

# Minutes from RNA Meeting on February 8, 2017

Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building  
Room 159 (EOC) at 5:30 p.m.

## **Committee Members in Attendance**

Johnny L. Williams - Vice-Chair  
Nicole L. Harris - Secretary  
Antwyne U. Calloway  
Barbara Evans  
Scott Horchler  
Amy Morgan  
Cindy C. Pasternak  
Dwight O. Steele, Jr.

## **Committee Members Absent**

Brenda A. Allen  
C.J. Meidlinger  
David D. Parr

## **Guests**

Byron Hamlar, Citizen  
Mark Hostetter, Citizen  
Josh Johnson, Crime Safety Specialist  
John Garland, Councilmember  
Timothy Saunders, LEAP  
Dr. Elizabeth I. Ackley, Roanoke College Professor

## **Welcome to Members and Guests**

Vice-Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM and welcomed those present and recognized guests.

## **Reading and Approval of Minutes**

Copies of the January 11, 2017 meeting minutes were distributed for review. Ms. Pasternak indicated that a correction was required as she did not discuss the Road Diet proposal for Williamson Road at the Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association meeting as the minutes reflected. Instead she clarified, that she invited Rachel Ruhlen, Transportation Planner with the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, to discuss the potential Williamson Road Diet and bike lane additions, at the Riverdale Farms Neighborhood Organization meeting in January 2017. Further Ms. Pasternak stated that the yard sale referenced in the minutes for Airlee Court, is actually scheduled for April 22nd for the Riverdale Farms neighborhood and that any further reference to her attending the Airlee Court neighborhood group meeting were incorrect as this is not a meeting she attended. Ms. Harris confirmed that Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association did not meet in January so there was no information to report for that neighborhood group in January.

Mr. Calloway moved to approve the January 11, 2017 RNA Meeting Minutes with the aforementioned correction, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Pasternak. Hearing no further discussion, the corrected minutes were unanimously approved.

Councilmember John Garland clarified that there is no plan for a Road Diet on Williamson Rd but that the president of the Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association had proactively created a petition against that possibility. Mr. Garland stated that currently the Williamson Road Roanoke Area Business Association (WRABA) is pursuing community feedback to develop a plan for possible future Williamson Road enhancements.

### **Guest Presentations**

Mr. Williams introduced Timothy Saunders, from LEAP. Mr. Saunders informed those in attendance that LEAP addresses local food security. They support farmers within a 100 mile radius and work to get food into food deserts in Roanoke specifically NW and SE. Mr. Saunders shared that they are hosting a soup dinner tomorrow at the West End to foster community relationships and discuss food access. He passed out a flyer with additional details. Mr. Saunders introduced his colleague Dr. Elizabeth 'Liz' Ackley from Roanoke College, who is the Project Lead for Invest Health. Liz shared the initiative's goal is to improve health outcomes by creating transformative projects within the neighborhoods. Invest health has been working with the neighborhood to determine if a grocery store is something the NW neighborhood actually wants. They are surveying NW residents and are targeting 800 residents and plan to go door to door to 1700 homes. Liz stated that once they receive enough information that this is a project worth pursuing they will continue to move this forward. Dr. Ackley advised they attended the RNA meeting today to ask for help to share the surveys. She noted she has been attending neighborhood meetings to share the word on this initiative as well. Dr. Ackley provided packets of information with surveys to the RNA to share for those who represent NW neighborhoods. She clarified that this initiative is different from the efforts that Feeding America is currently pursuing. Mr. Calloway expressed concerns he has where the appearance of an "outsider" coming into the neighborhood, may not get the buy-in their looking for. Dr. Ackley clarified that she understands this very valid concern and said that in addition to the surveys, which will be completed in face-to-face interaction, she's also attending all neighborhood meetings in NW to become a "familiar face". Mr. Williams asked Dr. Ackley where they would be starting to survey the neighborhood. She responded that volunteers would be starting in Melrose Towers. Mr. Williams thanked the group for their visit the previous day as many residents are elderly. Mr. Williams was pleased that they would be starting at Melrose Towers as he lives there, and he offered to help with this initiative in any way that he could. Dr. Ackley added that the overall plan is to co-locate services so that instead of simply a grocery store, this would act as more of a destination hub.

### **Reports of Special Interest**

- Neighborhood Reports

Neighborhood reports were presented by all members present.

Ms. Evans reported that Grandin Court Neighborhood Association met in January and had a turnout of around 12 people. She stated the group discussed the RM-1 zoning proposal and that the police report provided good information regarding the neighborhood. She stated that they were a little frustrated about lack of communication.

Ms. Evans reported that the Raleigh Court Neighborhood Association did not meet in January.

Ms. Evans reported that Miller Court Neighborhood Alliance hasn't met but she has reached out to see if they will have a future meeting.

Mr. Horchler started off by thanking Ms. Harris for her recent efforts on surveying citizens to provide direct feedback to City Council. He said that he also appreciated the NextDoor initiative, a free private social media platform for specific neighborhoods that Ms. Harris was pursuing in Southeast. Mr. Horchler reported that elections would be coming up for the Southeast Action Forum in the near future. He asked Ms. Harris if she had other information to share regarding the Southeast Action Forum. Ms. Harris indicated that the first traveling Community Pop-up

Coffee shop is scheduled Monday. Mr. Horchler added that he'd heard discussions of the potential of neighborhood groups working together to work on a larger scale National Night Out.

Ms. Morgan reported that the Belmont Neighborhood Association and Riverland Walnut Hill Neighbors group didn't meet in January.

Ms. Morgan reported that Delegate Sam Rasoul asked Mountain View Neighborhood Association to head a class/committee to teach other neighborhood groups to Adopt a School because of success in their own neighborhood. She stated that they are planning on purchasing flags for light poles along the 13th Street corridor.

Ms. Morgan reported that Starview Heights Neighborhood watch discussed a problem house on Mountain Ave SE and the recent remediation efforts that a number of individuals and departments have been working on resolve the issues. She reported that there was an explosion at this house over the weekend so there were suspicions that this was meth. Investigations are ongoing.

Mr. Steele reported that the Northwest Neighborhood Improvement Council (NNIC) didn't meet in January but said that he did speak with president Elizabeth Hairston in regards to things they're trying to do. He verified that the group is not currently interested in joining other neighborhood groups. Mr. Steele noted Ms. Hairston reported a major concern their neighborhood is facing with a massive pothole on the 500 block of McDowell. He stated that there have been several near accidents with kids getting off the bus where the hole is. Mr. Steele said they have reached out to the city but haven't received any help. Mr. Clement indicated that he reported it too but did not recall receiving a response but said he'd follow-up on it.

Mr. Steele reported that Mr. Garland was a recent speaker at the Gainsboro SW Community Organization meeting. He noted the organization is planning an upcoming neighborhood block sale and that several home renovations are underway. Mr. Steele said that the neighborhood is pursuing the purchase of additional street lamps on Gilmer Ave that currently stop between 4th and 5th street. They are pursuing a grant to have lights extended down Gilmer to Gainsboro Road.

Mr. Steele noted he was unable to attend the Grandin Village Business Association meeting.

Ms. Pasternak attended the Old Southwest (OSW) meeting. She said OSW hosts events every month and that they discussed being the strongest organization in the city. She reported that they discussed the RM-1 zoning amendment proposal and that they talked about hosting another Enchanted Garden Tour because it had raised \$2000 previously. Ms. Pasternak also reported that the historic Alexander Gish house that is leased by OSW from the city is available to rent for special events. She also reported that their Neighbors Helping Neighbors event is a very active part of their organization, they are pursuing a kiosk in Highland Park and that their annual neighborhood clean-up called Block Pride is in the works.

Ms. Pasternak reported that the Garden City Civic League is in a transition phase as they have not recently met.

Ms. Pasternak reported that the Riverdale Farm Neighborhood Organization is now meeting quarterly. She noted their new gateway sign should be in place in the next week or so. She reported that the organization's Co-Chair had submitted an application to the city for new curbing and sidewalks to run from Food Lion to Brownlee to improve walkability. Ms. Pasternak

stated she has started working towards planning a Hoot and Holler event in Southeast so people could share their stories.

Mr. Calloway reported that he was unable to attend his neighborhood meetings due to illness. He did speak to the NNEO president and found out that they are seeking funds from the VA Dept. of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) and were also trying to get funding from the Roanoke the Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Mr. Calloway spoke to Ms. Walker who said she'd speak to him further about several things.

Mr. Clement informed Mr. Calloway that the Westwind Watchers Neighborhood watch is now active once again as their first meeting was last Monday. He reported that 8-10 neighbors showed up and were excited about getting their group going at the apartment complex. He informed Mr. Calloway that their meetings would be held the 2nd Monday at 6pm.

Ms. Harris reported that Airlee Court Neighborhood Watch Association had a good turnout with about 12 members. She said that the president spoke about the Cease and Desist order he received from WRABA regarding the petition he had created regarding the potential Road Diet on Williamson Rd. She stated that he informed the group that he was in fact Ceasing and Desisting as requested. He provided visuals that were made available on the City's website of the potential plans currently being discussed. Ms. Harris reported that Airlee Court group has a potluck this Saturday and that they generally have a large turnout. Mr. Garland asked if Rachel Ruhlen, Transportation Planner with the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission had attended an Airlee Court meeting to talk about bike lanes. Ms. Harris said that she had shared Ms. Ruhlen's offer to make a presentation to the Airlee Court group's president but that she had not heard anything more, and since attending the group's neighborhood meetings since the fall, had not seen where Ms. Ruhlen had attended.

Mr. Williams reported that the Roanoke Redevelopment Housing Authority had a pancake breakfast Saturday. He stated that Friday they are having a hotdog and hamburger sale in the Community Room of Melrose Towers. He invited all members to attend.

Mr. Williams said that all of his other neighborhood groups don't meet during the winter.

## **Reports of Officers – Standing Committees**

- **Report from Garland Neighborhood Blight Committee – Harris**

Ms. Harris stated that she sent a list of contacts including neighborhood leaders, city workers, City Council members, etc., to Mr. Garland and at this point needs to speak with Mr. Garland about the next steps. Mr. Garland spoke about the slow approach he is taking to ensure the right people become involved and to get the appropriate buy in to make sure this taskforce is successful. Mr. Garland mentioned that he is still looking for RNA's feedback to move this forward. He spoke about his plans to incorporate the Adopt a Block concept into this program. Mr. Garland said that he was hoping to gain traction with the Real Estate Investment (REI) Group because of neighborhood perceptions of landlords. He spoke about recent walks he'd taken with a neighbor in Southeast and expressed just how difficult he believed some situations are to fix. Mr. Garland asked that the group send names to Ms. Harris to further build the list. He indicated real estate investors, pastors, neighborhood leaders, etc., are all important to this effort.

- **Report from 2017 Neighborhood Month Conference for Roanoke Neighborhoods Committee – Morgan**

Ms. Morgan said that the committee plans to model this year's 2017 Neighborhood Month Conference after last year's event. She stated that First Christian Church (FCC) was selected as the venue as it offers space for the RNA to use as needed. Ms. Morgan added that more than 4 classes could be offered because of the space available. Some ideas of classes to offer are: curb

appeal, meth detection, hoarding, and positive meetings, understanding home insurance, code and courts, adopt a school, and working together. She said much like 2016, plans called for the conference to begin with a keynote speaker and lunch speaker. She noted the date of the event is planned for April 29th from 8AM-1PM to kick off May Neighborhood Month. Ms. Morgan noted she believed the cost for continental breakfast and lunch would be \$200-\$300 to which Mr. Clement confirmed the estimate. Ms. Morgan requested a motion so we could move forward with this plan.

Mr. Calloway made a motion to approve having the Neighborhood Conference on April 29th, from 8 AM-1 PM, to approve up to \$300 for La Cove to cater the event, and to allow the committee to decide on the classes and keynote speakers. Mr. Horchler requested to add that the committee be able to solicit sponsorships from the community. The group agreed. Mr. Horchler then seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

- **Report Regarding RNA Surveys – Harris**

Ms. Harris reported on the participation of the survey created and sent out regarding the 2017 pool season. She reported that 21 responses were received. Of the responses there was 1 response in favor of the pools not being opened, and 20 in favor of the pools being opened. Ms. Harris stated that shortly after sending the feedback to City Council members, Council Member David Trinkle replied that they had voted on this at a previous meeting and that they had decided to open the pools and that the required maintenance for the Washington pool was in the works. Ms. Harris stated that she believed the survey was very well received and wanted to find out when the RNA wanted to share the RM1 Zoning Proposal survey since the latest update indicates that this would be voted on in late spring. There was general agreement that it was not too early to share this survey. Mr. Horchler stated that he really liked this approach for gathering community feedback and would like to use this approach for future concerns. Mr. Garland applauded that the survey truly did not try to sway responders one way or another on the issue. He appreciated the non-biased approach and said that he values the feedback gathered. Ms. Evans asked how the survey was shared because of concerns that not all neighborhoods received the notification. Ms. Harris explained that this was shared on the RNA Facebook page, and that several neighborhood groups sent the survey link from that post. Ms. Evans indicated that we may want to share this with the individual neighborhoods going forward. Ms. Pasternak asked about the survey for the RM-1 Zoning Proposal and Ms. Harris stated that she'd send the survey to the group for all to verify the questions before posting it.

## **Unfinished Business**

- **Follow-up Discussion re Participation with Citizens' Convention in Hosting March 2017 Workshop**

Mr. Clement stated that he followed up with REACH Executive Director Tim Dayton regarding his ideas and hasn't received a response. Based on lack of information received, the group decided to close this item.

- **FY17-18 Neighborhood Development Grant Review Committee – Clement**

Mr. Clement reported that the RNA Neighborhood Development Grant Review Committee met last week and went through 21 applications. He explained the reasons why some projects were funded through CDBG funds and some are funded by the city. He also explained that there are Plan A and Plan B approvals because due to a potential 19% funding cut in City funds (Plan A) and the possibility of receiving supplemental funding to offset this cut (Plan B). Plan A and B are in place per the decision/approval for budget. Mr. Garland encouraged members to attend City Council to explain why we shouldn't cut this funding and potentially even ask for more funding. Mr. Clement went through the decisions for each application based on the requests submitted, eligibility, etc. Mr. Garland asked if the funding difference between Plan A and Plan B would go

back into the budget for the City if not allocated. Mr. Clement confirmed that it wouldn't. Mr. Clement explained the funding would roll over for next year if not used in 2017. He explained that one option would be that RNA could offer scholarships or neighborhood month project funding with unallocated funds. Mr. Clement stated that unused CDBG money goes back into the city's HUD Community Resources available funds. Mr. Clement requested RNA's support to allocate these funds.

Mr. Horchler made a motion to accept the recommended grant funding as presented by the RNA FY18 Neighborhood Development Grant Review Committee. Mr. Steele seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

### **New Business**

- **Election of RNA Chair**

Mr. Clement recapped that he had previously solicited RNA members for their interest in being considered for the Chair position and the only person that expressed an interest was Johnny Williams. Mr. Clement explained that the RNA could take a vote by voice, hand or ballot. Ms. Evans recommended Johnny Williams to take the position of Chair. A vote was taken by hand and all members in attendance approved unanimously. Mr. Williams accepted.

Mr. Clement asked that anyone interested in the now vacant Vice-Chair position, contact him so that we can vote in the next meeting.

- **Resignation of C.J. Meidlinger**

Mr. Williams shared an email of resignation submitted by C.J. Meidlinger received earlier in the day. Ms. Morgan made the motion to accept C.J. Meidlinger's resignation. Mr. Horchler seconded the motion. Hearing no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

### **Open Forum/Announcements**

Mr. Williams reviewed the activities listed on the meeting agenda.

### **Closed Session**

A communication from Vice Chair Williams requesting that RNA convene in a Closed Meeting to discuss two (2) vacancies appointed by RNA, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

Mr. Williams requested that the RNA convene in a Closed Meeting to discuss vacancies appointed by the RNA. The RNA unanimously agreed and hearing no further discussion, the meeting was recessed for the closed session. All guests excused themselves.

### **Meeting Reconvened**

Following the closed session, Mr. Williams reconvened the meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Williams adjourned the meeting at 7:00 P.M.