

MEETING MINUTES – Revitalizing Neighborhoods Committee 8/18/09

Present: Paul Haan, Frank Lynn, Kym Spring, Gail Heffner, Kevin Wisselink, Pamela Benjamin, Christine Helms-Maletic, and Carol Townsend

Paul called the meeting to order. Carol showed the Visual Preference Survey the Urban Planning students developed last year, which was improved by Tom Bulten, who used it when creating the Area Specific Plan for the Kalamazoo Corridor area. Easttown and Frank would like a copy of it.

Christine reported that the Zoning Project is wrapping up at the end of this month. An extensive evaluation will be included with the final report Carol will be writing. One last item is a recommendation on the Zoning Community Organizer position we have researched. Since there was not a clear cut response from the neighborhood associations, it was decided that we needed further guidance from Lee Weber to see if funders might be interested in this position.

There was much discussion on the Neighborhood Indicators. The Committee feels pretty comfortable with the final draft of the indicators. It is understood that the measures will have to continue being a work-in-progress. Kevin suggested the RNC test the students' guide on how to access the data for measurements on a new neighborhood. It was agreed that we will ask for time on Easttown's and NOBL's Board agenda to discuss the results of the students' work and see what commitment they can make to following up in future years with measurements, and to get their feedback. Pamela, Christine, Kevin, and Carol will meet with the Boards.

Other next steps with the Indicator project will be decided later. They include: meet with other neighborhood associations to determine their interest in adopting the indicators, RNC deciding if they want to commit to measuring some of the indicators for all neighborhoods (in partnership with CRI), and presenting the project to the Grand Rapids CD and Planning departments.

Frank reported that the City is proposing to replace the Grand Rapids Housing Code with the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC). There have been a series of meetings, with the next one being August 19 at 1:00 p.m. at ICCF. The City Commission seems to be leaning toward replacing our code. Some bargaining points may be: have the City certify 1 and 2 family houses; change enforcement process from an emphasis on cases closed (which is why inspectors seem to pursue good landlords instead of the bad ones); and have them specify just how they will save money when switching to a whole new system.

Carol reviewed the effort by County Treasurer Ken Parrish to establish a land bank authority. This would be a good community development tool for us. Kym thinks it can help with some of the foreclosure problems.

Meeting adjourned late!