

Charlestowne Neighborhood Association
Membership Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2016

A meeting of the Charlestowne Neighborhood Association (CNA) membership was held at 5:30 PM on Monday September 12 at First (Scots) Church in the main sanctuary. Ms. Virginia Bush (Ginny), President of the CNA presided.

President's Report:

Ginny Bush provided an overview of recent issues and challenges facing peninsular residents and noted the lack of support for downtown neighborhoods by the current City Council. She noted that we have seen a dramatic shift of dynamics on the Council and this has negatively affected the inner city by diverting funding to West Ashley projects and voting for large scale development on the peninsula (hotel developments, Sergeant Jasper residential/ commercial development and WestEdge). Such developments that have increased traffic and commercialization of the "Old and Historic District" and heightened concern for quality of life and safety.

She noted that the peninsula should not be expected to bear the burdens and costs of growth and no large-scale project should be approved without prudent and realistic long-range planning.

This imbalance needs to be addressed both for the livability of the neighborhoods and the long-term environmental, social and economic stability of the entire city.

One strategy for the CNA is to seek more collaboration with Council members and their constituents who face similar concerns. Traffic concerns and the loss of neighborhood amenities (such as the closing of the Bi-Lo grocery on Meeting Street) are areas of shared interest as they disrupt neighborhood life and the sense of continuity that distinguishes Charleston.

In the coming weeks CNA will be working with Councilman Mike Seekings in pursuing these cooperative efforts to create a stronger working relationship with the Eastside and upper peninsula neighborhoods on common areas of concern and to support prudent comprehensive planning.

Ms. Bush introduced Councilman Mike Seekings who reported on the challenges of addressing peninsula concerns given the alignment of power on City Council and reiterated the need to strengthen alliances among the neighborhoods and council members on the peninsula. He also stated that more public money is spent in West Ashley per capita than on the peninsula. Also, \$350,000 previously approved for a major traffic study on the peninsula was diverted to West Ashley.

City Council meets on Tuesday, September 13. The proposed amendment to Century V Comprehensive Plan to provide for the concept of Gateway Zones is again on the agenda. It will require a 75% supermajority to override the Planning Commission's recommendation against the amendment.

Ginny Bush reported that CNA continues to oppose a City Council vote to override the Planning Commission and approve the amendment.

Committee Reports:

Parking: Mike Frederick

The committee has worked with Councilman Seekings and City Streets and Parking authorities to enact stricter parking regulations for high demand areas.

Within approximately two weeks, one hour parking restrictions for all vehicles will go into effect for (1) East Battery/East Bay street from Elliott Street to South Battery and (2) the north side of South Battery from East Battery to King Street. These restrictions will apply from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week and will affect all vehicles except those that display a valid City Parking Decal or a visitors permit. Decals are available to all residents of the district. Guest permits are also available to all residents and may be ordered by mail along with the decals.

CNA residents are advised to monitor and report the effects of the new restrictions, as spillover parking may reasonably be expected on nearby streets that have more lenient restrictions or offer unrestricted parking. The City will monitor parking and will entertain residential requests for enhanced restrictions on other streets.

Crime Report: Larry Burtschy

The Committee monitors police reports for the entire area and works closely with the Charleston Police Department on areas of concern. He stressed the importance of citizens being alert to activities and reporting any incidents to the police either by dialing #911 or by using the non-emergency line 843-709-1985.

Officer Duquette from the Charleston Police Department was introduced. He reinforced the Committee's advice, stressing the importance of reporting incidents. He was asked several questions including any reports of problems at the restrooms at Hazel Parker Playground (none have been reported and the experiment will continue for the remainder of the year). Increased patrols have begun as a result of unauthorized camping and loitering at Waterfront Park and Hazel Parker. Under the City's trespassing program, violators can be banned for a year.

A discussion was held concerning safety concerns with the increased uses of bicycles (many in use by tourists with little knowledge of street patterns or rules of the road) in the historic district. The boom in bicycle popularity has lead to some chaotic conditions and conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and cars. There is also concern and confusion about cyclists' rights on sidewalks since Charleston allows some sidewalks to be "shared paths" for pedestrians, cyclists and skateboards.

It was clarified that Tourism Enforcement Officers only have authority to enforce regulations applicable to tour buses, horse carriages, pedicabs and walking tours. The police department handles all incidents that involve crime, other vehicles and city ordinances.

Sergeant Jasper Report: Randy Pelzer

He reported that the Jasper Committee, the CNA Board and the other preservation and neighborhood associations are currently considering any future avenues that might be available to us with respect to the Jasper development. Opponents won some battles and lost others, but have not been able to overcome the combined determination of the City, the developer and City Council to allow a massive development on the site.

Residential Complaints:

Recent complaints to the CNA include problems with improper dog waste disposal, construction and garden maintenance noise (gas-powered leaf blowers). A City ordinance provides for a fine of \$1092 for improper dog waste disposal, and owners are reminded to use a city-designated receptacle or their own garbage can for this purpose rather than someone else's yard waste bag or garbage can. There are no noise ordinances that cover leaf blowers or construction noise, so neighbors are encouraged to address these issues of etiquette among themselves to heighten awareness and seek cooperative solutions.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.

Connie H. Wyrick
Acting Secretary