

# Minutes from RNA Meeting on March 14, 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)  
Dwight Steele, Jr. (arrived at 5:38pm)  
Johnny Williams  
Charles E. Wilson

## Committee Members Absent

Nicole Harris, Chair  
Byron L. Hamlar  
Christina Hatch

## Guests

Faye Gilchrist, City of Roanoke, iRoanoke and QAlert system Administrator  
Colleen Burns, RNA Applicant

## Welcome to Members and Guests

Vice-Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 5:34pm and welcomed all members and guests.

## Reading and Approval of Minutes

The RNA's January 10, 2018 Meeting Minutes were distributed for review. Mr. Parr make a motion to approve the January 10, 2018 RNA Meeting Minutes and Mr. Williams seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

## Guest Presentations

Vice-Chair Lewis welcomed the guest speaker at which time Mr. Clement introduced Ms. Faye Gilchrist noting she administers the city's iRoanoke and QAlert systems. He stated he had asked her to attend the meeting in response to the RNA's conversation at a prior meeting regarding the development of an online form to provide an opportunity for neighborhoods to submit their concerns and feedback to the RNA. Ms. Gilchrist stated Roanoke citizens can call 540-853-2000 to report Citizen Requests, send a tweet, submit an issue online at [www.roanokeva.gov](http://www.roanokeva.gov) and also submit a service request through the iRoanoke app. All of these requests go through the city's QAlert system. The system works like 3-1-1 or a de-centralized call service. Ms. Gilchrist noted the names of citizens are in the QAlert system if they have registered to vote or previously submitted a request. She urged the RNA members if they are talking to Neighborhood Groups or citizens about iRoanoke/QAlert system to remind them to make certain to input the location of the issue with their request by clicking on a button located in the bottom right corner of the screen that look like the following:



Ms. Gilchrist advised that the city trains their call takers to be certain to ask for the location of the issue or complaint being submitted by the citizen. She stated she visited the Roanoke County website to look at how they have their citizens report neighborhood issues which appeared to be a form similar to that the city used year's ago.

Ms. Gilchrist noted that on the back end of the city's QAlert system, there are many different categories of complaints and issues that citizens can choose from. She advised that the QAlert system takes their complaints/issues along with the address location and automatically routes the issue to the city staff person responsible for resolving it. There is no system in place to have complaints routed according to particular neighborhoods as they are only routed to the person responsible for resolving it.

Ms. Gilchrist noted that she understands the RNA might like to receive a report specific to city neighborhoods but noted the city holds the QAlert system information close as it includes much personal information on those submitting a complaint/issue. As a result, any FOIA requests received are forwarded to the City Attorney for his review prior to releasing it to the requester. She also noted there is a cost associated with FOIA requests submitted to the city. She advised that she can build reports based on what different city departments' request. She can also categorize the reports by specific addresses so that if there are complaints that are aggregated by many citizens in the same place, the city can identify these as a critical problem. Ms. Gilchrist advised a report could be built that would be inclusive of all areas with the same specific problem and then from there they can add filters, such as addresses that then could help generate reports pertaining to very specific areas.

Vice-Chair Lewis asked if the RNA could be notified if there are citizen requests for the neighborhoods where RNA members are assigned. She also asked if there is an avenue in this system so that neighborhood concerns could be submitted as well. Ms. Gilchrist responded that the city's Citizen Engagement Officer, Ms. Whitney Slightam will be attending a future RNA meeting and this would be a great question to ask her. Vice-chair Lewis responded the RNA was interested in knowing the concerns residents might have with their neighborhoods which is why the form on the Roanoke County website was of interest. Ms. Gilchrist responded she created an online "Lunch with the Mayor" Employee Request Form and suggested that RNA create a similar form and make it available on the Office of Neighborhood Services and RNA website pages. The form can be designed where submissions go to Mr. Clement who then could disseminate to the RNA. However, Ms. Gilchrist also noted the city may have concerns of the possibility of citizens using this form with the expectation of their concerns being resolved instead of reporting issues through the city's QAlert system. She re-emphasized that the RNA inform citizens to contact the city if they do not receive a notification that their concern has been addressed.

Ms. Gilchrist suggested RNA members can make a request for a report for a particular neighborhood through the Office of Neighborhood Services if needed. Mr. Clement asked if there was away in which citizens could review online the status of an issue they submitted. Ms. Gilchrist responded that the QAlert system does not require citizens to enter their personal information in order to make a citizen request or report an issue which means that they cannot necessarily check on the status of their requests. Mr. Clement asked if the system could be enhanced where a citizen could enter a complaint number to check on its status. Ms. Gilchrist responded that funding would be required to possibly accomplish this which is the reason that QAlert is not integrated with Trakit, the city's E-Permits system.

## **Reports of Special Interest**

- **Neighborhood Reports**

### **Mr. Parr**

*Old Southwest, Inc.*

No neighborhood reports. Mr. Parr advised on 3/15/18 he and Alison Blanton are presenting at the Old Southwest meeting about their opinions regarding the demolition and replacement of the city's Fire Station #7 located on Memorial Avenue SW in the Raleigh Court neighborhood.

### **Ms. Evans**

*Grandin Court Neighborhood Association*

Ms. Evans noted the organization is regrouping their efforts regarding the historic caretaker's cottage located in the neighborhood's Fishburn Park. She advised the group is looking at ways to possibly raise money again but noted

they do not have enough neighborhood volunteer participation to undertake what Old Southwest, Inc. did with the city's Highland Park historic caretaker's house, the Alexander Gish House. She reemphasized that the organization is trying to come up with ways to save the house.

**Ms. Rigby**

*Melrose Orange Target Area*

Ms. Rigby noted the most recent meeting had been postponed until next month.

*Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance*

Ms. Rigby advised she could no longer attend the Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance meetings as they conflicted with a work-related meeting scheduled at the same time.

**Ms. Lewis**

*Grandin Village Business Association*

Vice-Chair Lewis reported that Bethlehem Grocery will be locating into the prior Nopales Restaurant location within the Grandin Village. She also noted there was a mugging reported in the parking lot behind the Roanoke Natural Foods Co-op but it was felt the assailants knew each other and that the neighborhood is on top of it.

*Neighbors in South Roanoke*

Vice-Chair Lewis reported that the historic fire station located on Crystal Spring Avenue SW will soon be relocated to a location on top of the Carilion parking garage located on McClanahan Street SW. She noted plans call for the current historic fire station structure to be disposed of by the city for other uses as opposed to being demolished.

*Melrose Rugby Neighborhood Forum, Inc.*

No report.

**Mr. Williams**

*RRHA Resident Council - Melrose Towers*

Mr. Williams advised the Roanoke Redevelopment & Housing Authority had recently finished renovating the bathrooms in Melrose Towers, He also noted the Authority had recently hosted a party for the residents to celebrate Valentine's Day and were planning another to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

*Hurt Park Neighborhood Alliance*

No report.

*NNEO*

Mr. Williams advised the organization was working on creating a community garden on their Loudon Avenue property.

**Mr. Steele**

*Historic Gainsboro Preservations District*

No report.

*Northwest Neighborhood Improvement Council (NNIC)*

No report.

*Gainsborough SW Community Organization, Inc.*

Mr. Steele advised that at the recent meeting of the Gainsborough SW Community Organization, Inc., a police officer provided a report that neighborhood break-ins and domestic abuse calls were down. He also noted a representative from Roanoke Social Services spoke on adoption. Mr. Steele also advised the organization provided some recaps regarding the upcoming block party being planned for May Neighborhood Month. He stated one of the

greatest areas of interest discussed was the culinary school's expansion currently underway across from the Dumas Center on Henry Street. Mr. Steele noted a representative from Virginia Western Community College who administers the Culinary Arts Program was present at the meeting and talked about the project. According to Mr. Steele, the speaker stated plans called for a display to be placed in the building that will tell the history of Henry Street and of significant people from the neighborhood. He also stated the building would also include a theatre that the organization was hoping to name after a prominent member of the neighborhood. Mr. Steele said the community is apprehensive that these activities being undertaken is just another group/organization doing what they want to do in the neighborhood as the naming of the theatre is just a token being thrown at them. He stated the neighborhood organization asked how the community would be able to engage with the building for which they were advised there would be a community room that could be rented out. The feeling is that there is nothing that invites the neighborhood into the building. Mr. Steele advised a grand opening of the newly renovated building would be taking place soon. Several RNA members made suggestions as to ways to include the neighborhood with the building including the possibility of including a café in the new building, sending out a mailing inviting the neighborhood to the grand opening, inviting people who are interested in learning more about a career in Culinary Arts, or possibly providing a scholarship for people who live in the neighborhood to participate in the Culinary Arts Program.

#### *Youth Services Board*

Mr. Steele advised the Youth Services Board recently wrapped up their mini-summit held on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. He noted it was an event directed towards the youth of Roanoke City as perspective employers and speakers were there explaining how the youth attendees could acquire internships. Mr. Steele also advised that the Board was currently preparing for the Global Youth Services Day scheduled on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

- **Review of Neighborhood Assignments**

Vice Chair Lewis noted this was the time for RNA members to discuss desired changes be made to their neighborhood assignments. Mr. Wilson volunteered to attend the *Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance and Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Forum, Inc.* meetings. Vice-Chair Lewis reminded the RNA that although she serves on the *Raleigh Court Neighborhood Association, Inc.*'s Board that Ms. Evans would continue attending the neighborhood group's meetings and reporting their activities and concerns to the RNA. Vice-Chair Lewis suggested the RNA should have a member attending The Peacemakers, Inc. meetings after attending a recent meeting at The Hope Center located on 11th Street NW where she learned the organization feels they are underrepresented in the City of Roanoke. She stated she would find out when the group meets and advise the RNA at their next meeting.

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

- **Update from Neighborhoods First Committee**

A report was tabled until the return of RNA Chair Nicole Harris.

- **Update re RNA Welcoming Committee**

Mr. Parr reminded everyone he was seeking individual feedback on the draft report he distributed during the January 2018 meeting before submitting a final recommendation for the RNA' consideration. He reminded the RNA to email their comments only to him and to not include the other RNA members in their correspondence.

- **FY2019 RNA Neighborhood Development Grant Program Application Review Committee**

Mr. Parr advised the 2018 RNA Grant Review Committee, comprised of Mr. Williams, Vice-Chair Lewis and himself had met with Mr. Clement to review the applications submitted by neighborhood organizations desiring to participate in the FY 2018-2019 Neighborhood Development Grant Program. He distributed a spreadsheet noting all of the applications received, the funding amounts requested, the sources from where the funding would come from, and the projects and funding amounts recommended by the committee for RNA approval. He summarized that the committee recommended all of the CDBG proposals be funded 100% except for two: the proposal

submitted by the Southeast Action Forum, Inc. which the committee felt the proposal as submitted was too vague to fund and as such was judged as incomplete, and the Old Southwest, Inc. proposal requesting funds to send too many people to neighborhood conferences. Mr. Parr noted all of the neighborhood groups who requested funding to send members to neighborhood conferences and other related-neighborhood trainings were funded at the same amounts based upon the cost of sending one (1) member to the Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference in Portsmouth, VA in September 2018, and one (1) member to the national Neighborhoods USA conference in Palm Springs in May 2019. He reminded the RNA that the manner in which the neighborhood organizations utilize the funds received to attend neighborhood-related conferences and trainings is used at the discretion of the organization as to how it feels it could best benefit from doing so. Mr. Parr also noted the Grant Review Committee recommended funding of all city-funded projects submitted except for two: Old Southwest, Inc. who requested funds to offset their annual fundraiser Parlor Tour expenses, and Mountain View Neighborhood Association, Inc. to purchase tools to be used in neighborhood clean-ups. Mr. Steele made a motion to accept the recommendation of the RNA Grant Review Committee to fund the FY2018-2019 Neighborhood Development Grant projects as presented. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

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

Vice-Chair Lewis reminded the RNA that the draft survey is available for their review and feedback on the Google Drive.

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

Following a brief discussion, the RNA asked Mr. Clement to develop a draft form for reporting neighborhood concerns that could be placed on the RNA webpage. Mr. Clement advised he will create a draft online form for the RNA to review at their next meeting.

## **New Business**

- **RNA Bylaws Change Proposal**

Mr. Clement reported Chair Harris' proposed that an amendment be made to Section 2, Paragraph A of the RNA By-Laws. He distributed a copy of the current RNA By-Laws to the members and referred them to Section 2, Paragraph A that reads as follows: *General. The RNA shall consist of thirteen (13) members, seven (7) of which shall be appointed by City Council. The seven Council-appointed members shall select 6 additional members. All members shall serve rotating 3-year terms pursuant to Council Resolution 36397-061603. Members are eligible to be re-appointed for up to three consecutive full terms. Members are not required to be a resident of the City of Roanoke.* Mr. Clement stated Chair Harris proposed that all members of the RNA, both City-Council appointed members and RNA-appointed members, be able to vote on accepting new RNA-appointed members onto the committee and desired the RNA to consider changing their By-Laws to reflect this. Mr. Clement suggested the RNA consider creating a RNA By-Law Committee to research and possibly develop an amendment to this paragraph that could be presented at a future RNA meeting for the RNA's consideration per the guidelines set forth in Section 7. Amendments of the current RNA By-Laws. Following a brief discussion, Ms. Rigby made a motion that the RNA form a RNA By-Law Committee to come back to the RNA with an amendment to Section 2, Paragraph A of the RNA By-Laws following the guidelines set forth in Section 7. Amendments of the RNA By-Laws that would allow all RNA members the ability to select the six (6) RNA-appointed members. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. During the discussion that followed, Ms. Evans, Mr. Williams, and Vice-Chair Lewis volunteered to serve on the committee. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

- **Fire Station #7 (located in Raleigh Court neighborhood)**

Mr. Parr shared the position of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, Inc. (RVPF) regarding the city's intention to demolish and replace the current Fire Station #7 located on Memorial Avenue SW in the Raleigh Court neighborhood. He advised that he and Ms. Alison Blanton, Chair of RVPF would be presenting the organization's proposal to Old Southwest, Inc. during their Thursday, March 15th meeting and that they hoped to meet with other neighborhood groups served by the station in the coming weeks.

## **Open Forum/Announcements**

Vice-Chair Lewis reviewed the following announcements.

- **Thursday, Mar 15 Raleigh Court Neighborhood Assoc. City Council Candidates Forum**  
(Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church, 7pm)  
Vice-Chair Lewis advised questions should be submitted to [news@raleighcourtnighborhood.org](mailto:news@raleighcourtnighborhood.org)
- **Saturday, Mar 17 Freedom First St. Patrick's Day Parade**  
(Downtown Roanoke, 11:30am)
- **Monday, Apr 2 City Council Budget Briefing**  
(City Council Chambers, 9:00am)
- **Monday, April 16 Recommended Budget Presented to City Council-Budget Document Available**  
(City Council Chambers, 2:00pm)
- **Monday, May 14 City Council Adopts Budgets and Update to the HUD Consolidated Plan**  
(City Council Chambers, 2:00pm)

At this point in the meeting, Ms. Evans and Mr. Wilson left the meeting. As such, a quorum was no longer present requiring Vice-Chair Lewis to adjourn the meeting.

## **Adjourn**

Vice-Chair Lewis adjourned the meeting at 7:07pm.