



COMMUNITY HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Committee Members: Golden, Ewing, Alexander and Williams

Chaired by Mayor Pro Tem Golden

MAY 10, 2016 – 10:00 A.M.

3RD FLOOR LOBBY CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES

Present:

Chairman Jeff Golden, and Committee Members Chris Williams and Jason Ewing

Absent:

Committee Member Latimer Alexander

Also Present:

Council Member Cynthia Davis

Staff Present:

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Richard Fuqua, Affordable Housing Manager; Thanena Wilson, CD Administrator; Michelle McNair, Community Resource Manager; Toni Jackson, Housing Specialist; Lauren Atwell Bass, Community Resource Specialist; Alisha Doulen, Community Resource Specialist; Fanta Dorley, Human Relations Manager; Lori Loosemore, Supervisor- Code Enforcement; Maria Smith, Deputy City Clerk; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others Present:

Wendell Davis, President of the Orangeburg Housing Authority
Tammy Templeton

News Media:

Pat Kimbrough, *High Point Enterprise*

Note: The following hand-outs were distributed during the meeting and will be attached as a permanent part of these proceedings:

- *Rendering of Housing Project (Live, Work and Play)*
- *PowerPoint Presentation: Proposed 2016-2017 Contracts with Habitat and Community Housing Solutions*
- *Agenda- Operation Inasmuch 2016*

1) Update- Neighborhood Clean-up/Code Enforcement Efforts (Great American Clean-Up)

Chip Vanderzee, Supervisor- Environmental Services, provided an update on behalf of Rebecca Coplin, who could not be present due to a recycling presentation at Oakview Elementary. He thanked city management and City Council for supporting them in this highly successful effort. He shared the following stats:

| 2016 | 2015 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1,104 volunteers | 464 volunteers |
| 18,280 pounds of trash | 1,500 pounds of trash |
| 1,200 pounds recyclables | 300 pounds recyclables |

Mr. Vanderzee attributed the increases to the city management pushing the event to the business community; Community Development Department; getting the word out and doing presentations at the various neighborhood associations (Burns Hill, Highland Mills, The Meadows, Macedonia, Southside, Underhill and Washington Street). The volunteer efforts were almost tripled. There were many donors and sponsors of the event. The elementary and high schools (Allen Jay, Parkview, Fairview, Oakhill) also contributed. He noted they had the support of city management to continue with on-going events possibly quarterly or monthly. The next one is planned for October 1st (Big Sweep).

Rebecca Coplin joined the meeting at this time.

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager, reiterated that the city does plan on expanding the program throughout the year and hopes to work up to at least 3,000 volunteers, which will almost take someone full-time to manage this effort.

Chairman Golden expressed appreciation to all those who participated.

2) Update- Code Enforcement

Mike McNair, Director of Community Development & Housing, shared a map which identified the active cases on file with an overlay of fire damaged properties. He then recognized Lori Loosemore to provide an update.

Lori Loosemore, Interim Supervisor for Local Codes, encouraged feedback from the Committee as to expectations. She advised that they have two full-time inspectors that started on April 11 and 18th respectively. There are now three full-time inspectors focusing on public nuisance and zoning issues. The two full-time housing inspectors (city employees) are focusing on housing.

She reported they did participate in the bus tour on housing. They are focusing on complaints first and being proactive of other issues in the area. She noted they worked in the Park Terrace area first and plan on focusing on the Burns Hill neighborhood next.

Regarding the housing issues, they are focusing on the complaints first while checking on the older cases. Staff has 269 housing cases in the old software, SoftNet, they are trying to follow up on and have identified six that will be coming to the City Council. She pointed out the highest concentration of active housing cases seems to be in the Burns Hill neighborhood. In the current software, Accela, there are 71 active housing cases, which brings it to a total of 340 housing cases that staff is currently working on in the city.

Mr. McNair pointed out staff also mapped out a list of fire damaged properties that were identified in the study, which seem to be concentrated in some of the same areas. He advised staff wants to go where the data and concentrations are, but still investigates on a complaint basis.

Chairman Golden mentioned that he oftentimes repeatedly gets calls about the same burned houses and asked if there is a system in place that could alert and make the public aware so they won't be turning in the same ones over and over. He expressed concerns regarding the length of time some of these burned structures are sitting in neighborhoods for years. Ms. Loosemore explained there is a public access part to Accela, but she was unsure if the public is able to access the minimum housing cases. She agreed to find out and report back. Committee Member Williams suggested posting a placard in the yard so the public would be aware of it. Ms. Loosemore pointed out staff does not put postings in the yards for housing cases, but they do for mowing and securing a dwelling. Chairman Golden inquired about any privacy restrictions and Mr. McCaslin noted he was unaware of any privacy concerns and felt the property could be posted although sometimes the signs are removed.

Chairman Golden asked about the specific information that the public can access in Accela. Randy Hemann, Assistant City Manager, suggested having a training opportunity at a future meeting to give Council an idea of what information is accessible to the public and how to access the information.

Council Member C. Davis advised that she did get two to three calls concerning the areas the city is focusing on and the individuals were told that staff was instructed by Council to focus solely on the core. Mr. McNair noted the question that was posed to him was does the core city take preference over the rest of the community and his response to them was that staff responds to all complaints; however Council has indicated a preference for the core. In other words while staff is focusing on the core, they are not ignoring the rest of the city. She wanted assurance that the residents are being told that the city is going to look at every complaint with the same concern.

3) Presentation- Multi-Family Construction on Meredith Street

Wendell Davis shared a short video. Mr. Davis reported through his conversations with Mr. McNair and other city staff, it was evident that High Point is very serious about the housing issues that the city is challenged with. He noted that High Point is no different than most cities in that there are areas that have deteriorated and are in desperate need of revitalization. Mr.

Davis commended High Point for its code enforcement efforts to rectify these housing issues and noted they looked at the Core City Plan, which addresses the problems and looks at revitalization.

Mr. Davis then introduced Tammy Templeton, the President of the Orangeburg Housing Authority. He shared that he has a 34-year background in municipal government and construction and they have been involved in several infill projects and Ms. Templeton has 20-25 years in construction and business development. He advised that a few years ago, they had a vision to look at blighted areas to see if they could make a difference and started Orangeburg Housing Authority, a 501(c)3 non-profit with a goal to address some of the blighted areas to bring them back to where they once were. In the process, they found that invigorating the pride causes the entire neighborhood to reinvigorate itself. He felt they could offer a lot of key attributes to help High Point meet its goals.

Mr. Davis expressed an interest in developing a property that allows people to live, work and play and one that fits into the Core City plan. They would like to enhance Meredith Street so the city's center would also be enhanced. He then shared some photographs of the condition of the Meredith Street apartments before the City Council took the initiative to condemn and raze the property. He advised this left a vacant lot in the neighborhood and felt they could develop a project similar to a successful infill project they did in Spartanburg, SC. A number of those homes were removed and replaced with duplexes; this instilled a level of pride in the entire neighborhood and also drastically lowered the high crime rate in that area. He then shared some renderings of what they are looking to replace on Meredith Street and called attention to the fence. He explained that many times a fence demonstrates some level of pride as well as keeps some out. Mr. Davis noted they also talked about dog parks and pointed out there were about two acres on this property that can be utilized in different ways. These buildings will have one, two and three bedroom units from 700 sq. ft. up to 1,100 sq. ft. and they are looking to attract median income people.

Following the presentation, Mr. Davis and Ms. Templeton entertained questions.

Chairman Golden inquired about the number of units. Mr. Davis replied there would be 24 units per building, two buildings and three levels.

Council Member C. Davis asked how many duplexes could have been placed on this property. Ms. Templeton advised that duplexes would be cost prohibitive and they felt it would be more feasible to go with the condo-type units.

Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin asked if they would retain ownership of the development and manage it and Mr. Davis replied in the affirmative and explained they would definitely want to be involved in managing it initially and their desire is to establish a partnership with High Point that moves beyond this project.

Mr. McNair advised they are in the due diligence phase and staff is trying to work through the details on how to put the package together. Once that is determined, staff will come back and provide more refined information and seek a referral to move forward.

Council Member C. Davis asked about any restrictions or limitations that would hinder them from developing this property. Mr. Davis indicated they are in the process of looking at the site to make sure there is not anything that would prohibit developing the site causing it to be cost prohibitive. Council Member C. Davis asked if it was necessary to have amenities in and around the development to make it work (i.e. grocery stores, etc....). Mr. McNair explained this would be conventional financing so that would not be a requirement as it would be with tax credits.

Mr. Davis concluded his comments by stating if they can reduce the negative impacts on the environment, it would result in also reducing the burden of service on the police department, fire department, public services.

4) Housing Construction Contract for Habitat (Graves Avenue) and Community Housing Solutions (Southside)

As a matter of clarification, Mr. McNair explained there is no contract yet, but staff is proposing to move forward with a contract.

Richard Fuqua, Affordable Housing Manager, expressed hope in continuing to expand the city's relationship with the affordable housing partners, particularly with Habitat and Community Housing Solutions (CHS). He provided a brief overview of the city's relationship with both.

Habitat: The city has enjoyed a relationship with the local Habitat affiliate since 2008 and since that time, they have built 25 homes in the neighborhood adjacent to Washington Terrace Park. Six homes are currently under construction or will be under construction before the end of the fiscal year. He mentioned that Habitat plans on doing a home building blitz starting May 14th with a goal of building two homes in the neighborhood during this time.

He shared a map showing the impact that Habitat has had (green stars are properties that have been completed and sold; yellow stars indicate properties that are under construction or will be under construction before the end of the fiscal year; the blue stars are four properties that the city is looking to contract with them for the next fiscal year.

Mr. Fuqua then shared some highlights of the proposed Habitat contract which would include constructing and selling four homes with a term of July 1, 2016 through FY ended June 30, 2017. The amount of the proposed contract will be \$135,000 (hard costs for these four homes, as well as construction training program expenses).

He then shared some highlights of the proposed CHS contract. Last year, the city established a formal relationship with CHS to become one of the city's CHDOs, after Unity Builders decided to focus their efforts in Greensboro and Winston Salem. Mr. Fuqua reported that CHS has completed construction of two homes in the Southside area that are presently being marketed for sale or for lease purchase. CHS is also the lead organization for the city's operation of the Inasmuch effort, which is slated to occur this Saturday. He then shared a pictorial overview of some of the investments that have been made in the Southside neighborhood (green indicates homes that were built by Unity; yellow indicates the two homes that were completed by CHS; and blue indicates the number of properties that are actually owned by the city). Staff hopes this

contract will allow completion of homes in this block and as the market demands, continue to build on lots that the city owns to finish out this development. He pointed out there are four homes that were built by Unity Builders on Mobile Street (two have been leased and two are being marketed for sale).

Chairman Golden asked if staff was doing anything to promote interest in the blue-starred properties owned by the city. Mr. McNair explained staff is working through non-profit builders, and has not engaged the private sector in this regard. He noted it is possible to engage private builders, but this puts the responsibility on staff to constantly keep checking the property and there is not adequate staff to do this.

Council Member C. Davis inquired about the size of a corner lot. Mr. McNair advised that a recreation center used to be on this property in the past and staff is hoping to build a cul-de-sac here but there is an expensive infrastructure piece that staff needs to work out so it can be done. Committee Member Williams asked if the city could market the down payment assistance program to market these homes and staff indicated this is already being done. Mr. McNair advised that the City of High Point will be hosting a State event (workshop for realtors) on Wednesday, May 19th at Northpoint.

Council Member C. Davis asked if the State has a master list of CHDOs. Mr. McNair explained that a CHDO has to be a community organization, with most of them being in the areas they are located in. She asked about the possibility of private investors building on the city-owned lots as Committee Member Ewing has alluded to in the past. Committee Member Ewing explained it is a compounded issue because it is not that the product is bad, but has to do with the location. He felt it was important to not only look at redevelopment, infill within the neighborhoods, but to also look at the commercial areas to develop out to force more police, safety, etc.....

Mr. Fuqua advised the next step in the process would be to seek the Community Housing & Neighborhood Development Committee's recommendation to go to Council for approval of both of these contracts and staff hopes to take this to Council for consideration at the June 6th meeting and subject to Council's approval, staff will move forward with developing these contracts for execution by the end of this fiscal year, June 30, 2016.

Committee Member Williams moved to make a favorable recommendation to the City Council to move forward with these two proposed contracts. Committee Member Ewing made a second. The motion carried unanimously. [3-0 vote]

Council Member C. Davis asked if staff has considered bringing in some developers such as High Point Builder's Association or any local builders that may be interested in the city-owned properties. She suggested inviting them and providing lunch so staff could present the available properties throughout the city. Assistant City Manager Randy Hemann felt that was an interesting thought and felt there may be some developers that may not want to do this full-time, but would like to help out. He wondered if there was an umbrella like a community foundation that could possibly help staff pull together the necessary resources to create our own CHDO with our own builder. Committee Member Ewing suggested organizing "builders blitz's as in the past" and possibly doing it on a quarterly basis.

Mr. McCaslin asked the Committee to keep in mind that this might result in the city providing the carrying costs for loans, etc... Mr. McNair advised that he actually discussed this possibility in the past with members from the Builder's Association and it may be possible to deal with their upfront costs in terms of construction loan payments, etc.... and put the city's payback on the backend which would require them to pay the city when the property is sold. He suggested pulling a coalition of realtors/contractors together to facilitate construction going forward.

Mr. McCaslin shared that in a very near future Council meeting, Council would be considering the first lot where the city can acquire where Guilford County has already foreclosed on it where High Point can turn it over to the Bank of NC to do some sort of infill construction. Council Member C. Davis expressed hope that there are developers in the community that see the need in blighted areas that may do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Committee Member Ewing suggested the best option would be to create programs/partnerships and offer specific sites that could be marketed as new construction is.

5) Update- Operation Inasmuch

Toni Jackson, Housing Specialist with the Community Development and Housing Department, provided an update on Operation Inasmuch. She advised that Operation Inasmuch is based on a principle of a scripture, Matthew 25:40-45. She reported that the Housing Consultant's Group (HCG) has met with the neighborhood association to let them know what to expect and what would be happening in the Southside neighborhood. She noted this neighborhood was selected after reviewing the market segmentation study that was done by UNC-G. In addition to the one-on-one visits, approximately 80 letters were mailed out to owner-occupied properties informing them of the survey that would be conducted later on in the month. On two Saturdays in a row, the HCG staff went out and personally interviewed owner-occupied property owners in Southside to get information as to specific repairs that were needed. Volunteers were recruited from local churches and organizations to help with the labor. Community Housing Solutions conducted intakes with homeowners to determine property eligibility as well as income eligibility. They completed the assessment of repairs that were requested and provided work write-ups to come up with a cost estimate.

The City of High Point staff provided technical and analytical support to both of these non-profit organizations (maps, data, etc.) to help them complete their tasks. The City of High Point is also underwriting the repair projects. The Operation Inasmuch Committee conducted volunteer training for the leaders from the volunteer groups from the local churches/organizations and attended the Blitz Day recently held in Fayetteville to see an event like this in progress.

Ms. Jackson explained each volunteer group has been assigned a particular home and had an opportunity to personally meet the homeowner to establish a report. She advised that the homeowners were extremely appreciative and very excited about what will be done. Eleven different homeowners were chosen with eight churches participating and eleven volunteer groups with a total of 141 volunteers. Some of the repairs included plumbing, electrical, roof replacement, gutter work/replacement, handrails, flooring, yard work, siding, brick work, painting, etc....

Council Member C. Davis inquired about the permits to do the work and asked if there might be some kind of exemption of an expedited process for activities such as these. Ms. Jackson noted that the process of obtaining permits has started and was unaware of any expedited procedures. Mr. McCaslin advised that most of the work would not require a permit and for the repairs that would require a permit, it would fall under the residential portion which is pretty much a one day in and out.

Chairman Golden inquired about a dollar value on the improvements that are proposed. Ms. Jackson estimated the repairs to be around \$60,041. She explained three of these repairs will be done outsources which totals almost \$11,000 due to the requirement for certified electricians, etc.... She shared there is also a clean-up plan in an effort to continue with the Great American Neighborhood Clean-up so those crews finishing before 4:00 p.m. will assist in cleaning up vacant lots.

Ms. Jackson then distributed an agenda of the activities for Operation Inasmuch that is scheduled for Saturday, May 14, 2016. The event will kick-off at 8:00 a.m. with a breakfast that will be served at the Southside Recreation Center, 401 Taylor Avenue. She also shared one of the shirts that they would be wearing for the event.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC
City Clerk

Jeff Golden, Chairman