

NDRA/North Downtown Neighborhood Meeting

Thursday, August 30, 2007, 7pm, Central Library, 3rd fl. room

In attendance: Board members: Colette Hall, Ruth Stornetta, Debra Weiss, Elvira Hoskins, Jill Williams, Diane Wilson, Liz Jones, Robert LeHeup, Ernie Reed, and Stephanie Bolton.

Residents & Guests: Peter Kleeman, Mark Kavit, Llezelle Dugger, Burnie Davis, Marcey Day, Ariana Williams, Councilor Dave Norris, Sgt. Upman, and Beth Elliott.

Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm.

Announcement: Ashley Cooper, our neighborhood planner, has left City employment. Jim Tolbert, NDS Director, is our planner until a new person is hired. Ariana Williams was introduced. She may be appointed to fill an absent by-resignation Board seat.

Minutes of June 21, 2007 approved.

Treasurer's report - new balance \$934.46

AWARD: *Director of 2006-2007*

Congratulations to Robert LeHeup: Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, longevity on the Board.

Old Business:

A. Picnic (9/16/07, 2-5pm, Lee Park) plans finalized.

B. Report on 250 Interchange Design, City Council action and 250 Interchange Steering Committee 8/16/07 meeting. (Colette)

- Council instructed RK&K to work on refining the details of designs "C1 and G1."
- Colette and Peter Kleeman, who been to more meetings of the Steering Committee than some Committee members, have noticed the "Purpose and Needs" of this Project have slowly changed from a pedestrian to a vehicular focus.
- The bridge over 250, west of the Intersection, has been removed from the project's "study area." (Mr. Kleeman suggested that the "study area be expanded.") Instead, the public should use the "steps" to Rugby Ave. The steps are narrow and steep do not lead to the east section of the Park.
- **There may not be money to build a pedestrian bridge over the Meadowcreek Pkwy/McIntire Extended. The City may need to find other funding to build this, as "SAFETEA-LU" funding.**
- Who has the authority to make these changes? (Councilor Norris informed us these changes are not Council's decisions.) RK&K's implied changes are due to possible increased building costs. The Steering Committee makes recommendations, not final decisions, which is Council's purview. A NEPA (Nat. Envir. Prot. Act) public hearing is scheduled for this Fall. Concerned ND residents **are urged** to attend.
- The City and Veterans met regarding the Viet Nam Memorial. The Veterans do not want the Memorial moved by the future new 250 Interchange.

- The Army Corps of Engineers “nixed” the idea of the retention pond in the eastern Park; therefore, the entire “Master Plan of McIntire Park” must be re-evaluated and changed.
- Council wondered if roundabouts are safer than signalized intersections. Studies show that the new roundabout design used in USA and Europe is safer.
- The design and cost of the massive 250-overpass bridge needs to be finalized. (Should the BAR have a voice in this design? Is it part of their mandate? Is it rather the purview of the Planning Commission?)
- Elvira and others asked what people could do regarding this pedestrian bridge issue. Answer by Councilor Norris, “Go before City Council.”
- Should NDRA form a task force? This will be discussed at the next NDRA/neighborhood meeting after the annual picnic where this information will be disseminated.

C. Report on Neighborhood Policing Meeting, July 18th (Bob)

- Primary topic - put cameras on the Mall? Chief Longo explained impact.
- Business owners support them as a crime deterrent.
- Sgt. Upman commented on the recent juvenile assaults.

New Business:

A. Discussion and Report from *Take Back Lee Park Committee* and the homeless. (Ruth)

- Sgt. Upman: Judge Downer from District Court has barred several vagrants repeatedly arrested for disorderly conduct, drunkenness, assaults, fighting, etc, from the Park. According to City Code, this may be done at the discretion of the Judge and the City Manager. Call 911 if there is a continued problem.
- The Park climate has improved dramatically.

I. Concerns regarding the homeless population and COMPASS DAY-CARE. (COMPASS will be located in the basement of the former First Christian Church on Market St.)

- Will COMPASS attract “undesirables” to Downtown and the Park? Councilor Norris thinks not. Ms. Day is concerned it may. If it does, then what?
- What will happen when COMPASS closes at 7:30 pm? Where will the homeless go? In the winter months, PACEM may not be able to shelter all overnight.
- Councilor: The librarians started COMPASS, because the homeless were using the library as a day shelter. COMPASS will provide a venue with social services, job placement, and veteran services. There will be a community/commercial kitchen, laundry facilities, lockers, recreation space. Its purpose is to help people break out of the trap of homelessness. (Renovation will begin this Fall and it may open as early as the summer of 2008.)
- Colette brought up the Special Use Permit. The Pl. Commission and City Council approved the permit. The permit goes with the property not the user. If COMPASS fails what happens?
- Sgt. Upman stated that the “homeless” he has encountered are the same people who have always been here. Most of them have family or friends in the area but choose homelessness. Estimated number is 250 homeless in this area. This does not include some who stay with family or rent hotel rooms. The majority are victims. Parallel issue:

in the summer months, “riders of the rails” people who do stop are often a nuisance to the Mall environment and to the police. They are a more violent element.

- Ruth asks what can be done for these long-term, chronically homeless people. The Councilor said the city is trying to provide affordable, supportive housing for them. The dollars are available. Agencies need to apply for it. In fact, an umbrella agency is needed to find housing, supervise, and help with resources. “Housing First” is looking city-wide for housing for the homeless. (If anyone knows of housing, contact Beth Elliott from “Housing First” at elliottbeth10@earthlink.net)
- The sanctuary in the upper part of the Center is designated as a venue for community art space, dance, performances. . .

2. Rod Gentry, VP Union Bank and Trust, wants to create a Coalition of Downtown Businesses and Neighborhoods Associations for crime prevention. Colette (and perhaps Jill) will attend a meeting to learn more about his ideas.

B. Discussion to increase dues to \$11 for members using *Paypal*.

- Should dues be increased for using electronic means, as NDRA will be charged a service fee? At this time, the Treasurer is not concerned about the account balance. He suggests that we wait to see how much *Paypal* and the new website will cost NDRA.
- However, the Bylaws will be amended to read, “Dues will be set by the Board.”

C. Report on new web site and *Paypal* (Debra)

- Website will cost \$10/month for hosting. The new web name, www.northdowntown.org cost \$27. Debra will generously donate her services.
- Is there time to write an article for the newsletter about the new website and *Paypal* ?

D. Volunteers needed for 24 hour Permit Parking Petition information gathering.

- Colette presented the flyer/petition she designed with the City Traffic Engineer. It will only be distributed to: Altamont St, Altamont Circle, 2nd St. N.E., 3rd St. N.E., Hedge St., North First St., Park Plaza, Parkway, and Walker St. These streets currently have PP from 6 am - 5 pm.
- Each guest-parking pass costs \$25. Some residents may not want 24 hour PP and if so may vote “Not in favor.” However, the Petition with license plate numbers is required by City Code and must be returned.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jill Williams, Secretary and Colette Hall, President

Miscellaneous: **Annual picnic & Board elections, Sunday, September 16, 2- 5 pm, Lee Park - ALL North Downtown Residents invited.**