

Notes from meeting of Ad-Hoc Committee for Rehabilitation of Northwest Quadrant
April 23, 2009 4:30 PM 701 Craven Street

Meeting called to order by Chairman Pete Palmer at 4:30 PM.

Palmer: We are here to decide on our mission, who, what ????

Mayor: Why? Hometown is important to all. It's about saving a neighborhood and growing a neighborhood.

This is a complex neighborhood which has always been diverse.

We want young folks to come back.

The committee will be seven members who will meet often.

Beer: Gives overview of history of City involvement in the neighborhood and stresses Council's commitment. Affordable housing is needed.

Palmer: Middle of August is when we have been asked to report by to Council with our recommendations. We want to retain the special qualities of the neighborhood.

Charlotte Brown: Old Commons Book project through the Beaufort Three Century Project is underway. I and Donna Alley are working on this initiative. We have learned so much about the "people" who built our neighborhood and the homes. That is what makes a neighborhood unique. All homes, small and large, are important. We need to try to keep Beaufort user-friendly and keep local business downtown.

Al Hefner: We should have functioning neighborhoods. We do need to streamline the process of review. Social and personal needs exist. TCL would love to train folks in learning skills needed to maintain homes.

Henrietta Goode: Self-esteem is very low in this neighborhood. No opportunity there. Young children need opportunities and older folks as well.

Al Hefner: This neighborhood has been ignored. Lanes and alleys should be reinstated to bring opportunity to have services in the back, such as garbage pickup and parking of cars. Front yards can become important again.

Palmer: We should begin meeting once or twice in the next few weeks. Could we have a meeting in the neighborhood?

John Gadson: We need to remember we are here because Council had an ordinance change before them to change the HRB process to give Council authority to approve demolition of structures. This direction makes me nervous. The Northwest Quadrant is the weakest neighborhood. Eminent domain is mentioned in the new ordinance and is frightening. I and other residents are distrustful of the City putting liens on properties.

Palmer: The HRB needs to play a critical role.

Charlotte Brown: The focus should be on infill and revitalization instead of demolition. Restore and rebuild if possible.

Henrietta Goode: Has the City thought of restoring homes and then renting them until the repair cost can be repaid? The homeowners retain ownership.

James Bellew: Redevelopment Commission is working on this and other ideas.

Mayor: Another idea is to freeze taxes on historic homes at the pre-restoration level.

Charlotte Brown: Is there any support from Council to back up our ordinances?

Al Hefner: We can all agree that some of the houses need to be demolished, but the new structures must be of an appropriate scale to fit into the neighborhood.

John Gadson: We have to admit the community will change. It is a matter of how. If we plan right, the people who live there can still afford to continue to live there.

Mayor: Northwest Quadrant is not targeted.

Henrietta Goode: Why don't we talk to neighborhood people to get a history of their families? We need to know who we are talking for.

Dwayne Smalley: Many vacant houses are owned by folks out the county. Are we talking about creating more rentals?

Mayor: We need tools and need to go house by house, not block by block. Heirs issues are tough. We started a Design Center process years ago, but it failed. Our vision was to have it in this neighborhood.

Pete Palmer: Absentee owners have been havens for illegal activity. Owner occupied housing should be a top priority.

Charlotte Brown: We need to look for ways to help folks be part of the revitalization and create job opportunities for those living in the neighborhood.

Henrietta Goode: We need young people living and working in the neighborhood.

Mayor: Our next meeting will be with Council at a workshop.

Pete Palmer: It is at that meeting that Council will tell us their expectations from this committee. We can also express our ideas and concerns.

Mayor: The meeting after the one with Council will be with the HRB.

Charlotte Brown: I am concerned that all we will do is spin our wheels as happened with the SCE&G Tall Poles. City Council caved in.

Mayor: The process is important.

Al Hefner: We will win. Their minds will be changed.

Henrietta Goode: Why are we here? What have we accomplished?

John Gadson: I think this was a get acquainted meeting. We did not talk enough about development and the need for infill done in an appropriate way. We will need to craft a response at some point and give our guidance to Council.

Pete Palmer: We need a credible neighborhood person to knock on doors. Henrietta Goode volunteered to lead this effort.

Charlotte Brown: Be careful how we word things. People may be fearful based on how the questions are asked. Confidentiality is important.

Henrietta Goode: All will ask why we are there asking them questions.

Pete Palmer: We do need to know the needs of the neighborhood.

James Bellew: Perhaps we need a neighborhood forum.

Bobby Jenkins: The 23 houses identified on the Vacant and Abandoned List should be the starting point.

John Gadson: Most of the 23 have received repair or demolish letters from the Codes Dept.

Al Hefner: The Council asked HBF to look at the list and identify which could be demolished and which should be saved. HBF has returned their rankings to the City.

John Gadson: We need to give the neighborhood respect for their concerns. The neighborhood has asked for help for years. We need to give a human name to the houses as we do in other historic district neighborhoods.

Al Hefner: Many do not realize that The Point was dilapidated in 1971.

Pete Palmer: Shows an unidentified map that shows vacant lots. He said this might be a starting point to update this map.

John Gadson: I and others are planning a neighborhood meeting in early May to given information about lots of topics to the neighborhood.

Henrietta Goode: There is a neighborhood Potluck Meal every Friday at the park at Washington Street. This might be a good place to give information to the neighborhood.

John Gadson: We are all hoping that a neighborhood association will be the result. We have folks from the Old Commons Neighborhood Association who have volunteered to help with the organization.

James Bellew: As a point of clarification, the Redevelopment Commission are not developers.

Pete Palmer: Thank you all for coming. I have some information I did not have prior to the meeting. Our next meeting will be with Council.

James Bellew: Can we get a list of the Vacant and Abandoned properties that have been identified?

Donna Alley: I can provide the public list to Pete Palmer for distribution.

Garrett Budds: Coastal Conservation League would like to help. We did a form based code for Ridgeland.

Pete Palmer: Could some of us meet next Thurs?

Henrietta Goode: I can reserve the Greene Street Gym for future meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM

Notes taken by Donna Alley