

Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA)
Monthly Membership Meeting
John R Hooker Room, City Hall, July 15, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 and introductions were made.

Attendees: McDoel NA, Paul Ash and Elizabeth Cox-Ash/ Bryan Park, Jan Sorby/ NWS, Sandi Clothier/ Spicewood, John Kennedy/ Old Northeast Downtown, Bill Milroy/ Park Ridge East, Tom Shafer/ Green Acres, Georgia Schaich/Blue Ridge, Don Granbois/ Prospect Hill, Cynthia Brethem/ Eastside, Judy Berkshire/ Elm Heights, Tim Mueller.

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm.

Minutes

The minutes were reviewed and Paul Ash moved to approve, Elizabeth Cox Ash seconded; the minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

Elizabeth Cox Ash presented the treasurer's report, with an ending balance \$1288.37. Don Granbois moved to approve, Tom Shafer seconded, and the report was unanimously approved.

Guests Lisa Abbott and Vicki Provine from the City of Bloomington HAND Dept.

Lisa Abbott, Director of HAND, and Vickie Provine, Neighborhood liaison, asked to speak to CONA regarding the results of the recent Survey CONA sent out to neighborhood associations. Various topics covered in the Survey were covered, including the following:

Survey Issue- Occupancy Complaints. *Lisa said that HAND receives very few over occupancy complaints. Less than 5% of the complaints they receive have to do with over-occupancy. If over-occupancy is found, the owner is cited, and they are given 60 days to remedy over-occupancy. If a girl/boyfriend are there 95% of the time, but the guest has a legal residence someplace else (and HAND sees the lease), they are not in violation. Renters could just hand over 3 leases for 6 people, and they're covered. A HAND representative visits the residence and asks for information to confirm or dispute the over occupancy claims. There are reasons over-occupancy is the hardest thing to enforce, according to Lisa, and they involve the following:*

- *HAND has to be awarded entry. A refusal to be admitted to the residence must be honored..*
- *In the age of cell phones and changes to IU policy, it is much more difficult to establish contact with students.*
- *Noise citations, and other violations can help pinpoint a problem, but not necessarily confirm over occupancy.*
- *Most complaints have to do with cars, such as too many cars parked at a residence; the Police will not trace car license for HAND.*
- *Rental inspections are usually done during August when properties are not occupied.*

Vicki Provine said HAND provides the WELCOME TO BLOOMINGTON brochures and magnets, which lists Quiet Nights and Trash and Over-occupancy. Education is important.

Survey Issue- Parking on the lawn *is still a PLANNING violation, so calling them must be done during the day. However, HAND cannot trespass (go onto the property) to cite a car, or even to take the license plate. The HAND representative must drive by, get the information, during the day, following the complaint.*

Tim Mueller reported an incident in his neighborhood which had several complaints and had no results. The suggestion from Tim was to have the neighbor take a picture of the car on the lawn with the license and send it to City. Then HAND could follow up with a citation.

Question from CONA- Is there any way neighbors can help HAND get the information needed to cite over-occupancy? *Lisa responded that documentation would have to stand up in court for violation of Planning Title 20.*

- *water bill out of line with three adult occupants*

- many noise violations and police citing more residents for noise at the time

Survey Issue- Trash. Of the neighbors responding to the survey, 23% felt it was a problem in rental properties. Lisa responded that Title 6 is the nuisance ordinance (trash, tall grass, plant growth that interferes with safety, etc). Nuisance complaints can be made anonymously; HAND issues about 1500-2000 nuisance tickets yearly. It was noted that nearly twice as many respondents felt that poorly maintained properties is a problem.

Lisa explained the process for complaints:

Complaints always go into the (computer) system. HAND gets more complaints than any other department in the City because of the number of nuisance complaints.

1. Complaints are eventually dealt with, but because of the number, this may not happen immediately.
2. HAND will write a second ticket, if there is no correction.
3. Board of Public Works approves any rectifications by HAND. Ten days after the violation gets to the landlord, HAND can order rectification, and then arrange for mowing or trash pickup. This process may take over a month to complete.
4. Noise issues must be obvious (i.e., hear the noise over the phone) when called in.
5. If there are many complaints against a particular landlord or tenant, HAND may have the power to enforce other violations for the property while following up on a current violation.
6. Making anonymous complaints is possible, for instance, a neighbor could call their councilmember to make the complaint, and then the neighbor would not be identified.

Lisa indicated Problems her Department has with the Questionnaire. She recommended the following:

1. Phrase some of the questions differently. Lisa felt that some questions were too vague.
2. Ask specifically, what is the problem? (does it relate to an enforceable issue?)
3. Lack of prioritization; have respondents place problems in order of priority. For instance, which is more important, trash, parking on lawn, property maintenance, over-occupancy, noise, etc.
4. Ask question, then parse it by renter and owner.

Vickie asked the CONA members to think of how HAND might educate and get the word out on these issues, and asked that we send our suggestions to her.

Lisa noted that violations are complaint driven, in other words, without a formal complaint, HAND can't start the process.

Comments made by CONA members included the following topics:

Rental Inspections

1. Inspectors don't have a checklist.
2. Their requests sometimes seem arbitrary.
3. Why aren't rental inspectors equipped with a computer during the inspection that allows for identification of problems immediately?
4. Yearly inspections don't track problems from year to year.
5. If inspectors didn't have to type info back at the office, they would be available to enforce issues they discover.

The following suggestions were offered for enhancing the rental inspection system by several members of the CONA group.

1. Make use of tax forms to track landlord statements re/rentals.
2. Make rental inspection fee relate to enforcing rental violations.
3. Schedule rental inspections in September or April to witness the number of residents.
4. Compare Ft. Collins and West Lafayette regulations and processes to see other ways to improve complaint and rental inspection processes.
5. Expose councilmembers to the results of this survey.
6. Refine the complaint-driven process, so that HAND can enforce without multiple complaints over time.
7. A pro-active documentation process can make enforcement easy, and landlords and renters liable.

Lisa and Vickie were thanked by the CONA members, and continued discussion was promised by all.

Current Planning Issues

Neither the Growth Policies Plan nor the Certified Tech Park were discussed.

Jan Sorby, who is on the committee to review the reuse of the current Bloomington Hospital grounds, noted that the committee will eventually be going out to the neighborhoods to discuss the issues related to the reuse of the site.

New Business

Bill Milroy expressed concern for what was being promoted by several CONA members in regards to changes to the way inspections and complaints are handled in Bloomington, and warned that the Old Northeast NA might be opposed to much of what was being said tonight.

Judy Berkshire, of Eastside NA, said the repair process following Vectren's replacement of gas lines has been very slow, and many repairs are not being done properly or completely, they tear up the street, and they don't repair driveways. She said the work to repair is outsourced, but said her neighborhood has not filed a complaint, yet, with the City.

Don Granbois, of Blue RidgeNA, reported that Smithville has been very conscientious, and has repaired any damage to property caused by installing fiber optic cable, promptly and courteously, and residents are delighted that the process will be completed in the fall.

It was noted that Smithville will be represented at the next CONA meeting in August; this is just a small meeting for representatives, but a larger meeting is being considered, that would involve a larger venue for those interested in hearing more about their plans for the city.

Another note is that the Nominating Committee must meet to create a slate for October elections at CONA, where several positions are going to be open.

Success Stories

Elizabeth Cox Ash talked about the Open Streets event held in McDoel Gardens, and it was a terrific success. Businesses had fabulous treats, activities for kids and adults alike, and architectural tours were popular and enjoyable. The Open Streets program encourages walking, biking, and doing healthy activities.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40.