

**Charles B. Aycock Neighborhood Association**  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
For August 25, 2008

**Present:** Christina Cantrell, Charlie Conner, Jennifer Lanza, Shawn Patch, Justin Smith, Bert VanderVeen, Laura Wall

**Guests:** Officer Bud Blaylock, Officer Jim Cayton, Kym Smith, Fabio Camara, Brian Heagney, Mark Townsend, John Mandrano

**Business meeting called to order** at 6:32 PM

**Agenda Items:**

1.) **Community Watch report** – Officers Blaylock and Cayton had no police incidents for the neighborhood area since the last board meeting and remarked that alert and watchful residents are partially responsible. Some specific questions for the officers:

Mr. Conner asked about a **mattress-burning incident** on Chestnut St, but the officers had no report on the specific event. Mr. Connor said he would email the details so the officers can investigate.

Mr. Camara asked whether he was in violation of the law since he **walks his dogs after dusk through city parks** such as Sternberger Park and Latham Park. The officers stated he is technically in violation, but that most police officers do not arrest a person moving through a city park. The law is designed to remove loiterers.

Mr. Heagney asked whether the **tunnel from Leftwich St. to Summit Ave. is safe** for pedestrians. The officers replied that they have not been any reported incidents, although there have been arrests made for other activity. On the same subject, Ms. Wall asked if anything can be done about the chain link fence that effectively traps a pedestrian leaving the tunnel. Officer Blaylock speculated that the fence may be on the railway right-of-way and the city may not have any ability to remove it. There was additional discussion about lighting and graffiti, which is covered in the “Graffiti and Leftwich Tunnel” section.

2.) **Minutes from last meeting** are not complete. They will be reviewed and voted at the next meeting.

3.) Picnic recap – the **Neighborhood Night Out picnic** appears to be a success. There is no official count of the total number of dinners sold, but the number of attendees appeared to be more than last year. Due to the transition of treasurer, the expenses and profit were not available for the board meeting. There was good representation from both the Greensboro Police Department and from the City Council. All the remaining “It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” T-shirts were sold.

4.) Neighborhood Clean Up – a number of emails in the past week regarding trash in the neighborhood prompted a reminder of **Greensboro Beautiful’s Big Sweep** clean up event scheduled this year for Saturday, September 20. Jessica Trotman offered to head up the effort for Aycock Historic District via email. The website with Big Sweep details is [www.greensborobeautiful.org/BigSweep.htm](http://www.greensborobeautiful.org/BigSweep.htm)

5.) Graffiti and Leftwich Tunnel - Kym Smith, Street Lighting Coordinator, City of Greensboro Department of Transportation, presented an update on the **improvements scheduled for the pedestrian tunnel that runs under Fisher Ave.** from Leftwich St. to Summit Ave. Caged lights are scheduled to be installed the length of the tunnel in approximately 2 weeks. The plan is for the tunnel to be illuminated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The city is planning to paint over the graffiti, but there was discussion about a plan presented by Peggy Holland, Transportation Planner, to adapt a grant called “**Underground Art**”. The grant provides a canvas for artists using bridges, tunnels, and other public buildings in the hopes that graffiti painters are less likely to tag areas that are already painted. Mr. VanderVeen is exploring this option with Ms. Holland. If the board decides to pursue the approach, the sealant that makes graffiti less permanent (by enabling power-washing within 2 weeks to remove graffiti) must be applied after the artists have completed their work. Ms. Smith requested some neighborhood assistance with keeping the tunnel clean regardless of which option is pursued, perhaps in power-washing the tunnel in case graffiti reappears. However, there is no water source near the tunnel and no one in the neighborhood owns a water truck. The city owns water trucks, but there is some urgency in washing very soon (2 weeks) after graffiti is tagged. The easy removal is not guaranteed after that period of time. The neighborhood is available to monitor the tunnel’s appearance and can call or email Ms. Smith directly so that the city can wash immediately. Ms. Smith’s email address is [kym.smith@greensboro-nc.gov](mailto:kym.smith@greensboro-nc.gov) and her office phone is 336-433-7309.

Ms. Smith was also approached by Laura Wall for suggestions on **illuminating Sternberger Park**. There is some concern from a neighbor who borders the park that additional seating (as called for in the master park improvement plan) may encourage unlawful activity. Ms. Smith brought a number of lighting options to the meeting. There was discussion that streetlight(s) in the park may contradict signs that state the park closes at dusk and may advance the (incorrect) idea that the park is open after dusk. Ms. Smith was asked about motion-detection devices on lights and Ms. Smith promised to ask Duke Energy about this feature. Ms. Smith stated that if the board chooses a standard lighting option offered by Duke Energy, the cost is minimal and the maintenance is handled by Duke. If the board selects a custom option, the board is responsible for a higher installation cost (by a private contractor) and ongoing maintenance costs. A vote on a decision was postponed until more information is available.

6.) Treasurer’s report is not available, due to transition of the position. There was discussion regarding the need to reduce the number of signatures required for withdrawing funds from 5 to 2. There was no support for only one signature, but 5 signatures appear to slow down any process that necessitates official funds. Financial information will be updated by the incoming Treasurer.

7.) New board officers –following election of new board members at the picnic on August 5, 2008, the following board members were nominated and approved unanimously:

- President – Bert VanderVeen
- Vice-President – Laura Wall
- Treasurer – Justin Smith
- Secretary – Christina Cantrell
- Historic Preservation – Shawn Patch

8.) Betsey Braun sent an email report regarding the following activities:

*Three updates from meetings I attended.*

1. **Sternberger Arts Commission:** Two artists have replaced departing artists. Some of the neighbors might know VanDorn who has left – he resided in Aycock in the past. The board received reports and reviewed the maintenance of the facility and the cost of operating. This is routine. Nothing stood out or was of major concern.

I provided a neighborhood report:

NeighborWoods planting is scheduled for November 8<sup>th</sup>. The grant provides 150 trees to the neighborhood.

The Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation granted \$20,000 for the removal and replacement of the fence at Aycock Middle School. The chain link fence will be replaced with an iron fence in keeping with the historical neighborhood.

The Summit Avenue Corridor Project will be included in the bond package for a November 6<sup>th</sup> vote.

2. I attended the most recent meeting of the **Dunleath Charrette Planning Committee**. Mike Cowhig, Dan Curry, Jim Peeples and Mark from Revolution Mills Studios were also in attendance. I had asked Jim if Revolution Mills would lend its event center to the Charrette workshops. Discussion about location and purpose resulted in Dan and Mike reviewing the site the next day. Mike noted in an email that he thought it would be a very good choice.

The following email was sent to Dan, Mike and Andy Scott as the result of the meetings discussion. I was to compose and forward to Dan and thus copied Andy Scott.

Hi Dan,

After you left the meeting on Tuesday, several good ideas were presented. In case you didn't get a chance to hear them, I'd like to share them with you. I've copied both Mike and Andy on this as well.

The first two were made by Jim Peeples and they make a lot of sense from both a business and city perspective.

- We should have the knowledge of the appraised property value as we move forward.
- The way to attract potential developers to the Charrette is to have a signed agreement from the owner/seller with an agreed upon option price for 6 months after the completion of the Charrette.

The third idea is to hold a national design competition for potential use/development. The winner would be chosen to join the consultants during the Charrette. The purpose of this would to broaden potential options, find cutting edge ideas and perhaps discover a unique idea for development. An RFP could be easily developed with information, criteria and guidelines. Submissions would be accepted through the middle or end of October and the whole Charrette gets a 'jump start.'

3. *The third meeting I attended was the **Parks and Rec Commission Meeting**. Everyone wants to save it. The reality of the facility's deterioration will drive some of the decisions. The following is the email I sent Goldie Wells.*

*The Parks and Rec Commission meeting was about the city making sure the commission and neighbors understood the developments. It is also clear that everyone would like to see it preserved but some major influence and funds are going to be needed.*

*Comments put forward by Dave Wharton and Ann Stringfield made quite an impact. Paraphrasing the outcome of the concept – Foundations, city, neighborhood reps, etc. should sit down and really consider how we can revitalize the facility. Ann mentioned the promises made when the new stadium was built. Dave asked about a meeting for potential stakeholders.*

9.) Laura Wall reported updates regarding the following beautification activities:

**Neighborwoods** is scheduled for Nov 8, 2008. In addition to trees planted in residents' yards, there will be 65 trees planted on the Aycock Middle school property. Ms. Wall pointed out how critical it will be to adequately water the newly planted trees on school property. The neighborhood is currently responsible for this task. Ms. Wall will review water sources on the school property. The fence is scheduled to be installed in approximately 2 weeks. The current chain-link fence is to be removed and replaced with a more aesthetic black fence roughly 15 feet from the sidewalk. The Neighborwoods trees will be planted between the sidewalk and the new fence.

The city of Charlotte recently passed a law that **prevents sex offenders from frequenting city parks**. Ms. Wall wrote to the City Council to suggest enacting a similar law in Greensboro. Mayor Johnson called Ms. Wall to indicate she is in favor of such an ordinance.

Ms. Wall requested an estimate for a **branding solution for the neighborhood**. There is some controversy with both official names: "Aycock Historic District" and "Summit Avenue District". Some historical records suggest that Charles Aycock (governor of North Carolina from 1901-1905) was a white supremacist and in addition, "Aycock" is the name of a major street in Greensboro that is nowhere near the historic district of the same name. But for longtime residents, "Summit" conjures a rundown and seedy side of town. No progress can be made on signage and street-toppers until the neighborhood agrees on the best designation. The estimate priced a branding solution at \$20,000, which appears to be a lot of money to decide between 2 names, but it may be required to convince residents to resolve the name.

10.) Other business:

Discussion was held on a news article in the News and Record that indicated a consulting firm from Virginia recommended to the city to **move the Farmer's Market from its present location to downtown** to boost retail sales downtown. The general consensus is that the recommendation is without merit and that Aycock residents should send letters to City Council indicating that sentiment.

New resident Brian Heagney asked for **suggestions to deal with dogs that bark as his wife passes by** when walking the neighborhood. It was suggested that he speak to the owners of any dog he finds threatening to determine if the dogs are aggressive or protective and also to determine if the fence is strong enough to contain canines. Some alternate walking routes that do not pass by barking dogs were also offered.

John Mandrano noted that the **railroad trestle under E Bessemer Ave is in need of cleaning** and he has a crew that can perform that.

John Mandrano presented a dilemma regarding the **property at 740 Chestnut St.** Mr. Mandrano purchased the property in a seller financing transaction from the Children's Home when the Children's Home moved to its current location on Yanceyville St. Mr. Mandrano's plan was to convert the building from offices to a congregate care facility, which is a home for residents aged 55 and older who share facilities such as kitchen, living room, and yard, but have separate bedrooms. The property's zoning permits this arrangement. Unfortunately, no money has been raised by the principal who desired to run the facility and the Children's Home (who holds the mortgage loan) wishes to call the note. Mr. Mandrano is not in a position to pay off the note. Some of his ideas are to rezone for rental storage units, since the house is already divided into office spaces or to renovate the house into 4 condominium units using MSD funds. The board replied that MSD funds may be not used for a public-private partnership, but the possibility of the board purchasing the property and renovating for resale was raised. It was suggested to Mr. Mandrano to provide details to the board at next meeting for discussion.

11.) The meeting adjourned at 9:29 PM.