

Cool Spring/Tilton Neighborhood Association

Meeting Minutes

November 9, 2010

Attendees: See attached list.

1. Welcome

Meeting Chair Clara Zahradnik welcomed CS/TNA meeting attendees.

2. Holiday Season Activities

- University & Whist Club, Holiday House, and Outdoor Lighting Tour. December 4.
Contact Ed Weirauch (organizer) to include your house on the tour or volunteer as a guide.
- Christmas Caroling – Sunday, December 12 at 4:30 pm.
Heather Hook will host the Pre-caroling Soup. Volunteers needed to bring a soup or bread.
A volunteer near Ingleside is needed to host dessert. Volunteers needed to bring a dessert.
- Cool Spring Night on Art Loop at Wilmington Library. December 3.
Contact Terry O’Byrne for more information.

3. Neighborhood Watch

Chuck Dorman reported:

- Operational for 6 weeks. 40 people signed up with 50% participation.
- Originally scheduled for Friday and Saturday nights with 2-2 hour shifts, but rescheduled to 7 days/week with 1.5 hour shifts to increase participation.
- Observations:
 - 11th St. street lights out. Delmarva Power work orders have been submitted.
 - Loitering and drug dealing encountered on Van Buren St. between 6th and 7th Streets.
 - Many properties poorly lit. Important to encourage businesses and homeowners to install/turn on property lights for safety.
- “Neighborhood Watch” street signs are needed.
ACTION ITEM: Neighborhood Watch participants to decide on locations for street signs and with Council Steve Martelli, contact Public Works Department to install signs.
- Police are aware of Cool Spring/Tilton Neighborhood Watch Program but no feedback has been received on concerns (i.e., at Van Buren and 6th and 7th Streets; attendance at CS/TNA Meetings despite repeated invitations).
ACTION ITEM: Councilman Martelli to contact Community Police Officer Corporal John Burns regarding police cooperation with CS/TNA.

4. Community Garden Project

Public Allies reported:

- Three possible sites to be evaluated.
- Working with Cornerstone West and Delaware Center for Horticulture.
- Possible need to enlarge scope, e.g. include Little Italy.
- Need for a community champion for community garden.
- Need to determine community's interest in garden through a survey developed by Public Allies.

Public Allies was applauded for their contributory efforts.

5. CS/TNA Position on Vacant Property Conversions

CS/TNA's current position is in favor of maintaining the city ruling that, whatever the status of a property (i.e. multi-family, single-family), if the property is vacant for 1 year plus 1 day, the property reverts to single family status or the request for variance must be presented to and considered by the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA). Extensive discussion on this issue followed.

Comments

C: Concern that vacant properties in this stagnant real estate market will remain on the market for an extended period if restrictions apply.

C: Street parking and traffic congestion problems will increase with more multi-family properties.

C: Concern with deterioration of the neighborhood with more tenant rentals. Cool Spring/Tilton currently has 65% rental units which is a high percentage.

C: "Vacant List" criteria need to be evaluated.

C: Concern that the current restrictive policy may inhibit investment in revamping properties.

C: Blocks with converted properties have better investment.

C: Other districts (i.e., Hockessin, Greenville) do not support conversion to multi-family properties despite stagnant real estate market.

C: Multi-family properties result in increased costs to city in trash collection, etc.

C: Restrictions on property conversions to multi-family properties is one of our best tools to control density. West Side is the most densely populated area in the city.

C: Flexibility must be preserved in this market. Use of case-by-case approach is recommended.

C: Investors seem to try to circumvent current policy on restricted conversions and plead ignorance or hardship to win conversion approval.

C: Essential to have information in writing on restrictions (i.e. on property conversions, historic district guidelines) at point of sale of property.

C: "Sellers' Disclosure" form is best option to convey information on restrictions.

C: Representative Gerald Brady (Chairman of State Housing and Community Affairs Committee) recommended modifying the "Sellers' Disclosure" form and considering this issue from a state-wide perspective.

C: ZBA is not consistent in decisions. It is essential to have consistency in decisions.

C: Frustration was expressed regarding the length of time that the disclosure issue has remained an unresolved problem. However, CS/TNA officers emphasized this is a complex issue, the issue is in the process of being addressed, and CS/TNA and the government are intent on fixing the issue.

C: Proposal made for a CS/TNA committee to interface with the real estate community and state government to resolve the issue regarding disclosure of restrictions on a property.

Vote on CS/TNA's position against the re-instatement of multi-family use variance when a single-family property has lost the variance due to vacancy:

Support: 14

Opposed: 2

Abstain: 4

Motion carried.

ACTION ITEM: C. Zahradnik to inform ZBA on CS/TNA position.

6. December CS/TNA Meeting (December 14; 7:15 pm; Regency Healthcare Facility)

- Officers suggested the idea of a Pollyanna Trade of gifts but attendees expressed minimal interest.
- Councilman Bud Freel emphasized the need for contributions to Toys for Tots in Hilltop. Attendees supported this activity.

ACTION ITEM: Bring a toy for a child (toddler to 12 years) to the December meeting.

Attendees

John & Judy Fardoulis
Terry O'Byrne
Ken Carson
Bejay Hoffman
Chuck Dorman
Morgan McGinnity
Caitlin Dalih
Eric & Liza Zumsteg
Christin Willauer
Ted Jacoby
Zoc Plerhoples
Barbara Dunn
David Schelat
John Shaw
Alfred Lance
Lisa Zimmerman
Melissa DiVincenzo
Laura Philon
Nia Wright-Berry
Dennis Gallagher
Councilman Steve Martelli
Councilman Bud Freel
Representative Gerald Brady
Clara Zahradnik
Ed Weirauch
Tammie Williams
Connie Smith