

## **Minutes from OCCO General Meeting February 14, 2009**

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

### **Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the January 2009 meeting were reviewed and approved with two changes: adding a missing verb to the Hartnett Community Garden report and clarifying community concerns and issues about the proposed Donnelly Manor apartment complex.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Henry Roque presented the latest account statement, which showed a balance of \$1436.54. Deposits for January totaled \$75, and there were no expenses. 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**

Several meeting attendees signed up for the ***Oakland City Security Patrol***, which is scheduled to launch in April 2009. At least sixty households need to sign up before we can hire an officer and get the Patrol started. Meeting attendees were asked to take extra Patrol flyers with them and canvass their streets to get the word out.

Our neighbors in Venetian Hills are interested in partnering with us on this effort; OCCO members will attend their community meeting on February 21 to talk about the Patrol and to hand out flyers in their area. If Venetian Hills joins us, the coverage area for the Patrol will be much larger, but hopefully can still be handled by one Patrol car.

A specific effort to increase awareness about the Security Patrol will take place on Saturday, February 21, when we will walk targeted streets and leave flyers and talk to residents about the Patrol. Jamila Houser stated that the planned **Community Walk** is modeled after a similar effort in Capitol View. Another goal of the walk is to find out what do residents need from their community organization; we will knock on doors and ask residents to take a brief survey. We will also leave a newsletter that will have articles about activities going on in Oakland City.

A meeting was held last month with interested neighbors on **Arlington Avenue** to discuss recent crime activity and concerns about residential burglaries. They are interested in establishing a **Neighborhood Watch**. Similar interest has been expressed by neighbors on Lawton Avenue.

Ms. Phillips spoke about **Operation Neighborhood Takeback**, an initiative of the Atlanta Police Department and the Fulton County District Attorney's Office. They are looking for neighborhoods that want to take the lead in reclaiming their communities from crime and blight. The program includes a Neighborhood Watch Training and a Community Walk. Ms. Phillips told Community Prosecutor LaDawn Blackett-Jones that Oakland City would like to be among the first neighborhoods to take part in the program. She has received an application packet that needs to be submitted to the District Attorney's office.

- Future Plans for Fire Station 14

- Lev Sterling and Maureen Malone shared information about the Fire Department's plans to relocate a ladder truck from Fire Station 17 (on Ralph David Abernathy Blvd near West End) to Fire Station 14 in order to provide additional protection when the current group of firefighters has to leave the neighborhood to support search and rescue operations (they have received special training for that purpose). The Fire Department cites the fact that in January during the collapse of a walkway at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, Station 14's truck was out of service for fire calls because the firefighters were doing search and rescue operations there.
- The proposed changes would take place in March, and would double the number of firefighters at Station 14.
- Station 14 has become much busier since the City closed down Station 7 last summer (it is located on West Whitehall Street in the West End). But Station 14 was not designed to hold additional equipment or firefighters.
- The City has space available at Station 2 on Jonesboro Road to house a ladder truck.
- Such a move raises many concerns, including but not limited to: accreditation of the Fire Department, sleeping arrangements for the additional firefighters, and whether or not affected neighborhoods would really have better coverage.
- Residents were encouraged to contact Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran at 404-290-0965 to express their concerns about this proposed plan. In addition, they can call the Mayor's Office at 404-330-6026 and Councilmember Clela Winslow's office at 404-330-6047.
- As information, other stations close to 14 include Station 20 on Manford Road near Metropolitan Parkway, Station 25 on Benjamin E. Mays Drive, and Station 5 on Campbellton Road near Greenbriar Parkway.

- Hartnett Community Garden

- Mr. Roque has so far signed up ten neighbors to work plots in the garden.
- Seeds are now available at no charge from the Fulton County Extension Service.

## Housing

- Recap of Donnelly Manor Project

- After receiving conditional support from OCCO for this proposed apartment complex at the corner of Donnelly Avenue and Lawton Street, Ron Walker, Executive Director of the Atlanta Mutual Housing Association, returned to NPU-S at its January meeting to seek NPU support for the project.
- The NPU voted to oppose the project, largely due to vocal opposition residents who live close to the site of the proposed project and a letter submitted to the NPU-S Chairperson by the Beecher-Donnelly Neighborhood Association citing concerns about Atlanta MHA's management of its DeFors Manor apartment complex in Buckhead.

- A spirited discussion took place between those who attended OCCO's December meeting, where Mr. Walker presented the plan, and those who attended the January NPU-S meeting. Neighbors living near the proposed site of the community complained that OCCO did not seek their input and instead took a vote from among neighbors who live close to Fire Station 14, where the meetings take place. Opponents of the Donnelly Manor project also brought photographs of existing apartment complexes in Oakland City and asked how could OCCO support a new apartment development when it cannot improve those already in the neighborhood.
- Ms. Phillips and other responded to the concerns. She stated that OCCO can no more enforce proper management of an apartment complex than it can enforce proper management of a single-family home in the neighborhood. Concerning the December vote, she mentioned that the time and place of OCCO meetings is well known to those who have been involved with the organization over time. Nonetheless, she agreed to schedule a meeting between the residents and Mr. Walker so that they could hear first hand about the project.
- Those opposed to the project asked OCCO to rescind its support of the project since NPU-S does not support it. No motion was introduced at this time.
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
  - Atlanta Mutual Housing Association plans to apply for NSP funding to acquire properties in Oakland City. Kevin Houser is working with Ron Walker on the application. The application is due on March 2.

**Report from Councilmember Clela Winslow**

- She was unaware of the Donnelly Manor project; she thinks it may be financed with funding from the Atlanta Development Authority.
- She has been working with Code Enforcement to get the house at the corner of Oakland Lane and Oakland Drive demolished. The home is now in the *in-rem* process. She will investigate a home at 1115 Arlington Avenue that is in equally poor condition.
- She has proposed a Community Improvement District for business in West End and in Oakland City (along the Lee Street corridor). Business would tax themselves in order to pay for improvements such as beautification or security patrols.
- She distributed handouts to meeting attendees on a variety of topics, including: college scholarship information, a retreat for high school students, and curbside recycling dates.

Respectfully submitted,



President  
Oakland City Community Organization, Inc.