

Minutes from RNA Meeting on August 9, 2017

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

Committee Members in Attendance

Johnny L. Williams, Chair
Nicole L. Harris, Vice-Chair
Ellie Rigby, Secretary
Barbara Evans
Kate Lewis
Cindy C. Pasternak

Committee Members Absent

Antwyne Calloway
Byron L. Hamlar
David Parr, Jr.
Dwight O. Steele, Jr.

Guests

Timothy Martin - Citizen Engagement Officer, Roanoke City Office of Citizen Engagement
Leandra Weitzenfeld, McKenzie Brocker, Danielle DeHart – Roanoke City Stormwater Management Division
Vickie Bibee, Forrest Moore, and Janet Frantz - Mill Mountain Garden Club

Welcome to Members and Guests

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 5:33pm and welcomed guests and the two (2) new RNA members, Ms. Ellie Rigby and Ms. Kate Lewis.

Reading and Approval of Minutes

The Meeting Minutes from the RNA's May 2017 meeting were briefly discussed and approved unanimously.

Guest Presentations

- **Timothy Martin – Roanoke City Office of Citizen Engagement**

Mr. Martin provided a brief presentation on Roanoke's newly created Office of Citizen Engagement (OCE) launched in March of this year. He noted goal and focus of the office is to bring government and citizens together for collaborative relationships and to engage citizens through social media and collaborative platforms. He stated OCE works with the Office of Neighborhood Services, Office of Arts and Culture, Office of Sustainability, Lead Safe, and other departments with small staff. Mr. Martin advised he oversees the social media pages for all departments in the City noting City Council now has a Facebook page and their meetings are live on Facebook. He also collaborates with Downtown Roanoke, Inc. to keep people informed of downtown events. Mr. Martin noted there are 60+ city department Facebook accounts (pages) with over 200,000+ followers. He noted by visiting www.roanokeva.gov/socialmedia, people can have access updates to all of the social media pages in one place.

Mr. Martin highlighted another social media platform such as NextDoor, the iRoanoke App, MyRoanoke alerts, and Recycle Coach in addition to the www.roanokeva.gov website on which users can find a robust search feature and also allows users to sign up for a monthly e-newsletter called Roanoke Reports.

- **Leigh Ann Weitzenfeld – Roanoke City Stormwater Management**

Ms. Weitzenfeld provided an overview of the Roanoke's Stormwater Management Division's 'Scoop the Poop' Campaign. She noted there are 9000 opportunities around the city for storm water and pollution to enter our

streams as well as over 7000 registered dog owners in the city whose dogs can produce over 8000 pounds of pet waste a year. Ms. Weitzenfeld noted the Stormwater Management Division's vision is: "Together, we can transform our waterways into community assets, focal points, and a source of pride for those that live, work, learn, and play in the Upper Roanoke River Watershed." She advised that their 'Scoop the Poop' Campaign essentials included:

- Letter (template for neighborhood associations to distribute)
- Scoop the Poop Brochures
- Pet Waste Bag Dispensers
- Video on the website to show ("Love Where You Live – Scoop the Poop")
- The Mill Mountain Garden Association wrote a grant to get 112 signs to distribute to the neighborhoods. They are \$12 to print additional signs
- Social Media – Facebook and NextDoor
- Media – Roanoke Times, TV, other print and visual media

She asked for the RNA's assistance in distributing this information to the city's neighborhood associations. Ms. Weitzenfeld also noted that a part of the grant funds also went to purchase signs for the Mutt Mitt stations that have been placed along the greenways and downtown. She noted the initiative's mascot dog is named "Big Lick". Ms. Weitzenfeld also asked the RNA for suggestions on how this campaign can be distributed to the neighborhoods. Ms. Lewis asked if the Stormwater Management people would come to neighborhood meetings to speak about the 'Scoop the Poop' campaign. Ms. Weitzenfeld said that Stormwater Management has attended meetings but would certainly attend for this specific campaign. Ms. Lewis asked if the template letter had been provided to the neighborhood associations which she replied that the Office of Neighborhood Services had sent the it out to the neighborhood presidents asking them to contact him if they wanted the signs. Ms. Weitzenfeld said that they haven't officially launched the campaign because she was hoping to get the RNA involved in helping to disseminate the information out as part of the campaign. Ms. Weitzenfeld noted that the Stormwater Management Division staff will be having a media event for the greenways and the downtown in the near future. Ms. Lewis suggested they along with Mill Mountain Garden Club representatives create a resource packet and make it available online for neighborhood groups, citizens, and RNA members. Mr. Clement suggested Stormwater management staff work with Mr. Martin's replacement to roll out a media event with the City, the mayor, the Mill Mountain Garden Club, and several neighborhood presidents present. Ms. Weitzenfeld advised Stormwater Management staff have worked with the Clean Valley Council to get the information into the schools.

Reports of Special Interest

• Neighborhood Reports

Ms. Pasternak said that Detective Sloan spoke at the July Old Southwest, inc. meeting about heroin and drug epidemics noting there had been quite a few drug-related fatalities, more specifically 108 heroin overdoses with an average of 8 fatal per month. She also noted Joe Crowder is starting the 'Roanoke Valley HOPE Initiative 'with angels', a program to assist people with addictions that will be taking place on the second Monday of each month at the Bradley Free Clinic from 11-4. She noted participants can't have any open warrants. Ms. Pasternak also advised there was also someone at the meeting from the Rescue Squad noting Roanoke has the world's oldest volunteer rescue squad. Ms. Pasternak said that Officer Hurd spoke at the Mountain View Neighborhood Association, Inc. August meeting about a perpetrator who had been involved in crime on Chapman Ave. noting that person had committed 2 burglaries and 6 larcenies. He also advised there has been a female stopping traffic for money which has become a nuisance to residents. Ms. Pasternak also advised the group is looking at installing two (2) bus stop shelters using a Neighborhood Development grant funds. Ms. Pasternak said that the Riverdale farm Neighborhood Organization's co-president, Teresa Pence conducted their most recent meeting noting the group had received a Neighborhood Development grant to purchase new solar trash cans. Ms. Pasternak also reported they had recently held a potluck dinner but unfortunate not a lot of people showed up. The meeting's speakers included the Roanoke County Chief of Police and Roanoke City Sheriff candidate, Mr. Billingsly. Ms. Pasternak noted the meeting provided a good opportunity to plant seeds for young community engagement in the youth that were also in attendance.

Ms. Harris reported that the Wildwood Civic League doesn't meet in July or August. She also advised that the Belmont Neighborhood Association doesn't meet in August and that all of the SE neighborhood groups had joined together to host an event on National Night Out. Ms. Harris also noted that as the Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association met on the evening of National Night Out that was not able to attend. She stated the Starview Heights Neighborhood Watch had a guest speaker from the Virginia Crime Prevention Association who spoke about the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs. She also noted the speaker advised that although these gangs are not prevalent in Roanoke that they have a tendency to migrate noting they are from El Salvador and have specific tattoos, markings, etc. and love the number 13. Ms. Harris noted that the Southeast Action Forum, Inc. did not meet during August because of National Night Out.

Ms. Evans stated that the Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance did not meet during July or August and that the Norwich Neighborhood Alliance is not active. Mr. Clement advised that Norwich meets quarterly at the Church of God on Roanoke Ave. Ms. Evans also advised she had attended the July meeting of the Grandin Court Neighborhood Association but there were no association officers in attendance. She stated the meeting attendees are not happy about the Blackwell House sale by the City. Ms. Evans suggested that they submit a proposal to City Council and possibly contact Old Southwest, Inc. to learn how they had been successful with oversight of the Alexander Gish House. She also urged those in attendance to invite Councilman John Garland to speak at a future meeting and consider becoming involved by volunteering to serve on the various City Council-appointed boards and commissions. Ms. Evans stated the group also spoke regarding their concerns about the proposed development of the Shenandoah Life property. Ms. Evans noted it appeared the organization does not communicate well with its members and asked the other RNA members for suggestions on how to help the organization.

Chair Williams advised he attended National Night Out held at Melrose Towers and that several public officials were there. He talked about how the Housing Authority would be sending some youth to the upcoming Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference. Chair Williams noted the Housing Authority has 8 communities and that PACE provides money to help people with their everyday needs (medicines, meals, etc.) They also help people to care for themselves where they live. Chair Williams said the Housing Authority cannot turn away people now for disabilities. He also noted the Housing Authority had been hosting blood pressure checks and free food distribution events. Chair Williams advised that the Melrose Rugby Neighborhood Forum did not meet again until September and that the Hurt Park Neighborhood Alliance did not meet. Chair Williams also noted the Peacemakers now have a donated van, which now makes them accessible to all quadrants in the city. He expressed his desire to see their efforts expand beyond NW. Chair Williams also noted there is a group related to Kissito Healthcare that helps transport the elderly and suggested the RNA introduce themselves to these groups to see if they can help spread information about their services.

Chair Williams noted he would like to represent the Greater Deyerle Neighborhood Organization. As a new RNA member, Ms. Lewis had no reports but requested she would like to represent Neighbors in South Roanoke and would contact the Lakewood Park Neighborhood Watch president to see if they still meet.

Ms. Rigby as a new RNA member had no reports but noted she would like to represent the Fairland Civic Organization, Southeast Action Forum, Inc., Wasena Neighborhood Forum, Inc. (in RNA member David Parr's absence), and attend the Melrose-Orange Target Area stakeholders meeting.

Ms. Pasternak said that she would like to represent the Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Forum, Inc.

Reports of Officers – Standing Committees

- **Report from Garland Neighborhood Blight Committee**

Ms. Harris advised the name of the committee had been changed to the Neighborhoods First Committee noting they had met on July 18th. She said of the 30+ people invited, 25 or so were in attendance and that it was well received. Ms. Harris stated the meeting was an open forum for attendees to express their opinions and concerns which when prioritized were disparity in services and lack of community, blighted properties, and neighborhood perception of

lack of youth programs. She noted the ‘Adopt a Block program idea was discussed and that the group decided to work with Stephen Niamki, president of the Melrose Rugby Neighborhood Forum, Inc. to assist in the distribution of surveys at which time they would talk to neighbors about their needs. She noted the group was also interested in having youth representative to which Councilman Garland suggested reaching out to Anita Price for assistance.

- **Report from the RM-1 Survey Committee**

Ms. Harris reported twenty-four (24) responded to an online survey she posted on social media re the propose RM-1 amendment with eighteen (18) respondents saying no and six (6) saying yes. She noted people felt better about the amendment if it was regulated. Councilman Garland pointed out that that the amendment’s special exception provision provided for regulation as duplexes will still have to be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Harris replied that many respondents, however, did not have faith in BZA decisions. Councilman Garland advised he was told that the RM-1 was on the back burner because it was not well received but that it will probably come before City Council at a future date.

Unfinished Business

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

Ms. Harris put together a presentation for the RNA review. Councilman Garland suggested the RNA make their presentation to City Council prior to their Council Budget retreat scheduled for September 22nd. Mr. Clement advised City Council was scheduled to meet on Tuesday, September 5th and again on Monday, September 18th. Ms. Harris made a motion that the RNA present the Annual State of the Neighborhoods Report to City Council on September 5th during their 2pm Regular Session. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pasternak. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Clement advised he would make the request to the City Manager’s office for the RNA to be placed on City Council’s September 5th meeting during their 2pm regular Session. Councilman Garland followed that he and Councilwoman Dykstra would sponsor their report. Ms. Harris volunteered to present the report on behalf of the RNA and suggested comments regarding a proposed RNA budget to be included in the report be sent to her by close of business on September 1st.

- **RNA Participation in Roanoke Christmas Parade**

Ms. Harris suggested the RNA have a float in the upcoming Christmas parade and ask neighborhoods to make their own float and participate with them. Ms. Pasternak suggested that some neighborhoods could make signs or have floats, maybe a mixture. Ms. Lewis suggested that the RNA include the parade float as a budget item and discuss it further at the September meeting. Mr. Clement suggested that due to the short time period before the 2017 parade that they might want to consider participating in the 2018 St. Patrick’s Day parade instead. Ms. Harris made a motion to support entering a RNA float in the 2018 St. Patrick’s Day parade. Ms. Lewis seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

- **Donation to First Christian Church for Hosting Conference**

Mr. Clement reminded the RNA that the First Christian Church had allowed the RNA and Office of Neighborhood Services to use their church facilities at no cost on Saturday April 29 as the location for the 2017 Neighborhood Month Conference for Roanoke Neighborhoods. He suggested the RNA and Office of Neighborhood Services partner together and make a donation to the church to help cover any expenses incurred by them for its use. Ms. Evans made a motion that the RNA give a \$50 donation to First Christian Church. Chair Williams seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the Motion passed unanimously.

- **FY2018 RNA Budget**

Mr. Clement distributed a document showing the FY17 RNA proposed budget vs. actual expenses incurred during the year. He noted all funds were used except for a remaining balance of \$52.34. He suggested the RNA convene a FY18 Budget Committee to determine how the RNA would allocate their current FY18 funds. Ms. Lewis made a motion to form a committee to discuss and create a FY2018 RNA budget and bring it back to the RNA at a future meeting. Chair Williams seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously

approved. Ms. Evans, Ms. Lewis, Chair Williams, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Rigby volunteered to serve on the committee.

- **Reappointment of Johnny L. Williams**

Mr. Clement reminded the RNA that Chair William's term would be expiring at the end of the month. Chair Williams noted he desired to be reappointed by the RNA for another three (3) year term. Ms. Evans made a motion to reappoint Johnny L. Williams for another three (3) year term expiring August 21, 2020. Ms. Harris seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

- **Inclusion of Neighborhood-Related Info in City's Welcome Roanoke Mailing**

Ms. Harris suggested the RNA create a flyer that could be mailed to every household across the city advising all Roanoke residents about the city's neighborhood associations. Mr. Clement suggested forming a committee to look at creating an insert to be included in something the city already sends out such as a water authority bill or city personal property tax statement. Ms. Harris made the motion for a committee to be formed to create a draft neighborhood information mailer insert and research the cost for distribution and bring it back to the RNA at a future meeting. Ms. Lewis seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Lewis and Ms. Rigby volunteered to serve on the committee.

Open Forum/Announcements

Ms. Rigby and Chair Williams noted their desire to attend the State of the City Address scheduled for August 24, 2017. Ms. Lewis made a motion for the RNA to pay for Ms. Rigby and Chair Williams to attend the State of the City address on August 23, 2017. Ms. Harris seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pasternak noted the Riverdale Farm Neighborhood Organization had grant funds that the RNA could use to send representatives to the upcoming Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference being held in Short pump, VA on September 22-23, 2017. She noted she will also send this opportunity to her represented neighborhood groups.

Closed Session

Per a communication from Chair Williams requesting that RNA convene in a Closed Meeting to discuss two (2) vacancies appointed by RNA, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, Chair Williams requested that the RNA convene in a Closed Meeting to discuss vacancies appointed by the RNA. The RNA unanimously agreed and hearing no further discussion, the meeting was recessed for the closed session. All guests excused themselves. Ms. Lewis asked that we take the time to review the applications and we revisit the applications at the next meeting. The other RNA members unanimously agreed to review the application and come prepared to discuss at the next RNA meeting.

Meeting Reconvened

Following the closed session, Mr. Williams reconvened the meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Williams adjourned the meeting at 7:49 P.M.