

CSTNA September Meeting

9/11/2018

President Nathan Durant – Welcome and Announcements

Officer nominations: if you would like to nominate yourself or anyone to be an officer (president, vice president, treasurer, secretary).

Nominations

- President: Nathan Durant
- Vice President: Carol Townsend
- Secretary: Jordan Howell
- Treasurer: Clara Zahradnik

Clara Zahradnik noted that all the nominations, being unchallenged, will not require a formal election next week.

In regard to the agenda, because we have a packed agenda and a number of high-profile speakers, Nate reminded everyone to be respectful not only when it comes to tone but also in regards to how much they monopolize time by asking excessive follow-up questions before other people have a chance to ask a question. Everyone needs a chance to ask a question.

Clara Zahradnik – Treasury Update

Our balance decreased by \$5 in the past twelve months from \$3,338.49 to \$3,333.49. This is quite a nest egg, Clara suggests, and we should identify projects to receive these funds.

Barb from City Church – Fall Fest

City Church wants to invest in the neighborhood, so every year they host Fall Fest and the Easter Egg Hunt in Tilton Park. These include moon bounces, free food, scavenger hunts. Bring children, friends, and families. The events attracts several hundred attendees, mostly families.

Fall Fest will be held on October 13 from noon to 2PM. The main need for this event is volunteers. Minimum of 40 shifts need to be filled, which equals a minimum of 28 people, barebones minimum, to make it run.

Councilperson Vash Turner offered to pay for the Fall Festival event fee (\$100) charged by the city to hold the event in Tilton Park. Barb from City Church says that they already paid the fee, and really need \$100 for the pumpkin carving station.

Motion to allocate \$100 for the pumpkin carving. Seconded. Approved.

Kevin Melloy motioned to establish a flower committee, or something like that. Don't think we actually voted on that.

Vash Turner – City Council Update

Vash says there's too many water problems right now. The city may be taking properties for just \$3,000. Vacant properties selling for under \$3,000, mostly for taxes and water. On the sheriff sale list are 17 properties with taxes and water under \$3,700. Vash says there's not a level playing field between owner-occupiers and LLCs. LLCs tend to get preferential treatment.

Question: How do they target the homes that go to sheriff sale? Vash doesn't think homes should be put to sheriff sale for \$2,200. That's not right. Heather follows up with another question, and then another, stopping to apologize to Nate for doing exactly what he asked us all not to do.

Turner yielded the floor to the owner of 1103 W 7th. Just purchased the home thinking that he could turn it into apartments; wants a variance on the property to have it reverted to a multi-unit building "for his family" to stay in. Not exactly sure why he needs separate apartments for his family. Some notable skepticism in the room as to whether or not this person is full of it. When asked if he could remember the name of his realtor, he could not remember.

Motion to postpone a decision to endorse a variance until we receive more background on the issue. Nate says that this is a decision that we take very seriously. This deserves a fair listen at a subsequent meeting. Seconded. Approved.

Upcoming legislation before City Council:

- Restricting restaurants from offering sodas or high-sugar drinks on kids menus

Capt. Campos and Chief Tracy – Police Update

Tracy: We're in dress uniforms for 9/11 memorials. Mayor hit on a couple points. We needed to change the culture of the organization internally to achieve external success. 60% reduction in shooting victims. Lowest in a decade. But it's still too many. We're not only bringing down violent crime, but we're doing it with fewer arrests.

Campos: We're running out of time, so I won't bore you with numbers. But basically, crimes are way down. Recently arrested a group of 13-19 year olds who were responsible for roughly 40 stolen cars across the city.

Mayor Purzycki

Nate reaffirms that we are aware of property blight issues in our neighborhood, and that's why the Mayor is here tonight. Also announced to the crowd that we've filed a

FOIA request on behalf of the neighborhood association to verify certain information regarding the Park Place properties.

Earlier this year, Purzycki was approached by the property owners about a variance to perform major renovations/rebuild with the park place properties, including ADA accessibility. Rebuilding the homes as replicas was, as the mayor said, a suitable alternative, without providing any reassurances that this would actually happen.

Vocal disappointment among the room.

Questions

- Why are these buildings in the shape they're in to where they need to be torn down? Marilyn Bacon interjects: because the owners let them go; all the other homes on the block are in fine condition, and they're not ADA accessible. Mayor doesn't answer this question.
- There are so many property issues. The blight law going through city council: are there other laws that if passed by City Council would help establish a legal bedrock to manage all these blight issues? No direct answer.
- Kevin Melloy: corners make or break neighborhoods. We need a corner initiative. The park place properties. Being more of a statement than a question, the meeting moves on.
- We're starting to crack down on property owners for blight issues. What's the vision here? Are we trying to motivate owners to invest in their properties, or are we trying to rush things into sheriff sale? Mayor replies that there are a lot of people who love that they moved to the city but just can't take it anymore, mostly because of violence. We want people to stay in their homes and strengthen their neighborhoods.
- Greg Luna: Yes, other neighborhoods are in worse condition than ours. He knows at least two families that left because of violence. And seeing neighbors further deflated because of vacant or blighted properties.
- Jana Leonard landed in Cool Spring and loved it, but then a police chase landed on their front lawn, someone was shot and killed a few blocks from their house. They still love the neighborhood, and their biggest concern is the drug trade, especially paraphernalia on playgrounds? Are there any plans to tackle drug use? Are playgrounds a priority? Mayor says shooting incidents are down 55%. We're seeing progress. But he'll defer to Chief Tracy and Capt. Campos to discuss strategy. Big picture: if you try and do everything you get nothing done, so we need to focus priorities on specific neighborhoods.
- Amy O'Neill commented on Cool Spring Park: mulch delivery to the playground, hasn't been replenished in years. Because it looks worn down, people are more likely to disrupt the parks. Mayor answers that he's aware of the problem.

- Why don't we bring back park rangers? Mayor answers that we're stretched on personnel. We've got union contracts to deal with. Can't do everything when you want to do it.
- Water bills? People complaining about high water bills (including Mayor's wife). This whole process has been a nightmare. The whole thing is a mess. Finance wanted to take quarterly bills and make them monthly. To do that required rethinking the way they bill. Process goes through citizens advisory board. Administration will get recommendations from Public Works and the citizen advisory board. Bills went up \$50. The old minimum was 2600 free gallons which was reduced to 2000 free gallons, but when you reduce the minimum everyone else got charged for those 600 gallons. So 25% of people will see their bill go down, and 75% will see their bills go up.