

Minutes from OCCO General Meeting January 10, 2009

President Felicia Phillips called the meeting to order at Fire Station 14. There were ten people who signed the meeting attendance sheet.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the December 2008 meeting were reviewed and approved with no changes.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Henry Roque presented the latest account statement, which showed a balance of \$1361.54. There was one expense of \$50; it was a contribution toward the cost for the annual holiday breakfast for City sanitation workers and cookie tins for firefighters.

Mr. Roque encouraged meeting attendees to pay their 2009 membership dues (\$15 per person or \$20 per household).

Quality of Life

- **Crime and Public Safety**

Membership forms for the new *Oakland City Security Patrol* were available for attendees to pick up and distribute to their neighbors. We need a minimum of 60 members for the patrol to begin with a limited number of hours per week. Outreach to local businesses is important because they would want coverage in the evening and overnight hours while residents need coverage during the day when they are not at home. No launch date for the patrol has been determined, but everyone has been asked to spread the word and recruit patrol members.

A meeting attendee mentioned that he has spoken to a *plainclothes police officer* who is patrolling the neighborhood; he shared with the officer information he knew about possible illegal activity happening on his street.

As a follow-up to an action item from December, Jamila Houser agreed to arrange a conference call with one of the founders of the *West End Security Patrol* to find out how they went about setting up their patrol.

Jacorey Johnson, who was recently convicted of a March burglary in Oakland City and is suspected in several other burglaries, received a sentence of 20 years in prison; he will serve a minimum of two years and the balance of the sentence on probation.

- **Hartnett Community Garden**

- Garden Coordinator Henry Roque recently finished his training to become a Master Gardener. Master Gardeners are community volunteers who receive training in various horticultural areas. While receiving his training and certification, Mr. Roque will continue to oversee OCCO projects in the garden.
- The West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, which manages the land we use for our garden, is interested in starting its own garden in the open ball field that OCCO has been working to clear and fertilize. Henry remains OCCO's liaison to WAWA, and will give us more information as spring planting time approaches.

Housing

- Donnelly Manor Update
 - At the December meeting there was a presentation given by Ron Walker, Executive Director of the Atlanta Mutual Housing Association. He presented Atlanta MHA's plans to build a 161-unit apartment complex at the corner of Donnelly Avenue and Lawton Street in the northeast corner of Oakland City.
 - OCCO voted to support the development with the condition that separate meetings take place with Mr. Walker to discuss the project in more detail so that OCCO could outline several conditions that must be met before we could fully support the project.
 - Several OCCO members met with Mr. Walker on December 15 and raised the following concerns and issues:
 - Fencing should surround the entire property
 - Oakland City should have representation on the Real Estate Committee that will be established by Atlanta MHA for the project
 - A security patrol for the complex should be in place
 - All historic ordinances must be followed
 - Proactive marketing of the apartments to current Oakland City residents is required
 - Social services, similar to those offered by Atlanta MHA in its other communities, should be available at Donnelly Manor
 - Mr. Walker was willing to address all of the above issues. He also stated that he could help OCCO accelerate its efforts to become a community development organization since Atlanta MHA would be interested in partnering with someone to pursue funds to improve single-family homes near the apartment complex.
 - Many questions were asked about the project, and additional concerns were raised. Ms. Phillips will invite Mr. Walker back to a future OCCO meeting so that more people can hear first-hand about the project and address their concerns directly to Mr. Walker.
- Pursuing CDC Status for OCCO
 - Kevin Houser has spent the last few months talking with various local and state agencies to find out what it will take for OCCO to become a community development corporation (CDC); that designation is also commonly referred to as CHDO (community housing development organization).
 - He made a presentation at the meeting that laid out what needs to be done; those steps include:
 - Submit a letter of interest to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (that will be forwarded to the Housing Assistance Council)
 - Establish a Board of Directors

- Review and update OCCO Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation to reflect a mission of developing low- and moderate-income housing
- Create partnerships with other CDCs or CHDOs in order for OCCO to build capacity to handle projects on its own
- Questions raised by meeting attendees included the following:
 - If OCCO pursues a CDC, what happens to all of the other activities that OCCO is involved in (such as the community garden, the security patrol, and programs for youth and children)?
 - Should a separate non-profit organization be established (instead of OCCO) just for housing? Some people are not interested in working on housing issues, so can OCCO continue to exist for non-housing related activities.
- **After much discussion, it was decided that a vote could not be taken on this issue.** In the meantime, Mr. Houser and others will continue to evaluate options and present an update at the next OCCO meeting.
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Funding
 - As a follow up to OCCO's research on this Federal program which will give grants to organizations to acquire, renovate, and sell foreclosed homes, Kevin Houser reported that Atlanta Mutual Housing Association is planning to apply for funding under the program. **He asked OCCO to formally support Atlanta MHA's application; the motion failed.**
 - Mr. Houser mentioned that there was an upcoming deadline of January 15 to submit interest in applying for NSP funding; he will find out if that is a deadline that OCCO must meet and will involve others in preparing the application as necessary.

Respectfully submitted,



President
Oakland City Community Organization, Inc.