

# RNA Meeting Minutes

Wednesday May 10, 2017

Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building- South (Room 159 - EOC)

## Committee Members in Attendance

Antwyne Calloway

Barbara Evans

David Parr

Cindy Pasternak

Dwight O. Steele, Jr.

## Committee Members Absent

Johnny Williams, Chair

Nicole Harris, Secretary

Scott Horchler

## Guests

John Garland, Roanoke City Councilmember

## Welcome to Members and Guests

RNA member Antwyne Calloway volunteered to lead the meeting in the absence of the Chair, Johnny Williams, and Secretary, Nicole Harris, as the Vice Chair position is currently vacant. Acting Chair Calloway called the meeting to order at 5:44p.m. and welcomed those present and recognized guests.

## Reading and Approval of Minutes

Mr. Steele motioned to approve the February 8, 2017 RNA meeting minutes as no meeting was held during March or April due to lack of quorum. The motion was seconded by Ms. Evans. Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken and the minutes were unanimously approved.

## Guest Presentations

No guest presentations were made.

## Reports of Special Interest

- Neighborhood Reports

Ms. Evans noted that the Grandin Court Neighborhood Association had met twice recently to discuss the proposed development of the Shenandoah Life property and to discuss the proposed apartment development where Main Street intersects with Brandon Ave. She noted both meetings had great turnouts. Ms. Evans also noted Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance had not met but she understood they had concerns about the new soccer fields being developed at Countryside Park. She noted Planning Building & Development Director Chris Chittum had recently attended their meeting and had addressed all of their concerns.

Mr. Parr reported the Wasena Neighborhood Forum had not met and that Greater Grandview Area Neighborhood Watch had an ongoing concern regarding the speeding traffic on Grandview as the neighborhood is family-oriented. He noted the police are aware of the issue.

Ms. Pasternak reported she had recently attended the Mountain View Neighborhood Alliance meeting at which police present reported crime had decreased by 50% over last month. She

noted the organization was very active with the Hurt Park Elementary School teachers and is also excited about the new restaurants that have been opening recently in the neighborhood as well as the new farmer's market.

Ms. Pasternak noted she had recently attend the Old Southwest, Inc. meeting where the president had a line-up of people including representatives from the dog warden, code enforcement, storm water management, and Parks & Recreation in attendance to discuss the city's 'scoop the poop' initiative as the neighborhood was experiencing problems with people not picking up after their dogs. She also noted Angels of Assisi is planning on relocating their business from Church Ave downtown to a new site to be constructed at the intersection of Franklin Road and Elm Avenue SW.

Ms. Pasternak also reported that the Riverdale Farm Neighborhood Organization was working on submitting an application for the installation of additional street lamps on Carlisle in the wake of the recent shooting that tool place there which had been solved by the police as a drug related issue. She also noted the organization was raising funds to assist a neighbor with their medical expenses. Ms. Pasternak noted during a recent meeting of the organization that police reported over 1800 calls for service regarding suspicious behavior had been received last year showing neighbors are engaged with calling the police when necessary. Ms. Pasternak concluded by saying the Garden City Civic League is no longer active as there seems to be no neighbors willing to take on the leadership role in continuing the organization's activities.

Acting Chair Calloway stated he had not attended any meetings but had been in contact with the organization presidents. He noted NNEO was moving ahead with their partnership with Apple Ridge Farms with regard to urban farming projects, and that the Loudon Melrose Neighborhood Organization had seen a recent increase in their meeting attendance.

Ms. Harris emailed the following report which was shared with those in attendance as she was absent from the meeting, as follows:

**Belmont Neighborhood Association meeting on April 10, 2017**

- Multiple guest speakers including:
  - o Michelle King - United Way Community Health Promoter talked to the group about oral health and barriers to it in Southeast.
  - o Sharon - Director of Family Service of the Roanoke Valley provided an overview of their mental health services and explained their sliding scale costs per service based on financial situation.
  - o McKenzie Brocker - Storm water reminded everyone that everything that goes down the Storm water pipes ends up in our rivers, and streams and encouraged people not to put grass clippings, dog feces, chemicals, etc. in the street as this is where it will all end up.
- New Code Enforcement Inspector Daryell Sexton introduced himself and explained that he's going to try and really build a rapport with offenders and work with them to help them come into compliance. He believes he's already making some good progress with several property owners who have had repeat citations over the last few years.
- Next meeting is July 10<sup>th</sup> and hoping to have the new CEO of the Rescue Mission meet the neighborhood.
- Salvation Army invited everyone to the Salvation Army's Community Garden kickoff event on 4/22.
- Belmont agreed to promote a neighborhood yard sale day on 5/27 when the Southeast Action Forum is holding there's to help have them all over Southeast, and the Salvation Army agreed for neighbors to be able to setup there if they'd like.

### **Starview Heights Neighborhood Watch meeting on April 24, 2017**

- Neighbors spoke about several nuisance properties and asked for updates on previous reports of suspicious activities.
- Group discussed concerns about panhandlers in the area. The police officer verified that policy in Roanoke currently can't enforce violations due to interdiction laws and that it is legal to stand in the medians.
  - o CEO of the Rescue Mission Lee Clark encouraged people not to donate money to panhandlers and said that 9 out of 10 of them aren't actually homeless. Blessing bags with toiletries, socks, etc. are the way to go for those who really want to help but he said people may be surprised to see that they'll be turned away because that's not what they're actually looking for.
- Lee Clark introduced himself as the new CEO of the Rescue Mission. Took questions from neighbors and laid many concerns regarding expansion rumors, to rest. No plans to expand the Mission at this time. They are in the process of reallocating current space to better utilize what they have to build a resource center to help guests get employment and move into independent living. At John Garland's request, Lee spoke about how the homeless population is actually declining, and spoke about efforts they're programs make to avoid perpetuating homelessness. Also spoke about statistics of their guests and how around 80% are from Roanoke and surrounding areas, 15% are from other areas of Virginia and only about 5% are from outside of the state. Neighbors reported that Mission's landscaping crew was leaving grass clippings in the road and Lee said he would address that now that he was made aware. He seemed very willing to partner with the Southeast neighborhoods and very receptive to feedback and concerns expressed. He also spoke of his hopes of working more closely with the city's Homless Assistance Team (H.A.T.) and other local organizations than the Mission has in the past.
- Amy Morgan - President of the Belmont Neighborhood Association, extended an invitation to Starview Heights Neighborhood Watch for the southeast yard sale day on 5/27.
- Questions were raised to John Garland about the Mayor's Advisory Council and John stated that after the Mayor was encouraged to include RNA in his efforts of remaining informed about the neighborhoods, that Sherman Lea agreed.
- Neighbors asked about the potential \$8 trash fee and as the RNA rep for the neighborhood, Nicole Harris encouraged them to attend the Public Hearing on the topic on 4/27

### **Riverland/Walnut Hill neighborhood meeting on May 1, 2017**

- Kathy Hill reported ongoing issues with a speeding red sports car on Arbutus. Same house also has young kids riding a 4 wheeler without a helmet in the alley. Officer knew the house and the family and said he was continuing to address concerns there.
- Kathy said that Riverland/Walnut Hill would be partnering with the Southeast Action Forum and other Southeast Neighborhood groups for National Night Out this year.
- Nicole Harris extended the invitation for their neighborhoods to participate in the southeast yard sale day 5/27.
- Sheriff invited the group to 'Coffee with a Cop' events and shared info about upcoming prescription drug take back events.

### **Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association on May 2, 2017**

- Almost all the conversation was around the upcoming 24 block yard sale on 5/13. Ben Birch talked about all the places that signs had been shared, and encouraged neighbors to participate in either buying or selling.
- Officer reported that crime in their Zone (Zone 2) was best in the city over statistics from this point in 2016.
- Neighbor asked about Motor Madness, and Ben confirmed that it would be in June again this year.

· There is a lot of good fellowship at this meeting. Most neighbors who attend take a vested interest in one another and share things outside of the neighborhood meetings. This group also has good participation of block captains who hand deliver the monthly newsletter door to door.

### **Wildwood Civic League meeting on May 4, 2017**

· Multiple guest speakers including:

- o Hong Liu - City Traffic Engineer spoke about Hollins Rd./Orange Ave. project. Currently don't have funding for the initial planned changes. Now just working to widen and improve the intersection. No current funding for the bridge over railroad tracks. Trying to pursue at least one of the two planned round-a-bouts on 13h St./Wise Ave./Hollins Rd. Working on improving the signal timing with Roanoke County so traffic flows easier on Orange.
- o Luke Pugh - Civil Engineer spoke about 2 upcoming projects on King St. First, on King St./Orange Ave./Springtree Dr. making changes to address traffic congestion at the Walmart Neighborhood Market. One change will add an additional left turning lane and the other will run pipe where creek is to build a sidewalk as well. This fully funded project is scheduled to start in July and be finished by the end of the year. Second, King St./Berkley last remaining load rated bridge in the city will be replaced with a bigger/longer bridge. The city will also be fixing the grade on Berkley/King St. since right now cars stop on an incline and often have to spin tires to get onto King. This fully funded project is scheduled to begin in the fall and be completed next spring.
- o Code Enforcement spoke about week season which started 4/1 and how already have written 400 violations throughout the city. Victor discussed the citation process, repeat offender policy, and average costs of sending contractors out.
- o Sheriff reminded people of current scams - One where people are calling in various different ways and are trying to get people to say "yes" so they can use that recorded response to opt them into all sorts of things. Encouraged people not to answer calls from numbers they don't recognize. Another scam is for an offer of a Lowe's gift card in exchange for personal info. These companies would not request the type of info they are requesting, so people were encouraged to disregard these offers.
- o Carolyn Word the Community Outreach contact for the Rescue Mission provided updates about their programs. Stated would like to have the new CEO Lee Clark come out to a future meeting to meet the neighbors. She extended an invitation to the Open House on 5/25 between 12:00 - 1:30 to tour the newly created Resource Center designed to help find employment and drive independent living.
- o Officer reported that crime in their Zone (Zone 2) was best in the city over statistics from this point in 2016 but said that car thefts are still on the rise across the city. He also encouraged people to lock their doors.
- o Invitation from new apartment complex, District View to tour the complex once complete.
- o The Annual Police/Fire Appreciation Cookout will either be the 4<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> of August. Several people volunteered to help with this event.
- o Considering a yard sale in June to raise funds for clothes and supplies for children who stay at the Rescue Mission.
- o Next meeting is 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday in August.

## Reports of Officers – Standing Committees

- Report from Garland Neighborhood Blight Committee

Ms. Pasternak reviewed a report submitted by committee member Nicole Harris outlining their recommendations, as follows:

Title: Neighborhoods First Task Force, an Initiative of the Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA)

Mission: The “Neighborhood’s First” initiative recognizes that the City is only as healthy as our weakest neighborhood; therefore every effort should be made to recognize those struggles that our neighborhoods face and dedicate energy and resources to find solutions. We recognize that an essential component of success is enhanced communication flow from Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA) to City staff and City Council.

Purpose: To form a collaborative team of invested members of the “Neighborhoods First” task force, as a subcommittee of the RNA to have ongoing discussions regarding neighborhood needs and how to best address those concerns.

Stated Neighborhood Problems from previous discussions:

1. \*Blighted and Vacant Properties
2. Crime
3. Litter
4. Sidewalk deterioration
5. \*Lack of Youth Programs
6. \*Inadequate Communication Flow from Neighborhoods to City
7. \*Inadequate marketing of Neighborhood Assets
8. Inadequate Resources

\*Items that Cindy and Nicole believe could be the first issues for the task force to address

\*Potential Solutions for Discussion:

1. Real Estate tax solutions – higher taxes on blighted properties
2. Enhanced Foreclosure process on blighted properties
3. Code Enforcement initiatives or revamps. Handling of repeat offenders
4. Vacant House Registry
5. Community Involved Policing
6. “Adopt a Block” program
7. Regular reporting at City Council Meetings
8. Grants for façade and exterior home improvements
9. Sheriff Neighborhood work crews
10. Marketing initiatives (renters as responsible citizens, property availability)

\*Cindy and Nicole believe the task force may function more effectively if the issues are addressed independently

\*Neighborhood’s First task force core group makeup:

- Two members of City Council
- Neighborhood Services City Staff leader
- City Code Enforcement – At least 2 Code Inspectors and at least one Senior Inspector
- Two members of the RNA
- Two local neighborhood advocates, initially one from NW and one from SE
- Two neighborhood clergy active in neighborhood ministry, initially one from NW and one from SE

\*Cindy and Nicole believe the makeup should depend on the issue being addressed, so ensure that time allocated to the meetings solutions will require, is used effectively

- Next Steps that we'd like RNA to help us decide on:  
Option 1: RNA to hold initial meeting with all those listed in the task force makeup list above, to provide an overview of this task force, discuss the goals, and to talk through issues in the neighborhoods and ideas to address them. Form issue-specific task force groups for top concerns, to ensure that those who can address the situation/stakeholders for that concern are the ones in those conversations. Then setup individual meetings to move forward with that process.
- Option 2: RNA to contact all potential members of the task force based on those listed in the task force makeup list above, to provide an overview of this task force, share the goals, and to request that they join issue-specific task force groups for top concerns previously expressed. Then setup individual meetings to move forward with that process.

Other details discussed:

- We discussed how we believed the issue-specific task force groups may function more efficiently than having the whole list of people work through each issue, because we'd only have those invested in that particular issue in the conversation. For example, if we're trying to work through "Inadequate marketing of Neighborhood Assets", those that could really help with that concern may not be the same individuals as those that can really help us review the VA State Maintenance Code/Legislation to address Code Violations and address blight.
- We agreed that we need help getting a representative involved that is aware of concerns in Northwest as our experience is only in Southeast. We both thought that the issues for Southeast may be very different than those in Southeast and we wanted to make sure we had the right people involved to help us determine what the similarities and differences were so we could move forward to address concerns in both sections of the city. We wanted to ask if anyone in RNA felt like they had experience in that area to help us move forward with NW.
- Prefacing this with our only experience being with Southeast - the top points we felt would be the most impactful were:
  - o Blighted and Vacant Properties
  - o Inadequate Marketing of Neighborhood Assets
  - o Lack of Youth Programs
  - o Inadequate Communication Flow from Neighborhoods to City (maybe take turns in attending City Council meetings)

Councilman Garland responded that the whole idea of the program is to take the problems the RNA identifies in the neighborhoods during their meetings and then bring people together such as leaders in the neighborhood, appropriate city staff and city administration leaders to help solve the issues raised. He noted that the committee may not necessarily be a permanent one but may be around long enough to establish initial directions on what to do and by developing connections with appropriate city staff have the resources that will resolve the issues discovered while strengthening the effectiveness of the RNA. By initiating the program, the RNA would be taking ideas raised during their monthly meeting forward toward resolving them.

Councilman Garland suggested the RNA attend future Council meetings and once a date is established to let him know that he in turn would reach out to another Council member to sponsor their appearance. Acting Chair Calloway suggested the RNA think about what was presented to them and come prepared to the next meeting to discuss moving forward on the program.

- Follow-up on 2017 Neighborhood Month Conference for Roanoke Neighborhoods Committee

Mr. Clement distributed a packet of information regarding the 2017 Neighborhood Month Conference for Roanoke Neighborhoods recently held at the 1st Christian Church on Saturday April 29, 2017. He provided a summary of all conference evaluations received and reminded the RNA that they had agreed to pay for the catering of the event at their February 8, 2017 meeting. Mr. Clement reported the catering invoice totaled \$225.00.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **New Business**

- Acceptance of Resignation from RNA member Brenda Allen

Mr. Clement shared an email received from RNA member Brenda Allen on March 9, 2017 expressing her immediate resignation from the RNA due to personal scheduling conflicts. Ms. Evans motioned that the RNA accept Ms. Allen's resignation from the RNA effective immediately. Mr. Parr seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

- Election of RNA Vice Chair

Mr. Clement recapped that he had previously solicited RNA members for their interest in being considered for the RNA Vice-Chair position and that only one person, Nicole Harris, had expressed an interest in being considered. He also suggested the RNA could take a vote by voice, hand or ballot. Acting Chair Calloway thanked Mr. Clement and asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. Hearing none, Ms. Evans motioned that Ms. Harris be elected to the position of RNA Vice-Chair for the remaining calendar year. Mr. Parr seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, a vote was taken and all members in attendance approved the motion unanimously. Mr. Clement asked that anyone interested in the now vacant RNA Secretary position to contact him so that the RNA could fill this position during their next meeting.

- RNA's Role Regarding Presidents Council and Mayor's Advisory Committee

Mr. Clement advised Acting Chair Calloway that RNA member Nicole Harris had requested this topic to be placed on today's meeting agenda. Acting Chair Calloway recommended discussion on the topic to be tabled until next month's RNA meeting at which Ms. Harris would be present to which the RNA unanimously concurred.

- Follow-up Discussion and Request by Dinah Ferrence at March 2017 meeting

Mr. Clement shared a paper and documentation provided by Ms. Dinah Ferrence to the RNA at their March 2017 meeting. He reminded the RNA that Ms. Ferrence is an OSW resident who attended the March meeting to discuss her neighborhood's concerns and opposition with the proposed RM1 Zoning proposal that is scheduled to be voted on by City Council sometime this year. At the conclusion of her presentation, she requested that RNA take a vote on their stance and share it with OSW, and that RNA work with City Council and others, to work on alternative plans to address large homes that need renovations. A vote was not taken at the meeting due to lack of a quorum. Acting Chair Calloway asked the RNA members what their thoughts were on the proposed amendments based upon what they were hearing and being expressed by other neighborhoods across the city. He reminded the RNA that a component of the proposed

amendment requires the applicant to receive a special exception from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and as a currently sitting member on that Board, he assured that he and other BZA members would not take applications submitted lightly. Mr. Parr agreed with regard to oversight provided by the Architectural Review Board on which he serves. Concerns discussed included the number of applications that might actually be submitted vs. city estimates provided in prior discussions and why the city was willing to change an ordinance to allow the creation of additional rental properties in affected neighborhoods where the number of rental properties are currently proportionately much higher than single family as compared to non-affected neighborhoods. It was also noted that although there are one (1) or two (2) neighborhoods supportive of the proposed amendment, the majority of affected city neighborhoods are in opposition to it based upon conversations experienced by the RNA during their meetings. Suggestions for compromising on the issue included the city creating and marketing incentives for property investors to improve and take care of those single family properties already converted into multiple units so that better tenants would be willing to live in them. Mr. Steele motioned that the RNA support Old Southwest, Inc. and other neighborhoods in their opposition to the proposed RM1 and work with City Council and others, to create alternative ways to address large homes in need of renovations. Ms. Pasternak seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was approved by the majority present with one (1) abstention.

- **Annual RNA State of the Neighborhoods Report**

Mr. Clement reminded the RNA that the City Council Resolution creating the RNA as well as their Strategic Business Plan requires the RNA to provide City Council with a State of the Neighborhoods report each year. Mr. Clement distributed a draft report to the RNA and asked that they review and come prepared to discuss it at the next monthly RNA meeting.

## **Open Forum / Announcements**

- Acting Chair Calloway reminded the RNA members to try to attend the Neighborhood Month activities scheduled throughout the month of May.

## **Closed Session**

Acting Chair Calloway noted that as no public was present at this point of the RNA meeting, the RNA could discuss the three (3) vacancies appointed by the RNA without going into a Closed Session. The RNA concurred and appointed Ms. Ellie Rigby to fill the expired term vacated by Amy Morgan commencing on May 10, 2017 and expiring May 9, 2020. Mr. Clement advised he would notify Ms. Rigby of her appointment.

## **Adjournment**

- Acting Chair Calloway adjourned the meeting at 7:06pm.