

# Minutes from RNA Meeting on May 9, 2018

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

## **Committee Members in Attendance**

Kate Lewis, Vice-Chair  
Ellie Rigby, Secretary  
Barbara Evans  
David Parr (arrived at 5:40pm)  
Cindy Pasternak  
Charles E. Wilson

## **Committee Members Absent**

Dwight Steele, Jr.  
Johnny Williams

## **Guests**

Joe Cobb, Vice-Mayor Elect  
John Garland, City Council  
Alison Blanton, Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, Inc.  
Carolyn Coles, Total Action for Progress SwiftStart Two Generation Program  
Russell Thomas, Potential RNA Member

## **Welcome to Members and Guests**

Vice-Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 5:32 and welcomed all members and guests.

## **Reading and Approval of Minutes**

The RNA's March 2018 Meeting Minutes were distributed for review as no meeting was held in April 2018 due to a lack of quorum. Ms. Evans made a motion to approve the March 2018 RNA Meeting Minutes as presented. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

## **Guest Presentations**

*Carolyn Coles, Total Action for Progress SwiftStart Two Generation Program Coordinator*

Ms. Coles noted the SwiftStart program is aimed at helping adults receive job training stating applicants must have a high school diploma or GED to participate in one of three (3) job training categories: health care, information technology, and advance manufacturing. She advised the SwiftStart program pays for the tuition and if childcare is a barrier the program will also pay for the childcare with licensed childcare providers. Ms. Coles stated the program is in partnership with the Virginia Employment Commission, Western Virginia Workforce Development and Virginia Western Community College to help people become qualified to participate. She noted if one is currently employed and making over \$11.55 an hour that they may be disqualified. She also noted if an employer says they want to keep a person employed but are unable to promote them without them receiving an additional certification that the SwiftStart program will pay for those additional courses to help the person achieve their promotion. Ms. Coles stated they have a 3-day "reality check" program that allows entrants to understand the commitments of time for classes, study, etc. Discussions are also conducted to make certain participants understand the importance of banking, good savings patterns and better spending patterns.

Chair Lewis asked if admission to the program is rolling to which Ms. Coles replied it depends upon when the classes for those programs start.

Mr. Parr asked how it is decided which training program applicants go into to which Ms. Coles responded as there are three general areas for possible employment that program staff work with the applicants to help them decide which programs to pursue. Mr. Parr asked how many people are currently pursuing the program to which Ms. Coles replied they try to have one (1) orientation per month and have 6-12 people per orientation. Ms. Coles noted this is a pilot program for the Department of Labor and that these categories were selected for our area. She reiterated the goal of the program is to help unemployed or underemployed people with young children into higher paying jobs. She also stated grandparents with primary custody of grandchildren also qualify.

*Alison Blanton, President, Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, Inc. (RVPF)*

Ms. Blanton spoke about the RVPF's efforts to have the City reconsider demolishing Fire Station #7. She noted the foundation fully respects Roanoke Fire/EMS Chief Hoback's desire to provide a new state of the art facility but thinks that it can be accomplished while still preserving the existing fire house. Ms. Blanton said the foundation sees this as a broader issue for City residents as they have concerns about how the City addresses historic properties that they own. She noted in early April 2018, the City Manager determined that the alternatives presented to save the existing structure were compelling enough to reconsider demolishing the original building. The City is currently meeting with SFCS (architect of record) to seriously consider how the existing station can be saved. Ms. Blanton also advised that the building was assigned to the statewide list of most endangered sites in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Chair Lewis asked if Fire Station 7 issue could be used as a lesson as to what measures neighborhood associations can utilize in the future to help save city-owned historic structures. Ms. Blanton responded that the foundation had originally listed the building as endangered in 2009 but then the funding did not happen. She noted foundation representatives had approached the Raleigh Court Neighborhood Association at the beginning of the latest process but the City was not willing to consider alternatives. Then op-eds and social media campaigns ensued. Ms. Blanton suggested she would like to talk to the City Manager and staff to help identify the historic resources that exist, their context and why they are important to the community. For upon doing so, should the city have a project come along certain processes would be in place. She noted Federal permits, funding or licensing are subjected to Federal Section 106 to make certain one arm of the government isn't licensing or saying something is important on behalf of another arm of the government. Ms. Blanton stated municipalities have to show an investigation of alternatives and consideration of impact noting the City could consider the buildings that they own. Mr. Garland suggested the RNA takes a position on whether the fire station issue is important or not and verbalize that to City Council.

Mr. Parr suggested that after our monthly meetings that we actually go to City Council. Ms. Blanton said that the RNA is a good body to report to since they serve as the liaison to the City of Roanoke.

## **Reports of Special Interest**

- **Neighborhood Reports**

### **Mr. Parr**

No major issues to report. .

### **Ms. Evans**

*Grandin Court Neighborhood Association*

Ms. Evans noted organization president Freeda Cathcart had made an appointment with the Mayor to try and have the Fishburn Park Caretaker's cottage removed off of the market and returned back the city's Parks & Rec oversight. She stated the Grandin Court community still believes they can help take care of the building and do something with it but needs the help of RNA. Mr. Clement will send the RNA a copy of the proposal Ms. Cathcart presented to City Council.

**Ms. Rigby**

No reports.

**Chair Lewis**

*Grandin Village Business Association*

Chair Lewis noted the Association is having problems with pan handlers so they asked if they could require them to obtain business licenses. She also noted that Daytime Blue Ridge asked if they could have a week long special on the Grandin Village. Chair Lewis would like for them to look at other neighborhoods to be featured on the segment and perhaps the RNA could put grant monies towards that endeavor. Chair Lewis noted she would reach out to them.

**Ms. Pasternak**

*Riverdale Farm Neighborhood Organization*

Ms. Pasternak noted Ms. Dominique Sparrow, a family service specialist from the City of Roanoke, presented information to raise awareness for the need to foster children even if only for a few hours per week. She also talked about the meth and opioid epidemics. Ms. Pasternak also noted Project Linus representatives spoke about collecting and distributing handmade blankets to children in need of comfort. Ms. Pasternak advised the 1905 Riverdale mansion was demolished and that the community was grieving the loss. She also advised the soccer complex is moving forward and the old Viscose plant is being targeted for redevelopment by private investment as a building within the complex was recently rezoned for apartments.

**Reports of Officers – Standing Committees**

- **Update from Neighborhoods First Committee**

No report.

- **Update re RNA Welcoming Committee**

Mr. Parr provided some background to the new RNA members regarding the Welcoming Committee topic. Further discussion was tabled until the next RNA meeting to allow Mr. Parr's draft proposal to be distributed to the RNA for their review.

- **Update re RNA By-Law Committee - Lewis**

Chair Lewis presented the proposed changes to the RNA By-laws that were presented at the previous RNA meeting. Following a brief discussion, Ms. Rigby made a motion to approve the proposed RNA By-law changes as presented. Mr. Parr seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Chair Lewis noted the By-law changes will go into effect at the next RNA meeting.

- **Creation of Survey re Disposal of Properties in Parks – Lewis**

Chair Lewis noted there had been no response regarding the creation of a survey to address the disposal of properties located in city parks. Councilman Garland reminded the RNA that Council recently participated in two meetings regarding proposals from private contractors to erect cell phone towers within two city parks and suggested the RNA have someone attend those community meetings. He stated he had attended one of the meetings and Vice-Mayor Elect Cobb attended both noting there was not much participation from Preston Park residents. Councilman Garland suggested the RNA invite City staff to attend a future RNA meeting to discuss the proposal being considered.

- **Creation of Online Form for Reporting of Neighborhood Concerns**

Mr. Clement distributed a draft survey based upon what the RNA had talked about in prior meetings. Following a brief discussion it was decided the RNA will choose the best course for soliciting feedback via the surveys. Ms. Coles spoke to the continual challenges of engaging neighborhood participation. Councilman Garland spoke to the need for continual reports from the RNA to City Council regarding neighborhood concerns.

## New Business

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

Chair Lewis proposed restructuring the neighborhood meetings that RNA members attend into quadrants. She suggested if the RNA is open to this idea that she will send a proposal to everyone. Chair Lewis noted this would also compel RNA members to attend other municipal or informational meetings regarding the concerns occurring in and impacting those communities. This restructure would also allow RNA members to attend City Council meetings to represent quadrant-related neighborhood information. Chair Lewis also advised she would like to schedule regular meetings with City Manager Cowell to share the concerns of the neighborhoods. Following a brief discussion, it was decided that Chair Lewis will draft an outline of the direction she envisions and send to Mr. Clement to include in the next mailing prior to the June RNA meeting. Chair Lewis and Ms. Rigby volunteered to comprise a committee to present these ideas to the RNA at the next meeting. Mr. Parr noted that the new City Manager is a good listener and reinforced that the RNA needed to meet with him.

- **Special Election for RNA Vice-Chair – All**

Chair Lewis advised the RNA that the Vice-Chair position was vacant and the RNA need to hold a special election to fill the vacancy. Mr. Wilson volunteered to be considered for Vice-Chair position. Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Wilson was elected unanimously.

- **Review RNA Budget – Lewis**

Mr. Clement demonstrated samples of RNA logo embroidered shirts. He noted the cost of the shirts were \$16.50 for a polyester/cotton blend and \$22 for 100% cotton. The cost of the shirt is taken from the RNA budget. The shirts are light blue or grey. Ms. Rigby made a motion to allow the expenditure for RNA members to purchase a shirt. Mr. Parr seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. RNA members were advised to notify Mr. Clement about which shirt/size they would like. Mr. Clement reminded the RNA that current budget funds have to be spent by June 30<sup>th</sup> and the RNA has money remaining. He proposed the RNA use their remaining funds toward the purchase of the awards for use at this year's neighborhood awards dinner. Mr. Parr motioned that the RNA use their remaining FY18 budget funds for the purchase of the awards for use at this year's neighborhood awards dinner. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Clement advised he would balance the purchase of the trophies out of his operating budget if the purchase exceeded the balance of RNA's budget. Mr. Clement also suggested that the RNA form a committee for expending the RNA FY19 budget.

## Open Forum/Announcements

- **Tues, May 1-May 31 Neighborhood Month Activities**  
(Visit [www.roanokeva.gov/neighborhoodmonth](http://www.roanokeva.gov/neighborhoodmonth) for schedule of planned activities)
- **Monday May 14 Melrose Orange Target Area Meeting**  
Goodwill industries, 2502 Melrose Ave NW, 6:00pm)
- **Monday, May 14 City Council Adopts Budgets and Update to the HUD Consolidated Plan**  
(City Council Chambers, 2:00pm)
- **Monday, May 28 Memorial Day**  
(City Offices Closed)

Councilman Garland also advised that City Council Priority Planning Retreat will be held on July 31<sup>st</sup> to establish what Council's priorities are before establishing the city's FY20 budget.

## Closed Session

Ms. Lewis motioned for a closed session at 7:11pm to discuss RNA appointments. Ms. Rigby seconded the motion. Hearing no additional discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Garland and Mr. Thomas left the room. Mr. Garland reminded the RNA that he is the person who is charged with recommending RNA member appointments to City Council. Chair Lewis responded she would advise him if RNA approves any appointments. Following the closed session, Chair Lewis reconvened the RNA meeting. Ms. Evans motioned, with respect to the

Closed Meeting just held, that each RNA member, certified to the best of their knowledge, that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements - under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act - were discussed, heard or considered by the RNA members in attendance. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

## **Adjourn**

Chair Lewis adjourned the meeting at 7:19pm.