

CSTNA Meeting - December 13, 2016

Welcome

- Thanks to everyone who participated in our amazing caroling event – the biggest ever!
- Neighbors in need – several people are collecting assistance for neighbors in need right now. The CSTNA will not, as an organization, donate to these efforts, but we encourage people to help out if they choose to.

Presentation by Angela Parker, Christiana Hospital Blood Pressure Ambassador Program

The blood pressure ambassador program started in 2011 with screenings by Christiana nurses. In 2015, the program expanded to include the community – it currently has 103 community blood pressure ambassadors (recruits to the program who live or work in communities) and 24 organizational partners.

A lot of people aren't aware of the signs, symptoms, and potential consequences of high blood pressure, and some may be resistant to screening. Screenings and education are especially important in the African American community, because 40% of African Americans have high blood pressure and get it at an earlier age than other populations.

Anyone interested in becoming an ambassador or having Christiana come out to conduct free screenings at an event can contact Angela. You would just need to provide a small table and you will be provided with all equipment. They can provide a 5-minute education session – diet and exercise tips, info about medication. You can tell people right then and there whether they should seek medical care, although it is just one reading – they may need another check.

Angela provided us with recruitment flyers tonight. They also have flyers in the works with general information, and she'll get us some of those that we could distribute door to door or at neighborhood events.

Community Issue

Concerns have been expressed about the concentration of group homes in our neighborhood. Nate reached out to a few relevant people from the city; however, because the city is in a period of transition (with new leadership coming on board), they're hesitant to present on initiatives in the works.

Nate is interested in starting an open, respectful, informed discussion about this issue. There are laws with regards to group living facilities, and we want to respect those laws and respect the people who live in those homes.

Nate invited people to comment.

Alfred Lance: Works in the Development Office, understands the concerns, and wanted to support this conversation. Most people involved in the city's work on this are appointees, so any information is nebulous at this point. The city has a Crime and Blight Team with representation from various stakeholders/offices that addresses issues of blight and vacancies and their relationship to crime in Wilmington. They're in an information-gathering stage right now. One of their goals is balancing the need

to provide housing for people with a need to maintain a non-institutional character to neighborhoods. This involves both city and state. They hope to maintain a close relationship with neighborhood groups as they move forward.

Related issues the team looks at include identifying specific properties for home ownership opportunities and/or acquisition by the city, possible ways to support high-quality multi-unit housing. They're asking what role the city could play and what role communities could play.

Often the only information the housing board has to go on to decide on a variance is the information provided by the petitioner. Alfred would like to see the staff support added to allow that board to be empowered by information from a variety of other departments and sources.

Alfred personally would like to see neighborhoods write a letter to the city outlining things they'd like to see. A lot of people internally are concerned about this issue.

Further discussion by meeting attendees:

- Our neighborhood has big houses and relatively low real estate costs, so it's an attractive location for group homes. An approach taken by Wilmington, NC, is to require a half-mile radius between group homes.
- Are we talking about group homes specifically or a parking problem or noise problem more broadly? We need to take a more holistic approach to the underlying problems group homes address.
- This is not a new issue – past protests opposing new group homes were met with accusations of NIMBYism. But at the same time, our neighborhood does have an unusually high number of group homes compared to other places in New Castle County.
- Realtors face issues with transparency in getting variances.
- There are various kinds of group homes (Limen Houses, Oxford Houses, more informal houses), each of which have different purposes, structures, rules & regulations, etc.
- Group homes are better than vacancies.
- Could there be an application process/lottery system used to turn selected vacant properties into group homes? Or incentives to fix houses up for home ownership?
- Nate – we will revisit this once new city leadership is in place.

Presentation by Bud Freel, Wilmington City Council, 8th District

We are in a period of transition, and changes will be made. The mayor elect is stepping into a very difficult financial situation, with a sizable deficit. The mayor has to present a budget by March. Bud has been very involved in the land bank project, which has some applications for funding out, and he's very excited about this process of really going after vacant properties.

They're also looking at revamping our housing code. Our housing code right now involves criminal charges – they're looking at making it a civil offense, so they can tackle nuisance properties without going through a lengthy court process. They're hoping to have legislation proposed by early next year.

Also under review is how we handle recycling and trash in the city – Bud would like to see us get more aggressive with recycling, and the Council will be looking at pickup, etc. over the next 6-12 months. He would also like to see community policing come back. Bud is cautiously optimistic that we're moving in a good direction.

District Neighborhood Planning Councils

Nate would like to revisit our work with the district neighborhood planning councils for Cool Spring/Tilton - 8th and 5th - and will reach out to those councils. We want to make sure we're not missing out on possible funding opportunities.

Rob Pfeiffer – The 5th District needs people at the meetings! Second Monday of every month. Anyone interested in serving in any capacity, let Nate know.

Additional Updates

- A News Journal reporter reached out to the CSTNA to talk about the Cool Spring Park restoration project. Sally O'Byrne talked with them about the history of the park, the reason for the restoration, and the dead/dying fish issue. There seems to be some miscommunication around the project, with things happening differently than they were planned.

- Rob assured the group that Tiltlandia is not leaving CSTNA. The new Friends of Tilton Park is focused only on advocating for the park for the people who live right on and very near the park. With Christian Willauer's grant-writing help, we have already received \$20,000 for the design of new playgrounds in both Cool Spring and Tilton parks.

- A 3rd Thursdays Bazaar is now happening every month, 5-8 pm at Third Place, with food trucks, artwork, and crafts – stop by!