

**Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Meeting
May 4, 2015**

Members Present: Richard Biffel, Denise Mitchell, Lisa Miller, Andrea Goodwin, Bob Ryan, Aaron Springer, Andrew Fellows, Robert Day, Alan Hew, Patrick Wojahn, Gloria Aparicio-Blackwell, PJ Brennan, Karyn Keating-Volke, Cole Holocker, David Mitchell, Bonnie McClellan

Other Persons Present: Anne Martens, H.S. Blake, Ken Calvert, Bill Gardiner

Minutes

I. Call to Order/Introductions

Patrick called the meeting to order at 7:10. The agenda and committee reports were distributed. Members introduced themselves. After introductions Patrick asked that they move to the subcommittee reports.

II. Subcommittee Reports:

a. Housing Diversity

Patrick presented. Proposed changes on page 1—re-worded to create housing task force to strengthen CHUM. Ori Gutin is the organizer on that for CHUM, researching what other cities have been doing. New strategy (#3): to hold student housing to high standards, strategy developed for students to rate their landlords. Cole said this has been discussed with Off-Campus Housing to ensure that accurate information is provided. Cole will discuss with Bob Ryan to figure out how accurate information can be made available in one location. Students can evaluate based on whether they feel it is an appropriate location for them to live. Patrick said that the Best Practices committee will also examine it. Aaron Springer asked how the ratings can avoid being “loaded” on one side or the other. Cole said they would make sure that the code information is factual—for example, the property has a medallion or it doesn’t, has rental license or doesn’t, etc. There was some discussion of the proposed medallion program, and Cole and Lisa Miller explained it.

Patrick said the strategy should be re-worded so that instead of a rating system it would simply be a database. Gloria asked how people would access the information, and Cole responded that it would be on the City’s website, and possibly linked from the Off-Campus Housing site. UMD doesn’t want to host the info, but a link might be okay. Robert Day asked if we can tie tenant violations to a house. It has been hard to get tenant information many times. Robert also mentioned the problem that some renters leave the City and tell others not to rent in the City because the students are taking over.

b. Homeownership

Bonnie McClellan gave the report. The committee pulled rental metrics for 2006 – 2014. 2014 had the lowest number of single-family rentals of any year in the period. PJ spoke about outreach to faculty and staff to inform them about living in the City. The second event will be on May 12. A real estate workshop will be held on May 14 about buying homes in the City.

Michael Stiefvater (City Economic Development Coordinator) is working with CPCUP to develop a brochure on the benefits of living in College Park.

The Aging in Place Task Force has put out a survey that is due June 1. The survey asks what resources residents would need to stay in College Park as they age. Information about the survey has also been in the Municipal Scene and on the cable channel. Another group of residents had an informal meeting on aging in place at St. Andrews Episcopal Church. 68 people attended. The group is working with / in communication with University Park and Greenbelt regarding their initiatives.

PJ has been working with the University on many programs. One pending item is the development of financial incentives to attract homeowners. Mayor Fellows has talked to the banks on Rt. 1 to see if they can develop financial tools to get more people from the University to purchase in College Park. He may have some information for the May 12 forum. The City Council has marketing strategies as a worksession item on May 19. The subcommittee looked at the current brochure, and they would like to develop a brochure that is not time-bound. Then we need to make sure the brochures get to the right people.

The Mayor said that the school facilities surcharge exemption issue will be on the City Council worksession in the future. Stephanie explained that because of the shortage in student housing in the recent past, the incentive was provided in certain areas. Now we may need to incentivize other types of housing. Bonnie said that a future action will be to have a housing office / position in the City. Eric Olsen and Peggy Higgins will be invited to join the committee. Bonnie also said the subcommittee needs to hear from people regarding the types of amenities we need in College Park. That is the area they have the least amount of information.

c. Best Practices and Expectations of Property Owners

Stephanie gave the report for Best Practices and Expectations of Property Owners subcommittee. The subcommittee has several suggestions, such as:

- create a quality of life video that would be required viewing by tenants
- use C-MAST data to provide information about problems and consequences
- create a model lease
- send a letter to each Prince George's County Property Owners Association (PGCPOA) member regarding the nuisance ordinance and the positive work of the NQoL committee (draft attached). The letter could also be sent to every landlord. Lisa Miller said the intent is to provide information upfront.

Bob Ryan said that the County Nuisance Board has not yet been approved.

Stephanie said the subcommittee will be working together with the Housing Diversity subcommittee. The subcommittee has also been working on a strategy to require landlords to participate in annual orientations. Bonnie asked if that could be a time to recognize excellent landlords, and Stephanie said that is a great idea.

PJ asked if PGCPOA had any agents who are members, and Lisa was not sure. Lisa said that the orientations will provide information that they need regarding new lead laws, smoke detectors,

the nuisance law, etc. This item is now a “B”. Bob Ryan asked if it would be more effective if it were online. Stephanie and Lisa thought that face-to-face would be better. Cole asked about property owners without licenses who are renting. Would this push people to avoid registering? Stephanie believes it is a small number of people who rent without a license, and we usually find out about them.

Stephanie said that some landlords manage their properties well, and others do not. Down the road we may try to differentiate between landlords who never have violations and those who have multiple violations. Lisa talked about a possible landscaping improvement program and a competition for most improved property.

One strategy is to require property owners or agents to be within 75 miles. Committee wants to make it a “D” strategy. A new strategy is to improve the notice sent to landlords when there are complaints and violations. The intent is to give them more information (sample attached).

d. Code Enforcement and Public Safety

Lisa Miller presented the report. On page 3 there is a sample notice to improve information flow. She has spoken with Teri Bell (State’s Attorney) about the use of pictures and video. Pictures help landlords take appropriate action, and we need to figure out a way to get approval. Chief Mitchell said they are in the process of getting body cameras for all officers. They are currently using video from cars, and they have not run into privacy issues yet. Stephanie noted the many occasions when tenants deny parties occurred. Bob said that code officers may not have the same rights to video as police officers. When the County police are using body cameras, the City contract police will begin using body cameras. Lisa said that Steve Groh committed to having the new forms ready by the beginning of the school year.

Chief Mitchell said that police visited the places where parties had been held a couple weekends ago, and there were no problems this weekend. Cole reported that it was an away weekend for fraternities. UMPD will have 4 mobile cameras up soon that will be less obvious than the existing cameras and will be able to capture additional areas.

Lisa noted that a lot of the strategies have been implemented.

Patrick asked about # 5, and to whom the fines are issued. Bob said that we issue fines to the tenants for the first offense. The landlord gets a fine if they had prior warnings or fines. Bob said that one defect in the code is that the fine for not providing the tenants names is only \$75. That makes it easy for the landlord to pay the fine and not provide the names, and then the City cannot fine the tenants for the noise violation. There was also a discussion of the six-month re-set on the violations—not fair in some cases when different tenants are responsible for the second party within 6 months and they receive the big fine. Other times the same tenants have parties seven months apart, and no fines imposed. There was a question regarding the possibility of the County prohibiting rentals due to nuisance violations, and thereby creating a foreclosure.

PJ asked about #9 (cameras), and stated that the system is not complete yet. There are areas where we could install additional cameras. Lisa said that perhaps it could be listed as ongoing, (“A”). Patrick said that #10 is in the same category.

Lisa brought up #11 and the wasted resources of having code wait for the contract cops or vice versa for noise readings. The County will not allow County officers to enforce the City's code, according to Chief Mitchell and Stephanie. Bob said that they could enforce the County ordinance, with doesn't require a noise meter. Chief Mitchell said that it helps to have a noise professional.

Mayor Fellows asked about an evaluation of the Code of Conduct enforcement off-campus to determine its effectiveness. Andrea Goodwin said that it will occur over the summer and a summary may be available by August or the following meeting.

e. Community Building

Robert Day said that the subcommittee didn't meet, but that the other committees have been doing work that overlaps with the Community Building subcommittee. It is interested in developing a database / clearinghouse to share opportunities for engagement.

The City has created a micro-grant for small events and we need to advertise it. He will be working with the IFC about doing more Sunday morning clean-ups and doing the street sponsorships that they committed to doing years ago. Stephanie said that the street clean ups have not been done for years, although the sponsorship signs remain.

Robert has reached out to ITGA to get some information. They will be here June 1 – 4, and there will be a College Park presentation. Robert said that the Council supported tailgating on campus last year and will likely support it again. The City is interested in UMD holding more events on campus.

A video is being created to recruit the FBI, but College Park will be able to use its portion to promote College Park. Robert wants to bring the Rec Board to the subcommittee, and also see if M-NCPPC could join it to make sure they are aware of events and give input. He wants to know how we create a portal for events that occur in the City, whether on-campus or off-campus. Bonnie said that the newsletter by CPCUP is a good start. Bonnie thought that the series like the event held at the Jerk Pit is really good.

f. Public Outreach

PJ said that even though NQoL decided not to do the spring forum, the subcommittee is reaching out. It will sponsor Good Morning Commuter this week. He would like for us to put together a press release of accomplishments, and also organize the strategies in a more-readable format. He is open to suggestions for improving outreach. Lisa asked if the group could be highlighted in the Municipal Scene. Stephanie and PJ thought a story would be better. Lisa asked if the civic association leaders would be able to provide information to residents. PJ said that he could send a press release to them as well. Lisa believes that one of our problem areas is getting our message out and communications. Gloria said that social media is a good tool to get out brief information. Anne suggested that a monthly happy hour be organized. Bonnie said that the committee is doing a lot of wonderful things.

g. Metrics

Stephanie passed out a version of the metrics we could use for measuring success (see attached). Each subcommittee has one or more metrics. Most of the data for Code Enforcement and Police we already collect. Other proposed metrics would require gathering information via new survey questions or obtaining it from other sources. Stephanie hopes that by the time the report is ready we would have data for these metrics, for several years going back.

Patrick asked that PJ send an email with all the events. The next meeting will be August 24. He thanked Bonnie for her comments on the positive work of the group, and thanked the participants from the University, PGCPOA, and other members for their contributions.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:11.