

Northampton Civic League Minutes 08/07/2007

The August meeting of the Northampton Civic league was called to order at 7:01 PM by NHCL Vice President Wendell Midkiff, with 12 people present (eventually, although some arrived after the start of the meeting).

The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

Secretary Matt Asay read the minutes from the July meeting. He thanked Flora Randall for taking the minutes during his absence. Mr. Midkiff noted that (at that time) we did not have a quorum of members present so approval of the minutes would need to be deferred until the next meeting.

The treasurer's report was deferred since our Treasurer, Butch Heath was still out recovering from surgery.

New Business

Jonathan McBride noted that the Virginia State Neighborhood Conference was coming up in September in Chesapeake. He highly recommended it for anyone who could attend.

Jonathan also noted that in 2008 Hampton would be hosting the national Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) conference. There will be delegates from across the nation attending. This is an opportunity to showcase Hampton and the Hampton Roads area (several nearby cities are helping sponsor the event). The Neighborhood office will be looking for volunteers for a number of activities within the NUSA conference.

Finally Jonathan mentioned that plans for new K-8 School to be located behind Bethel High School will be presented to the Planning Commission on September 6th.

Karen Duncan, our District 1 Neighborhood Commissioner mentioned that she was looking for volunteers to help beautify Forrest Elementary on September 7th as part of the the United Way "Day of Caring."

Several of our new guests discussed their participation in the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. It is currently being revitalized and is seeking new participants. The next series of classes will be on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in October, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Fire Station 9 (Briarfield and Aberdeen). People who are interested can call the Fire Department for more information. The program training coordinator is Richelle Wallace.

Finally, the Codes Academy (a set of classes for citizens offered by the Codes and Compliance Department will be offered Wednesdays from September 12 through the end of October. Classes will be in the Codes Department offices on the 4th floor of City Hall. Contact Joe Danford in Codes office for more information or to sign up.

Organizational Development

The Vice President turned the Meeting over to Jonathan McBride , City of Hampton Neighborhood Office Associate to continue the 'brainstorming session' on Organization Values.

Mr. McBride started out with a get-to-know-everyone activity called "Weather Report." He asked each person present to introduce themselves and offer a brief report on their personal "weather," at home, at work, or whatever. Members and guests responded by telling about where they lived, how long they had been in Hampton, and talked a little about how their day was going.

Jonathan noted how this little "icebreaker" helped everyone open up and allowed the new people present to note what sparked their interest in the league. He encouraged us to make some kind of brief activity a regular feature of our meetings.

He then used wall charts and a handout to summarize the "Focus Areas" that had received the most interest (via the "dot" votes) in the previous meeting. With each of these areas the group held a "brainstorming" session to identify different possibilities as to how to accomplish the goals at hand. Some of the highlights for the areas were:

Improve Neighborhood Appearance:

- Partner with groups who work on projects that improve homes (such as wheelchair ramps, cleanup/repair assistance for the elderly).
- Promote home upkeep by nominating houses within our area for the Hampton Clean City Commission's YARDS program monthly awards and helping recognize and publicize outstanding yards in Northampton.
- Publicize and attend the Master Gardener workshops offered twice a year.
- Assist seniors in the area with household upkeep and repairs.
- Help low income Codes violators get grants for cleanup assistance.
- Encourage the city to improve the appearance of public “common areas” in Northampton (patched telephone poles on Todds Lane were mentioned). We would need to asses the needs in the area and develop a list of priorities to push for.
- Participate in the City’s “Crime & Grime” program to make monthly inspections of the area with teams of neighbors and city staff. These programs have been very effective in some districts.
- Partner with Friends of Sandy Bottom to maintain and improve the park (one of the major assets of our area).

Drainage Problems:

- Keep vigilant to identify, report, and seek solutions to drainage problem areas in Northampton
- Seek “Face Time” with City Council to keep them aware of the importance of the problem to our neighborhoods.
- Monitor and possibly assist in the study underway in the City of the problems at Todds Lane and Big Bethel.
- Select a “coordinator” to act as a focal point for collecting and presenting information on Northampton Drainage problems. That person would maintain historical data and feed our experiences and observations to the City to seek answers and solutions.

Promoting Youth Involvement in the NHCL:

- Work with Kelly Bernard, the youth coordinator with the Northampton Community Center.
- Plan activities with and recruit members from the Boy Scouts
- Find a young person willing to act as youth liaison to area teens.
- Seek youth representatives to the NHCL from various youth organizations
- Find ways to build positive relationships between youths and and the rest of the community (so they will see young people as an asset rather than a problem).
- Seek to improve Gang awareness among parents, youth, and the community to “nip gang activity in the bud.” One member noted activity in the area including gang signs spray painted on his fence.
- Youth in are churches are another possible source of youth members

Partnerships (in addition to those noted above):

- Work with city government (the Neighborhood Office and the Neighborhood Commission).
- Seek advice and explore common goals with neighborhood organizations within and outside our area (Farmington, Aberdeen, Wythe, Ridgecrest (Selvin Walker’s neighborhood)

Internal Organizational Development:

- *We did not get to discussing this area at the meeting, but during other discussions it was noted that the NHCL Newsletter we used to have was a valuable tool for communication and keeping the organization visible in the community*

At this point, with the end of the meeting fast approaching Jonathan suggested we develop plans to begin organizing on these topics for goals we can accomplish in the next 6 months. He noted that he would be unable to attend our next meeting as he and his wife are expecting their first child at about that time. He suggested that one or two people act as the lead in each of our brainstorming areas. He stressed that volunteering to help get a topic started did not mean that the person was committing to chair the resulting committee for the long term. The following people volunteered:

- Drainage - Carlton Campbell
- Existing Improvement Opportunities (Schools, Community Center) - Karen Duncan
- “Network of Help” partnerships - Karen and Alonzo Duncan.
- Public Common Area assessment - Flo Randall & Carlton Campbell
- Crime & Grime - Jon McBride
- Youth Involvement - Matt Asay
- Sandy Bottom Park - Wendell Midkiff & Flo Randall
- Neighborhood Organizations and Groups - Jonathan McBride & Karen Duncan

The meeting adjourned at about 8:55 PM, The next meeting will be on September 4th.

Memberships: There were no renewals and 1 new member.

Matt Asay, NHCL Secretary

As corrected and approved on 09/04/07