

## Neighborhood Advisory Commission

MEETING MINUTES – February 25, 2014

Present: Councilmember Nicole Wagoner, Jennifer Jeudy, Allen Hedrick, Michael Cassidy, David Cox, Chief of Police Charles Hinnant, David Umling, Terri Hast, Frances Cook, Louise Elliott, George Reynolds, Sam and Sally Robinette, Jerry and Mary Wilson, Amie Wohlschlager, Shawn Hershberger, Dustin Freas, Brent Sterling, Tom Taccino, James Plumme and Lt. Dave Biser.

Nicole Wagoner brought the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and gave an overview of the commission which can be found on the City's website. She reminded everyone to sign in and intro. It is the duty of the Commission to maintain and improve the quality of life in the City's neighborhoods by coordinating the efforts of recognized neighborhood associations and to serve as a liaison for neighborhood associations with the Mayor and City Council and the City departments. She asked Dave Umling to comment on the 2013 Comprehensive Plan as a guideline.

Umling commented this group will act as the concierge between the neighborhoods and local government. He said the City's 2013 Comprehensive Plan can be used as a guideline for the individual neighborhoods as a vision for what the neighborhoods had already determined to be important to them. This does not need to be followed verbatim but can help with direction in bringing value to neighborhood in breaking the cycle of decline. City government can't do "everything", and we need to connect with one another to grow our neighborhoods in a positive way. We know that North End is not like South Cumberland and we might even connect differently but we all need to get buy in from the whole neighborhood – residential and business. Wagoner and Sally Robinette commented that helping to promote the businesses and what they offer to the neighborhood is a good idea.

Wagoner asked for nominations from the floor for President, Vice President, and Secretary. Mike Cassidy nominated Nicole Wagoner, Chair; Allen Emerick, Vice Chair; and Terri Hast, Secretary. With no other nominations from the floor the positions stood.

Wagoner summarized how the NAC meetings will run and wants to keep each meeting to 1 hour in length in respect for everyone's time. City Departments will give their reports and a short question/answer time will be given. It's hoped that each Neighborhood will give a short Report telling of any special events or announcements. If there are any issues to be discussed, it is asked that each group come with 3 possible solutions having discussed among themselves beforehand. We also want to hear about positive accomplishments in your neighborhood and we ask that each limit their total reporting time to 5 minutes each. Public comment is also encouraged but also kept to 5 minutes.

### Department Reports:

**Community Development** – David Cox, Building/Zoning Officer gave a report for January 2014. The City received 26 nuisances and general complaints and processed 14 as corrected. 7 property maintenance complaints have seen 6 corrected. Numerous housing complaints of frozen pipes, lack of heat, etc., the City was able to resolve quickly. 11 building permit applications saw 8 issued. 42 residential/rental applications have generated \$13,300 into the City's general fund. 13 occupancy permits were turned in and the 9 were completed. 35 out of 36 housing inspections passed. The City's 17 municipal infractions and 7 are in the court adjudication process. He reminded all that they have a small staff of 2 building and zoning officers, 1 full-time and 1 part-time code enforcement officer. They are currently meeting with the City attorney and are trying to streamline the citation process. As many already know, blighted properties are an important issue with M&CC, and with the Administrator's assistance have been able to increase ability to streamline some of these. The City has removed 2 homes damaged by fire at 106 Robert Street and 414 Grand Ave, and another at 240 Columbia Street. In the pipeline for demolition is 478 Baltimore Ave, 100 Industrial Blvd and 8 Oldtown Road. City attorney is working on tax foreclosure. Applications are in and under review for CDBG funding as the deadline was February 21. The Mayor's Neighborhoods Matter campaign will be underway soon with dumpsters throughout the City.

Lee Borrer, Community Development Specialist said that Human Relations Commission goal is to have Diversity Sensitivity training in the neighborhoods for free. A Fair Housing Event will be held on April 15 at ACM with the topic of Accessibility and creative ways to assist.

**Police Department** – Chief Charles Hinnant and Lt. David Biser reported crime is down 35.3% in Cumberland for 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year compared to past years. Some of this is due to weather. The State Safe Streets initiative is a crime-

reduction model which promotes collaboration and information sharing across multiple agencies allowing public agencies to work together to reduce crime and improve the quality of our neighborhoods. We did a good job but putting bicycle and foot patrol back into the streets will help us improve. Many times criminals have no records due to witnesses not showing up, or taking a plea, etc. the City is now following offenders more closely and identifying and prosecuting them to the fullest extent of law. CPD has partnered with many including Mayor and City Council, Allegany County Commissioners, States Attorney, Director of Housing, the US Attorney, and others. Police are now going to house with parole officers. An awarded grant provided for overtime and the hiring of 3 people including a crime analyst. Crime was down for 9 months during the sweeps they did. Lt. Biser reported that 1,192 warrants have been wiped out since January 2013 (that's 50%! ). A hot spot map showing all crimes in City was on display and determined South Cumberland around Virginia Ave., Baltimore Ave. and Decatur Sts., and Henderson Ave. around North End showed the highest levels in the City, so this is where CPD will focus extra attention. Other maps revealed types of crimes which helped in knowing what to look for and data showed that crime rate dropped locally, especially in burglary. A time pinwheel marked that most crimes are reported between 5-7 p.m. and tells us most crimes are happening during the daylight hours and being reported when folks come home from work. Officers are taking ownership of the neighborhoods and getting to know the people again.

**Fire, Street and Engineering** reports were not available.

### **Neighborhood reports:**

**Chapel Hill West Neighborhood Association, Inc.** representative Allen Hedrick reported that 2 key members had recently passed away. They hope to focus on blight and cleanup this year. 6 dumpsters had been filled up on previous Dumpster Days and they will be holding another soon using 8 dumpsters. Their group meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month (except for November and December) at 6:30 p.m. Wagoner said that all groups can submit events to the City for announcing.

**North End Crime Watch** representative Tom Taccino reported a North End Picnic is held each year but this year they have heard that it will become an ice cream social and wondered why. It was clarified that this is not a City of Cumberland event, but Cumberland Neighborhood Housing Services (CNHS). In the past Crime Watch with CNHS coordinated the event. Wagoner offered to help look into this noting the money raised probably determines the event. A dumpster day will be held in May. The City Police Department (CDP) normally report at their meetings, and Chief Hinnant asked the organization to let CPD know if a meeting is cancelled for any reason by an email [chinnant@allconet.org](mailto:chinnant@allconet.org) or a phone call to 301-759-6496. They meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

**Decatur Heights Neighborhood Association** has added some planters to the telephone poles and hopes to add a four more in the 200 block. They are looking for volunteers to water the planters. They are very happy with the Baltimore Avenue project the city has undertaken and Cox and John DiFonzo in Engineering, have been very helpful answering questions. Cox commented that code enforcement is working on two properties in their area that should help to clean up this area in the next few months. They meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month.

A question was asked as to why steps were put in place on Baltimore Avenue and was referred to the engineering department 301-759-6600 for an answer. *[After checking - these are not steps but a foundation for further building, the sidewalk will be ADA compatible.]* Wagoner commented on question regarding potholes and the fact that the City is attempting to gain back some dollars for street projects.

**South Cumberland Business and Civic Association** representative Terri Hast said that their group is comprised of residents, business owners, civic leaders, and church organizations from four neighborhoods – Walsh-Humbird, Johnson Heights-Mapleside, Chapel Hill and Rolling Mill. They've been meeting since the 1940's with 40-60 members present at each meeting. The most notable event they do is the annual Halloween Parade and the holiday lights on Virginia Ave. They are going through some reorganization with a new executive board and are hoping to make some positive changes. They meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. (not in January or June-August). HRDC gave the contact information to Mary Wilson after a question regarding the South Cumberland Street Fair.

Chief Hinnant will check on the street light at Mechanic and Valley Streets that someone said was not working properly.

Wagoner reminded all to sign in before leaving. The meeting was adjourned and the next meeting will be held on Monday, March 14 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted,  
Terri Hast

Cc: Margie Woodring, City Clerk