

Northampton Civic League Minutes 07/11/2006

The July meeting of the Northampton Civic League was called to order at 7:13 by NHCL President Bernice Jackson. There were 5 people present.

The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

The President noted that Darryl Krauch had indicated that he would be unable to attend due to the death of his Mother In Law. She also noted that Wendell Midkiff had sent his regrets as well. Matt Asay noted that the Treasurer, Butch Heath had previously said he would be out of town on the meeting date.

A motion was approved unanimously to get a condolence card for Mr. Krauch and send it around to the officers for signatures. The President volunteered to get the card.

Secretary Matt Asay summarized the June minutes which were approved with no corrections.

A new attendee at the meeting introduced herself as Jean McQuillan of Bellwood Drive and indicated she had an issue to bring up at the appropriate time. The membership welcomed her.

Unfinished Business

The previous issue of possibly selling ads on the NHCL web site was revisited. It was noted that our webmaster, Darryl Krauch was absent so further discussions were deferred until he was back. Our District Commissioner, Karen Duncan offered to put him in touch with Moses Meadows, the President of Farmington's civic association to find out about their experiences with ads in their newsletter.

Ms. Duncan also reported that she had investigated the issue of the difference in cost of the Yoga Classes for seniors at Northampton and the Senior Center. She was told that the difference was because the other instructor taught for free while the Northampton teacher has sought a fee to cover her expenses. Ms. McQuillan volunteered that it was her letter to the Daily Press that had initiated the issue and that after she (Ms. McQuillan) had complained about the discrepancy between what the teacher was being paid and the amount of money being collected from the seniors the cost was reduced from \$25 to \$10.

New Business

Everyone commented on the new "Meeting Tonight" sign added to our NHCL banner and placed at the community center entrance the day of the meeting. Matt had put it up for Darryl when he was called away.

Ms. McQuillan asked to speak about a zoning variance request on Bellwood Drive that was due to come before the Board of Zoning Appeals on Monday. A developer was asking to place 14 detached condominiums on a little less than 2 acres. This would result in "lots" that were slightly more than half the size called for by the current zoning.

She and many of her neighbors were opposed to the variance due to concerns about traffic, safety, and the potential to change the character of the largely sparsely occupied Bellwood neighborhood. She also noted the precedent this might set for the many other undeveloped parcels in the area. She and many of her neighbors planned to be at the hearing to speak in opposition to it.

The members present noted that we did not have a quorum to pass a formal motion on the issue, but several people indicated their support for Ms. McQuillan's concerns and their plans to attend the hearing. The hearing was on Monday, July 17th at 5:00 pm in the Zoning Office's conference room in City Hall.

Ms. Duncan then presented the information she obtained concerning the process and benefits of the Northampton Civic League (again) becoming a registered neighborhood organization. The benefits include up to 1000 copies a year (on our own paper) at the Kenny Wallace Center, bulk mail postage rates via the Neighborhood Office, a grant of up to \$500 for NHCL development, and the ability to apply for up to \$5K in Matching Grants, and up to \$100K in Neighborhood Improvement Funds.

She presented the registration packet to the president and noted that the first step was filing an "Intent to Register" form with the Neighborhood Commission. The members would work together to complete the

paperwork and presentation with the official submission and signature being made by our President, Ms. Jackson. Karen indicated that the biggest issue the league would have to resolve would be the geographical area we currently have as our league boundaries. Matt offered to bring in the large laminated maps so we could look at where our current members are located and what boundaries we might want to consider for the NHCL to effectively represent.

Our Commissioner then briefed everyone on the meeting she attended last month about the Jamestown 400th Anniversary celebration. She provided a long list of events coming over the next year. The events are not only for Jamestown itself but involve many other cities in the area including Hampton. She noted one event in particular to solicit Neighborhood Histories. Presentations will be made on May 11-13 of 2007. We discussed what we might put together for Northampton (including info on the Battle of Big Bethel which she offered to research). We also talked about what long time residents and former members of the NHCL might be able to help us put together about our history. Names mentioned included Floyd Gibbs, Manny Puma, John Kittler, and Don Green (who spoke to the league a while back).

Ms. Duncan also reported on the workshop she and her fellow commissioners held recently to identify “roles and goals” for commission members. They provided feedback to the Neighborhood Office staff on ways the Commission might become more effective. A retreat is planned in August. Anyone is welcome at the commission meetings which are held on the 2nd Monday of the month at 6:00 in the Rupert Sargent building downtown.

During a further discussion of the NHCL sign and meeting publicity it was noted that the Community Center itself does not have a sign on Todds Lane. The membership felt that this would be an excellent project for the NHCL to pursue. It would both help the center and energize and publicize the Northampton Civic League. We resolved to explore the topic at the August meeting as our meeting time was almost over. The motion to do so was approved unanimously.

The Secretary took an action item to get a membership application to Ms. McQuillan.

The meeting was adjourned at about 8:30 pm. The next meeting will be August 1st at 7:00 pm.

Memberships: There were no renewals and no new members.

Matt Asay, NHCL Secretary