupied by pasturelands where the wastewater treatment facility is today. She noted she has become interested in what the vision of Southeast area of the city was like during the 19<sup>th</sup> century versus what it looks like today. Ms. Coats stated she would like to help the neighborhoods become more like what they were envisioned to be. She stated

her research showed the Shawnee, Cherokee, and Cheyenne Native Americans lived in this area that is not reflected in local histories. She also advised that George Washington visited here at one point and an area near Poages Mill was actually a fort during the Revolutionary War. Mr. Clement suggested that she visit the Virginia Room at the Roanoke Public Library downtown to further her research advising that Ms. Joel Richert had researched the history of her historic Old Southwest SW neighborhood and had donated her findings to the library's Virginia Room.

## **Reports of Special Interest**

- **City Plan 2040 – Wayne Leftwich**

Mr. Leftwich advised he wanted to make certain the RNA is aware of all of the dates of the Open House Community Meetings scheduled to take place during August regarding the new PlanRoanoke Comprehensive Plan. He noted they had received 350 responses to the survey posted on the website so far and that they are hoping to receive a lot more after the meetings. Mr. Leftwich advised they are going to try and use the library computers and have some tablets available outside of the meeting rooms during the meetings for attendees to use to take the survey. He also noted they will begin signing people up for the working groups during the August meetings and, after assigning each group with a theme, will post this information on the PlanRoanoke website. He stated the purpose of these groups will be to establish goals for the new plan. Mr. Leftwich advised Planning Department staff will come back to the community in January or February of 2019 with the draft goals and ultimately hope to have a draft comprehensive plan by late summer in 2019. Ms. Rigby asked if the survey results would be made public. Mr. Leftwich responded that the results will be made available to the public for the most part as they hope to have a minimum of 2,500 responses and the answers to the open-ended questions would be more difficult to post. He advised they have hired the first of two (2) temporary planners who have been approved for two (2) years specifically to assist with the new Comprehensive Planning process. Mr. Leftwich stated the recently hired planner had attended Roanoke College and Hollins University and had received their Master's Degree from the University of Virginia. He noted they are still looking to fill the other position shortly having interviewed and are currently down to the finalists.

## **Neighborhood Reports**

### **Mr. Thomas**

#### *Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association*

Mr. Thomas advised he had attempted to contact the president of the association but had received no response. Mr. Clement advised the group is active and he will verify the group's contact information.

#### *Grandin Court Neighborhood Association*

Mr. Thomas advised the group discussed the Blackwell House (old caretaker's cabin) located in Fishburn Park during their most recent meeting. He noted the group is still pushing to keep the cabin as public. He also advised the group is discussing a new slogan for the neighborhood. Mr. Thomas also advised the group discussed the Shenandoah Life wooded property referring to it as "Save the Woodlands". Chair Lewis advised at this point there is no indication that Carilion Clinic, the owner of the property, has found another developer since the prior developer, Berkley Hall, backed out of the development deal several months ago.

### **Ms. Pasternak**

#### *Belmont Neighborhood Association*

Ms. Pasternak stated the group may dissolve due to lack of interest and attendance.

#### *Riverland/Walnut Hill Neighbors*

Ms. Pasternak advised this group is also having a challenge getting neighbors involved.

*Southeast Action Forum*

Ms. Pasternak advised the recent 'Love Southeast Fest' was a great success as roughly 1,200 people attended and the feedback was great. She also advised the recent National Night Out event held in Jackson Park and hosted by all of the SE neighborhood organizations and watch groups was also well attended.

**Vice-Chair Wilson**

*Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance*

Vice-Chair Wilson advised the group has not met for a while but that he has reached out to the group's president who has advised their membership that he is on board.

*Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Forum*

Vice-Chair Wilson advised that the group, in partnership with the Loudon-Melrose Neighborhood Organization had hosted a very successful National Night Out event in Staunton Park.

**Chair Lewis**

*Neighbors in South Roanoke*

Chair Lewis advised that the Roanoke Police Department had hosted a police cookout at the Neighbors in South Roanoke June meeting. She noted during the meeting the Police Chief advised he is not in favor of the legalization of marijuana and is in favor of arming School Resource Officers. Chair Lewis advised she explained to the group how the RNA is attempting to receive more information regarding neighborhood priorities and incorporating this information into the planning process. The president of the organization, Ms. Duerk, advised one of their priorities was better communication between the Department of Economic Development and the neighborhoods. Specifically, Ms. Duerk advised the neighborhood does not want the old Kmart building located on Franklin Road to be developed into a Self-Storage facility. She stated the neighborhood should have been included in the discussion with the developer earlier in the process. Chair Lewis noted Ms. Duerk suggested the city incorporate into their planning process that potential developers be asked by the city to reach out to neighborhoods for their input when devising a development plan that may affect that neighborhood as she feels that they should be part of the conversation.

Mr. Leftwich interjected that the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) did share the plans for the Kmart redevelopment with Ms. Duerk noting that the area is not actually considered part of the South Roanoke Neighborhood Plan but rather is considered part of the Franklin-Colonial Neighborhood Plan. He noted Economic Development staff generally do approach neighborhoods about major development decisions possibly impacting their neighborhoods.

*Grandin Village Business Association*

Chair Lewis advised they had a successful clean-up of Tarpley Park. She also noted City Council recently voted to tear down the neighborhood's Fire Station #7 and replace it with a new building.

*The Peacemakers*

Chair Lewis advised she is uncertain who to contact for this organization.

**Ms. Rigby**

No report.

**Mr. Jackson**

*Wildwood and Greater Grandview*

No report.

*Youth Services Citizens Board*

Mr. Jackson noted the Youth Services Citizens Board meetings begin at 4:30 p.m. He noted the Board is planning their annual Youth Summit to take place on Saturday, September 8th at Patrick Henry High School. He also advised the Board was very excited to have an RNA representative attend their meeting.

## **Mr. Clement**

Mr. Clement advised he had been working with the Police Department to create several new Neighborhood Watch groups. He advised the Windward Condominiums, located across the railroad tracks behind Tanglewood Mall, is forming a Neighborhood Watch and held a National Night Out event in August. He noted they are concerned about rentals attracting problem tenants. Mr. Clement is encouraging them to be more of a social group that receives police reports during their meetings. He noted that during a recent visit to the Westwind Apartments during National Night Out that he had asked one of the attendees why she was not participating in the neighborhood watch to which she replied that she did not because of the perception of the neighborhood watch as meddling in other people's business and that they should be more social. He also advised that Sandi Byrd is currently the primary contact person for that group.

Mr. Clement also advised the Sanford-Lynn Neighborhood Watch was in the process of being created that is located in Southwest area of the city between Route 220 and Franklin Road noting the neighborhood consists of thirty (30) or so in the neighborhood. Mr. Clement advised Michael Fox is currently the primary contact and that their next meeting is scheduled for Monday August 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at Sweet Donkey Coffee. He noted they also have neighbors who hesitate to participate in a neighborhood watch because they do not understand that a neighborhood watch is not about tattling on the neighbors but rather it is about keeping their neighborhood safe and keeping the criminals at bay who are adversely affecting the quality of life of that neighborhood.

Mr. Clement also advised he and the Police Department had been working with the residents of Stratford Village Apartments, located on Brandon Ave. across from Brandon Oaks, to create a Neighborhood Watch at that location. He noted roughly 15 residents were in attendance at the first meeting but it appeared that the management of the complex wanted nothing to do with the organization of a neighborhood watch group. A follow-up meeting was held to establish a schedule to get the group underway but shortly thereafter, one of the group's organizers contacted him and Police Officer Josh Johnson to advise there was no longer an interest in organizing a neighborhood watch for the apartment community. Mr. Clement advised he will keep RNA posted should something change.

## **Reports of Officers – Standing Committees**

### **Unfinished Business**

- **Update re Survey re Disposal of Properties in Public Parks - Lewis**

Chair Lewis advised that at the July 2018 RNA meeting that the RNA had discussed the idea of posting the survey regarding the disposal of properties in public parks to the Plan Roanoke website. Ms. Rigby made a motion to move the survey regarding the disposal of properties in public parks to the Plan Roanoke website. Mr. Jackson seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Chair Lewis advised she will work with Mr. Leftwich to enable the move to take place.

- **Update re Online Form for Reporting of Neighborhood Concerns - Lewis**

Chair Lewis advised that an online form for the reporting of neighborhood concerns is currently on the RNA website. She reminded the RNA that a discussion was held during last month's RNA meeting to also place the form on the City Council website. Ms. Rigby made a motion that the online form for the reporting of neighborhood concerns also be placed on the City Council website if possible. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Chair Lewis advised she would reach out to the City Clerk's office to inquire about placing the online form for the reporting of neighborhood concerns on the City Council website

- **Review RNA Structure (Neighborhood Reports/Agenda/Social Media) - Lewis**

Chair Lewis reminded the RNA that during their last meeting held in July that the RNA decided to table further discussion regarding the restructuring of neighborhood assignments based upon the geographical quadrants of the city. Chair Lewis explained that there was a discussion of possibly moving the assignments of neighborhood groups to be more based upon the city’s geographical quadrants rather than as-desired. She noted that doing so could benefit the observing of patterns developing within the quadrants of the city. Mr. Jackson suggested that the RNA consider moving toward quadrants as the RNA made neighborhood assignments moving forward to which all agreed.

- **Gun Buy Back Program - Lewis**

Chair Lewis noted she will schedule a meeting with the Chief of Police to discuss the idea of a Gun Buy Back Program. Vice-Chair Wilson volunteered to join her for this meeting. Moving forward, Chair Lewis advised the RNA needs to consider how to go after funding to support the program. She also advised there will be some code changes coming up in September or October that will address the definition of neighborhood blight and possibility create a land bank.

## New Business

### Open Forum/Announcements

- **City-wide National Night Out**

Ms. Pasternak said that there was a suggestion made by Mark Hostetter of Old Southwest and Terry Huxhold of the SE Action Forum of the city possibly holding one (1) large National Night Out event next year in Elmwood Park. Mr. Clement responded that National Night Out events are planned by the individual neighborhoods and each event is unique just as each city neighborhood is unique although similarities exist. He noted that many communities are not made up of neighborhoods as Roanoke and used the Town of Vinton as an example of a community that is not comprised of separate neighborhoods and where a community-wide national night out events is held. Mr. Clement reminded the RNA that Roanoke is a City of neighborhoods with a history of allowing neighborhoods to decide what their boundaries are and what their events are and that it should not be the city’s role to dictate to the neighborhood groups where and when to host a neighborhood event. He noted that if the city neighborhood groups desired to come together to host a large combined event, similar to what was already taking place by the SE neighborhoods that the city would readily accept their decision to do so. But he also expressed a concern that such an event would only become another city-wide festival-style event rather than one that focused on the individual neighborhood where it was being held and the individual neighborhood’s partnership with the Police Department. He emphasized National Night Out events as hosted by neighborhoods allow them to personally recognize the efforts resulting from neighborhood-police partnerships. These events also help to create neighborhood pride, bring neighbors together within the neighborhoods where they live, and send a message that their neighborhood is organized and in partnership with the police to fight criminal activities. He reminded the RNA that National Night Out events are for the benefit of the neighborhoods who host them as opposed for the benefit of those who visit them. Mr. Jackson suggested a separate city-wide event could be held the night after to which Mr. Clement reminded the RNA of the annual City Neighborhoods Potluck Dinner and Awards Celebration which this year has been scheduled for Friday, November 9.

- **August 1 – 31**

- **Monday, August 13<sup>th</sup>**

- **Saturday, August 18<sup>th</sup>**

- **Thurs. August 23**

- **Sat. August 25**

#### **Plan Roanoke Community Meetings**

Library branches across Roanoke (see attached for times and dates)

#### **Melrose-Orange Target Area Meeting**

Goodwill Industries, 2502 Melrose Ave. NW (6pm)

#### **Festival of India**

Elmwood Park (11a – 5p)

#### **State of the City Address**

Hotel Roanoke, (7:30a-9a)

#### **2018 Roanoke Wing Fest**

Dr. Pepper Park, (12n-7p)

