

SHNA
April Meeting Minutes
Date: 4/1/14

Sean Garretson presiding

Announcements:

Recent rash of break-ins and thefts, calls to APD, etc. by Louisa Brinsmade

Item #1

AmeriCorps presentation by Will Livesley-O'Neill with City of Austin

City Austin Love Your Block! Neighborhood grants – Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler

Will: We are part of the domestic Peace Corps program, and together with the City of Austin, we are tasked with making a few city programs more accessible and equitable.

As for the Neighborhood Partnering Program – the city hasn't done a great job of promoting it. It is a cost-sharing for beautification projects. The neighborhood proposes ideas to the city, and budgets one portion of the total cost for the city, one portion of the total cost to the neighborhood.

In-kind contributions count towards total neighborhood contribution. For larger totals, the city pays a bigger percentage of the total cost.

Maintenance for the project has to be built in for 3 years.

This program is for sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs, ADA compliance, community gardens or garden boxes, public parks, traffic abatement, safety, and the like. All the projects must be on city-owned property.

A good example would be the sidewalk and landscaping improvements on North Loop.

The core of the city to the north and west has been past winners with this program, but we are interested in seeing other areas apply and win approval. And we'd like to remove some of the barriers to winning approval.

This doesn't have to be for a brand new project. If you want to see a project that's already in the works get finished, you can apply for that. And if you are already applying for a grant somewhere else on a project, you can ask the city for a match on the grant funds awarded.

The upcoming two deadlines are: June 1 and October 1.

Those projects who aren't accepted win points towards the next application cycle, so be sure to re-apply if your project is not approved.

Kris Bowen: We are interested in improving the sidewalks on East 12th. I'd like to see that street become a walking corridor.

Will: Sidewalks are the most expensive in this program.

Sean Garretson: Can we do traffic calming with this?

Will: Yes, a median project on Salina and 22nd St. which is a sunflower mural on the street with a traffic calming circle in the middle won approval.

Let me point out that you need neighborhood association and community support for projects.

Rob Seidenberg: The bus stops on E 12th are terrible. We talked to Cap Metro about it, but they talked about requiring a certain number of riders per stop. But it is city land...

Will: Re-doing bus stops is a new idea that we had. It's worth pursuing.

Sean: What about dog runs? We have a small park where a lot of neighbors walk their dogs.

Will: Pocket parks are in our purview.

Tracy Witte: (Re: Tracts 3 and 5). We anticipate traffic problems with those two areas. It looks like we'll need traffic calming devices.

Will: The developer's contribution could count towards the cost matching requirement so it would be best to work with them on this program.

Kirsten Siegfried: What about improvements to Oakwood Cemetery. It is city-owned land.

Will: We're interested in new ideas – email us.

Item #2

Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler

The City of Austin's Love Your Block! mini-grant program gives \$500-\$1,000 to approved applications. It is similar to the NPP (Neighborhood Partnering Program), but much less.

This mini-grant program focuses on supporting little improvements: aiding a community garden, planting trees or bushes to help with traffic-calming, clean-up projects.

Love Your Block! Mini-grant deadlines: June 1, Oct 1

These grants can also take place on private property - but it needs to benefit the entire neighborhood, i.e., gardening boxes on private property would benefit the neighborhood with awareness of fresh food and perhaps providing neighbors with that fresh food.

This program will show preference for projects in underserved areas in Austin. East Austin definitely qualifies. You need to utilize at least 20 volunteers and it has to be an improvement project.

Q: What about cross-neighborhood projects?

Nevena: Those are definitely possible.

Item #3

URB letter update by Hunt Andre

The SHNA Board of Directors sent out a letter to the URB (Urban Renewal Board) and to some other agencies. The letter asks the URB to support the neighborhood's efforts to negotiate with the developer on Tracts 3 and 5. The letter also sets out a frame work - based on the development principles formed after the Special Called Meeting and the meeting with Austin Stowell. The letter asks the URB to support the grocery store proposal in Butler Equity's winning bid, and asks the URB to insert a "claw-back" clause to the contract if the developer doesn't deliver on the project.

I spoke with Austin Stowell – he told me that a "claw-back" clause is a "non-starter" for them.

The contract already has a "10% held in escrow" refunded upon completion of the project. The closing has been delayed due to a death in the family in the Real Estate Services department at the City of Austin.

We should take this time to go through the development principles and set our priorities depending on what we hope to achieve. I don't know how we should go about doing that - send out a survey, or have a meeting earmarked especially for that.

Sean: the development committee that's been created - we've entrusted you to make recommendations, so I don't know how beneficial the survey would be.

Hunt: The committee has to have a clear message from the neighborhood association members so they can try to achieve what the neighborhood wants. We need to have a discussion about it. We have the principles, and when we get into discussions with developers, we need to know what we can do and where concessions can be made by the neighborhood.

Rob: I hate to put him on the spot, but I'd like to hear what Kris (Krager) has to say. I think it's difficult to say that everyone's bought into the development principles since there wasn't a formal process and a vote.

Kris Krager: I'm not sure what the purpose of this committee would be since this is a done deal. They don't have an obligation to do what we want, it's just a way for them to try to be good neighbors.

Kirsten: They have an incentive. When the City Council voted, the council members told them to work with us, if they want future business with the City.

Kris: That's a little vague. I've worked on two projects - things that were expressly desired in letters from neighbors but weren't likely to be implemented.

Kirsten: But, the grocery store – Butler put it in their (RFP) application - and then they said they are dedicated to this. I understand you've done schematics on these properties.

There were 20 pts for it (the grocery store) in the scoring matrix.

Rob: That's the weird part - the wording (in the RFP) was they "encouraged" it – the URB was operating on a good faith basis. And I think that's what Kris is saying. Butler is not obligated to provide it.

Sean: And unless they (Butler) have to get a variance, they don't need the neighborhood.

Rob: We had issues with the RFP - it was vague and had no teeth.

Tracy: Is the scoring matrix available to the public?

Rob: Not yet – not until after the sale.

Kris: Mixed Use developments live and die by the commercial aspects of it. I talked to Royal Blue – they are 10-15 years off from locating in East Austin. It won't be Butler's decision (whether a grocery store will locate on Tract 5); it will be Wheatsville's decision.

Tracy: We can have a role in convincing them.

Kris: Again, that won't be a Butler decision. I will be the first to encourage him (to provide it), but I'm saying be realistic.

Sean: What are the specific things, the height, back side, balconies, etc?

Kirsten: If you have a development team that represents the neighborhood, they have to know what the wishes of the neighborhood are. We need to rate our neighbors concerns - a scoring matrix for the survey. We have to be able to understand what the wishes are for the entire neighborhood for their priorities - so when it comes to negotiating with developers, we can say, “Okay, we're willing to go 50 feet high with parking.”

Hunt: We'll start to learn what's achievable once we start talking with them.

Item #4

Development Committee Update by Hunt Andre

There could be an “overarching” committee, and ad hoc committees under it. There are 10-11 people would like to serve on the overarching committee. If we're going to meet with developers, we shouldn't have too sprawling of a group of people. And those ad hoc groups should reflect the adjacent neighbors. Does anyone have thoughts?

Tracy: If we have those meetings, they should be public - give everyone a chance to sit in on them. Transparency is key.

Hunt: Transparency, yes. But I think with the smaller groups... Having it open to the public is great, but I think we should consider reserving whoever negotiates with them limited a little bit so we can have a unifying voice.

Sean: At the Chestnut neighborhood, we keep those meetings small. We may want to go see them. They have a Planning Contact Team with 3-4 people as officers.

Paula: Doesn't this have to be someone with experience - and not varying too widely. It takes a lot of knowledge to do these things. This is the problem that I see with getting that far with this.

Tracy: Hunt, do you want the ad hoc committee members to serve on the overarching committee? What is the role of the overarching committee - because if you just want to sit on the committee and wait for the subcommittees to come back to you, then that's not going to work.

Hunt: I want whoever wants to be involved.

Sean: what subcommittees would be created?

Tracy: Like for the Petty tract - It seems natural that the adjacent neighbors should be involved in the negotiations.

Sean: What is the purpose of the development committee? What are they doing - lay this structure out. I don't see the need to make these subcommittees - always one Board member is the point person.

Kirsten: We still don't have the information we need to represent the neighborhood - I would like to be on any of these committees, especially for Tract 5, but there might be someone who wants a grocery store more than a limit on height. ...If it comes down to a choice between a grocery store and having enough parking, I will choose the parking. [I missed a lot of Kirsten's comments here, but I hope I've captured enough to meet the gist of her meaning]. Until we have a clear list of priorities, how can we trust someone like me to make decisions for the whole neighborhood?

Sean: The structure of the committee - that will play out - we need to have a survey and understand what the neighborhood wants to focus on.

Kirsten: I thought you said you didn't think a survey was necessary.

Sean: Well, we're having a conversation, and that seemed to be something everyone wants...

Kirsten: There is Survey Monkey. We could use that, and then we'd have a baseline for contact teams so they're not individuals representing their own interests.

Sean: Can you draft that survey language?

Kirsten: I don't want to be the sole person drafting that.

Hunt: I'll help with that.

Sean: Is there a time limit?

Kirsten: Let's call a meeting of the development committee and make that our first chore.

Kris: The statutory framework of City of Austin and what we want are two different things. It's important in terms of what expectations you have, so you know what's there already and informing developers, vs. what actual impact we have as a neighborhood. These are important distinction to make. If most of what you ask for they don't have to do, you have to manage your expectations.

Hunt: We'll work on the structure for the development committee; send out an email to assemble the first meeting of the committee, talk about survey, etc.

Item #5

OCEAN update by Kirsten

Tracy: Blackshear - re: Rosewood Courts. The City's Housing Authority opposes a certain portion of the historic application, namely the architectural part. Section 106 review for HUD and HOCCA is due soon. The draft transformation will be viewed one day before the draft is due. April 3, the historic application is due and on May 17 the public meeting will be held at 606 West 13th ST, 8:30m.

Kirsten: OCEAN also dealt with the question of mobile or modular homes at dead end of Angelina. An individual wants to help elderly people move into stable homes - they own a lot of property beyond Marshall Apts, and they want to either put a mobile or modular home on it.

And on the I-35 - Cut and Cap idea, there were various debates about that.

Also, there is the TIA Collaborative. The GNDC headed by Mark Rogers was there, and Trammel Crow. There is a large parcel at Saltillo Plaza to I-35 along RR tracks. There were 4 finalists, and this TIA made their presentation at OCEAN. They are proposing ground floor retail, low-income and affordable and market housing.

Kris Bowen: It's an 11-acre site

Item #6

CODE Next Update by Kris Bowen

Kris: CODE Next is broken up into many parts, and our part is called Community Character in a Box. In late February, I attended a meeting, received the materials, and asked the neighborhood to do two things:

1st - mapping. After further review of the map, I contacted OCEAN, and turned over those maps to the OCEAN group to discuss and set a date before map is due (20 days from now). Emailed Stan Strickland, and asked for set date to do community mapping so all the neighborhood

associations in Central East Austin could appear. He said he's planning on a meeting next week. I've copied Louisa and Tracy on it.

2. Photo documentation project. I was only given materials that I couldn't pass out to the group. Small groups of 2-4 are supposed to walk the neighborhood, take pictures of things that best represent the character of our neighborhood.

I want to encourage our neighbors to get involved. If you have questions, email me. If you haven't participated, then I encourage you to. There are neighbors from Robertson Hill participating – and I hope there will be more. Also, if you need additional time, particularly if your neighborhood didn't know about this project, you can get it. But April 21st due date is the one we need to stick to.

You photos should be uploaded to a special email on the CODE Next website.

John Goldstone: If you can stay off and not take photos of my property that would be good. I'm a little suspicious of a program that calls for people to "be sure to stay off people's property."

Also, one more point. I moved over to Bouldin Creek. Around Annie and 2nd and Mary and 3rd, there are traffic circles. I invite anyone to come down to visit for about 5 minutes, and you'll see near-death experiences.

Also, that "claw-back" thing, I would be wary about how you negotiate with that - because a lender will be wary of that being in a contract - that's a tough thing to do.

Sean: (Adjourns meeting at 8:17pm)