

MINUTES

General Membership Meeting

University Hill Neighborhood Association

14 April 2009

President Marc Manos called the meeting to order at 6:11 and introduced the Council members present: Briggs, Herman, Hiott, Hagen, Manos.

Minutes of the last meeting were approved (Hiott).

President Manos noted that Mayor Bob Coble had intended to come, but was suddenly called to a funeral in Beaufort.

He introduced District Three Councilperson Belinda Gergel, who commented on the beauty of our neighborhood and the many activities of the city, including the Southern Garden Symposium, the Columbia Museum's Turner to Cezanne show, the Red Cross Exhibit at the State Museum, and the St. Patrick's Day festivities in Five Points. On the latter, she noted that there had been many fewer complaints about the parade and its revelers than in the past. The financial situation of the city is being addressed with new transparency: The audits of the city are now online, as are the monthly financial statements. The City Council is struggling to bring down its expenses. Next year will be lean and the City will try to maximize the use of every dollar. It is up to all the citizens to remain engaged in the process and to offer suggestions when available and criticism when necessary.

Representing the Columbia Police Department were Captain Desroches and the Community Relations Officer, Corporal Chris Stokes. Captain Desroches reported that violent crime in the city was up 9% while property crime was down 13%. In the Metro Region, violent crime was up 28%, property crime was down 35%. In our neighborhood, there had been 10 serious crimes reported so far this year: one aggravated assault, one domestic assault, two simple assaults, two burglaries, one stolen car and three other crimes. Last year the Neighborhood had 28 violent crimes. Last year there were 14 auto break-ins, so far this year, none. In response to a question from the floor, Capt. Desroches told of the recent fatal shooting during an attempted robbery at the ACOA Club on College Street the preceding weekend. The alleged perpetrator was known to be from New Jersey, but not much else was known. The police are investigating. Capt. Desroches thanked us all for our cooperation with our officers over the past year.

President Manos noted that representatives of the USC Police Department could not attend, but remarked on our good fortune to be served by two separate police forces.

Safety: (Todd Herman) There was little to add to the full report by the Captain Desroches, but any problems or issues should be conveyed directly to Todd at therman@columbiamuseum.org. The phone number to contact our local officers Waggoner and Calby is 413-2594. A question was raised from the floor about parking at Laurens and Greene; Todd will investigate.

President Manos noted that we are one of only two neighborhoods with on-street parking permits. The management and distribution of parking permits has been moved from Police Records to Parking Enforcement. The office has taken steps to monitor parking problems in our neighborhood, including taking aerial photographs showing parking lots behind apartment in order to determine the number of permits available to each apartment building. Police could not do this, but Parking Enforcement can.

Parking (Hiott): John David Spade, parking Services Director, has been much more responsive to our needs than in the past. Focusing on tenant passes and the problems with visitor passes. If anyone with a parking problem should contact John David Spade (545-4015).

A question from the floor concerning parking across a sidewalk. Hiott: It is a violation. If there is a specific complaint, call the police and they will issue a citation, but it is probably best to call Parking Services.

Question from the floor concerning the length of the lights on Laurens Street at the Laurens/Greene intersection. Hiott: The question is best addressed to David Brewer of Traffic Engineering.

President Manos praised the great achievement of cooperation between the Association and the University in arranging to move the historic houses from 611 and 614 Henderson St. to Greene Street. The University will give up the deed so that the developers can create multi-unit dwellings. A five-member panel composed of University and Neighborhood representatives will be working on the project for its duration.

Ward Briggs reported on the Columbia Green landscaping grant that we received in September to plant shrubbery around the "University Hill" shield signs at the entryways into our neighborhood. To do so, we were required to file and encroachment request with the City of Columbia. The encroachment request required that we submit a certificate indicating that we had a \$600,000 insurance policy against any damages that might accrue to the city as a result of our \$500 worth of shrubbery. Although it seemed we had made a breakthrough in February when Keeping the Midlands Beautiful agreed to add us to their insurance policy, and a certificate was presented to the City Beautification Department by KMB, it now appears that the legal team behind KMB was not advised, and they have held back on adding us to their insurance while their lawyers study the question. That was in March and there has been no response. Meanwhile the City is looking for a way to

deal with this, but the Columbia Green grant runs out on May 31. We shall also very likely have to apply for an extension of our encroachment request.

President Manos reported that he is a member of the Five Points Parking Task Force.

He also reported that he dressed as “King of the [University] Hill” for the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, amply supported by other members of the Neighborhood.

He reported that the Hiller Hardware property may be developed as a branch bank of BB&T. He thought that he design would fit in well with the architecture on Harden Street.

In response to a question from the floor it was noted that mailboxes have been removed from the corner of Barnwell & Gibbes Green and the corner of College & Greene Streets.

Treasurer (Hagen): There is a balance of \$3910.53 in our treasury.

The highlight of the meeting was a presentation by Council Member Todd Herman on the Columbia Museum of Art’s new exhibit, “From Turner to Cézanne.” The presentation was intended to be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, but unfortunately Council Member Briggs’s computer, which was supposed to present the pictures that accompanied Todd’s talk, died moments before the talk was to begin. The talk became a major exercise in the use of the imagination by all, but it was lucid and informative even without the illustrations.

The meeting was adjourned and a reception began at 7:14.