

FINNEYTOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 25, 2011

MEETING LOCATION: Northern Hills United Methodist Church

ATTENDEES: Dick Meyer, Jeff Decile, Nancy McGuire, Bill McMahan, Donna Saul, Jeff Dean, Pastor Paulette Wittenbrink, Gwen McFarland, Karen Hug, John Merusi, Laura Horn, Alan Robertson, James Wright, Greg Hopkins, Cathy Zimmerly, Joe Gorman, Bill Wooton

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Welcome and Intro: Joe Gorman called the meeting to order at 7:10. Those present introduced themselves. Items of significance noted during introductions include:

- Joe Gorman thanked Reverend Paulette for hosting FCA. Reverend Paulette announced that she will be leaving NHUMC at the end of June after 10 years of service and will relocate to a church in Hyde Park.
- Dick Meyer, FCA Historian, mentioned that tonight was the first time any FCA meeting had been held on a Monday night.
- Karen Hug announced the opening of a Kids Clothing Closet housed within Northern Hills United Methodist Church. She also said that several churches in the area (St. Vivian's, Northminster, Lifespring, etc) are organizing efforts to meet the needs of families in the area without duplicating similar efforts.

2. FCA Ballots: Nancy McGuire announced the official ballot counts for Board Election for the following positions:

President Joe Gorman, 21 votes

Secretary Cathy Zimmerly, 20 votes

Nancy McGuire, Trustee, 18 votes

Bill McMahan, Trustee, 17 votes

Dick Meyer motioned to accept the votes and Jeff Decile seconded.

Nancy also noted that as of April 25, 2011, there are 206 homes and 230 individuals registered as FCA members.

3. Committee Reports: Dick Meyer, Treasurer, reported that current balance is \$5127.15 and \$54 in expenses was paid for membership mailings. Two \$500 community service scholarships will be given by FCA at the Finneytown High School Senior Awards Night, May 18th.

- **HOUSING:** Jeff Decile spoke of housing issues and noted a particular property on Harbury Drive. Gwen McFarland responded that the Township was aware of this property and responding accordingly.
- **LAND USE AND ZONING:** Bill McMahan covered several LUZ issues including “handyman special” plastic signs, Section 8 Housing, foreclosures and bankruptcies, and bill boards on bus benches. Bill has discussed with Springfield Township police the fact that posting of plastic signs violates zoning resolutions and has picked up many of these signs so they are not littering our streets and telephone poles. In regards to Section 8 housing, Bill noted that eight more Finneytown homes had become Section 8 homes but that the overall number has stayed constant at about 147 since some homes have been removed as Section 8. Section 8 homes represent about 2% of total home population in Finneytown. Bill also displayed several photos of Section 8 homes. Bill also mentioned that there are about 150 vacant/abandoned homes in Finneytown due to possible foreclosure/bankruptcy. Jeff Decile noted that FCA should include the web site link for Hamilton County foreclosures on its web site. Bill concluded his report by announcing that most, if not all, benches on intersections such as Galbraith and Winton and the intersection of Daly and Hempstead were in violation of regulations that establish the right of way for both county (20 feet) and residential (10 feet) streets. Not all of these benches are placed at official Metro bus stop locations.

4. School Update: Dr. Alan Robertson presented information regarding the Finneytown Schools Budget Reduction Plan and Cottonwood School status. Alan and Finneytown Schools Treasurer, Dave Oliverio, have been working on a budget reduction plan in anticipation of losing approximately 14.5 percent in state funding. Finneytown received \$6,191,878 in state aid for this fiscal year and is projected to receive \$5,295,662 in state aid for the fiscal year 2012. This may change as it is dependent on pending state legislation, but Alan feels that the administration has been careful stewards of school funds. Retirements, transfers and reorganization of staff has saved in salary expenses. Alan said the district is committed to making the most recent levy last its promised three years and efforts will continue to reduce the budget by \$1,000,000. The district has also looked into outsourcing the transportation system as a cost saving measure and will hold a public forum on May 5 so that Finneytown families will have opportunity to hear details of the plan and provide input. Alan said that the district may recommend either Petermann or First Student.

Other factors impacting the school budget are declining county valuations and Ohio Senate Bill 5 and its possible impact on the budget. Alan and the Board of Education will be keeping a close eye on its status. Senator Bill Seitz, even after being removed from the SB5 committee, has been in close contact with educators and administrators regarding this Bill.

Another school issue that Alan shared was the status of Cottonwood School. It has been costing significant money to maintain and there are even larger anticipated expenses to continue to operate (roof, unit ventilators, windows, paving, etc...) A public forum was held to discuss options for demolishing all of Cottonwood, part of Cottonwood, and doing nothing at all. The popular opinion seems to be in favor of "Option Two", which is to completely demolish the building and sell the land.

While many residents voiced disappointment in seeing the preschool program leave Cottonwood, most concur that the expense of operating the building warrants its demolition. Currently, while many groups use the building, the only revenue is from the Hamilton County preschool program and Champions program (\$18,197) and expenses total \$184,508 for a net loss of \$166,311. Alan is working closely with Jim Acton in what future steps will be taken in the Cottonwood process. Jim has generated a list of equipment and other items to be reused and or recycled (security cameras, copper, etc...)

Joe Gorman asked about student populations, class sizes, and number of school districts in Ohio and how the district is forecasting building needs dependent on those numbers. Alan responded that if there were a population explosion that warranted another building it would be in the district's best interest to build new and not try to maintain a building like Cottonwood. The district has also dropped in number on the OFCC list for state funding and Alan mentioned that even if we were soon eligible for building money the district has to approach it very carefully as there are numerous restrictions associated with the process.

Donna Saul and Jeff Dean asked Alan to speak about the relationship Finneytown has with the local vocational schools (Diamond Oaks, Scarlet Oaks) and the number of students that we lose to these programs. Currently, Finneytown has 45 students enrolled in these programs. The district loses \$3500 per student when they are enrolled in the vocational schools. Donna questioned the need for the field trip to the vocational school that the sophomores take each year. Alan said that he is working on getting a few satellite vocational programs located on the Finneytown campus. (The district would keep 6/7 of the \$3500 per student value.)

5. Metropolitan Sewer District: Bill Wooton, resident of Long Lane and employee of MSD specializing in capital project design, spoke about the recent increase in residential MSD bills. Over the next 6 to 7 years, there will be an 8 percent rate increase to help pay for the cost of resolving sewage overflow issues. MSD is working hard to find additional funding sources to lower the financial impact on its customers. (The federal government is providing no assistance.) Bill explained that the EPA took MSD and several other older urban sewage and water companies to court asking that MSD be required to separate its sewage from storm water runoff. Updating MSD's 180 year old sewer system has become known as the "Consent Decree" and will be divided into two phases with Phase I beginning now and ending sometime in 2018. This project, referred to as "Project Groundwork", will eliminate all sanitary sewer overflows (about

100 million gallons) and reduce combined sewer overflows by 85%. Bill encouraged residents to refer to www.projectgroundwork.org for more information.

After Bill spoke, Joe asked Donna and Jeff status of the sewage issue in View Place. Donna said that residents would be meeting with the health department soon. Bill stated that MSD would only be involved in the View Place area upon request from the Health Department.

6. Springfield Township Update: Gwen McFarland, Springfield Township Trustee, gave several updates on Township issues including the estate tax, underground wires, McDonald's, Winton Road fencing over Ronald Reagan Highway and the old Taco Bell location. Joe Gorman asked Gwen why utility poles were not placed underground along Winton Road and Gwen said it would have been too costly and areas near the Administration Building on Winton Road were paid through grant money. Northern Winton Road McDonald's is planning to rebuild pending building permit approval. The Township believes that the Winton Road/Galbraith intersection is a major gateway to the community and is working hard to keep it visually appealing. Landscaping plans will be implemented for the old Taco Bell location once the weather permits. The Township is also working with the Ohio Department of Transportation in correcting some mistakes in the fencing installed over the Ronald Reagan Bridge on Winton Road and seeing that the job is completed as originally agreed. There was some downtime in the process due to inability to get appropriate materials. The Township has addressed their concerns with ODOT with the original installation and corrections are being made. Gwen also announced that there will be a Buffalo Wings opening behind Chipotle and that Burke Hardware will be closing at the end of May. Joe Gorman asked about the roof tarp statue over the commercial buildings on the Daly/ Galbraith intersection and Gwen said that there is no answer yet to when the roof will be fixed.

7. Reverend Paulette: Reverend Paulette talked about all the community outreach programs that NHUMC has established over the past few years, especially those involving children. These include the Pumpkin Patch, Santa Breakfast, Easter Egg Hunt, and Vacation Bible School. She also thanked Karen Hug for all her efforts with the Kids Clothing Closet. The church is in good financial standing and she will miss her congregation when she leaves to serve a new church in Hyde Park.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Jeff Decile announced that the FCA will be sponsoring an Exceptional Parent Award and that nominations should be forwarded to him.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Zimmerly, FCA Secretary