



Washington Heights Advisory Committee Meeting
6:00 pm Wednesday Aug 10, 2022
Kool Family Community Center/Valentine Room
200 W. Michigan Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Lynn Ward Gray, CCLBA Board Liaison
Jenasia Morris, Ward 2 City Commissioner
Rochelle Hatcher, District 2 County Commissioner
Ron Sweet, Vice Chair, NPC2
Dr. Elishae Johnson, Chair, CCG
Marcelle Heath, Section 1
Brigetta Phillips-Freeman, Section 2
Shirley McKinney, Section 3

Shanay Settles, Section 4
Aric Vaughn, Section 5
Dennis McKinley, At-Large
Arniece Montgomery, At-Large
Hannah Frentz, At-Large
Damon Brown, At-Large
Centhia Fleming, Alternate
Sherrill Cotton, Alternate

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

Chair Lynn Ward Gray called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

Roll Call: Lynn Ward Gray, Jenasia Morris, Ron Sweet, Marcelle Heath, Shirley McKinney, Shanay Settles, Dennis McKinley, Arniece Montgomery, Hannah Frentz, Sherrill Cotton (Alternate) in attendance. Dr. Elishae Johnson arrived 6:55 pm. A quorum was established.

Rochelle Hatcher, Brigetta Phillips-Freeman, Aric Vaughn, Damon Brown were absent. Centhia Fleming (Alternate 1) was excused.

Staff: Krista Trout-Edwards, Executive Director, Amy Rose Robinson, Property & Project Coordinator, Janie Brown, Grant Support Technician.

2. Approval of Agenda

Hannah Frentz moved to approve the agenda as presented and Jenasia Morris seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote (9-0).

3. Citizen Comment

None.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of the Minutes – July 13, 2022

Hannah Frentz noted correction to the minutes under 6.b. Case Study #2 – Sunlight Gardens. Missing was a question regarding available parking for wedding and events and noted that Devon Wilson responded parking available on property and side streets.

Jenasia Morris made motion to approve minutes with correction and Shanay Settles seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote (9-0).

5. CCLBA Report

Krista Trout-Edwards briefed the CCLBA report as presented.

a. Last Month Meeting Follow-Up:

Ms. Trout-Edwards stated that staff is working on communication around the pause in sales, clarifying the ability to submit applications per the agenda item tonight and really wanted to take a step back at this meeting. She stated that staff was sorry for the confusion and poor communication and wanted to make sure that staff and the committee were on the same page; therefore, they would be focusing on the bigger picture, the field work and properties, a new Story Map, goals, and proposed bylaws that should help the committee understand the context as well as where we are going.

b. Youth Member Representative:

Ms. Trout-Edwards noted this information is on the website, with the deadline open through September 30th.

c. City of Battle Creek Items – as presented

d. Informational Items:

i. Community Walking Tour #1 – Rescheduled for August 16, 2022

ii. Governing Documents

a. Bylaws – as presented and up for discussion

b. Conflict of Interest supporting policy – as presented

6. Discussion Items

a. Review of big picture: County foreclosure process; CCLBA's role; city's Neighborhood Planning Councils; W.K. Kellogg's Grant; and WHN Advisory Committee as well as potential future goals.

Janie Brown reviewed the big picture, which included the county foreclosure process and the Land Bank's role in that, the city's NPCs, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Grant, and WHN Advisory Committee. She presented charts/maps showing how this all flowed and worked together. She also presented the idea of future goals and encouraged the committee to think about what percentage of the WHN/NPC2 properties should be affected by this work. And what "affected" should mean, would it mean get back on tax rolls, direct sell as commercial properties or side lot properties, established garden leases, adoptions, or development through Develop This Lot, Transfer This Commercial Property, or Transfer This Home opportunities.

Arneice Montgomery asked how a resident would get CCLBA assistance with the property they are working on if they purchased it from the Land Bank.

Krista Trout-Edwards shared how staff partners through grants like the EPA grant assistance as well as technical assistance through programming. She stated that they could reach out to Amy Rose Robinson to discuss their project in detail.

Arneice Montgomery asked if someone needed assistance with site clearance could they reach out to the Land Bank.

Krista Trout-Edwards stated the site clearance funding with the WKKF grant is for CCLBA owned properties in NPC2.

Hannah Frentz asked if the assistance would only be available for the 246 properties in the Washington Heights Neighborhood/NPC2.

Krista Trout-Edwards stated that yes, the site clearance funds are for assistance with CCLBA properties, not privately-owned properties.

Lynn Ward Gray requested clarity regarding this project and that it is focused on properties within the Land Bank's area of responsibility.

Krista Trout-Edwards confirmed that this project is focused on those owned by the Land Bank. However, residents could bring to staff's attention troubled (vacant, abandoned, dangerous) properties that are not publicly owned for this committee to address or work with other partners on to determine if other resources are available.

Arneice Montgomery noted that we need to know and understand how so many properties became vacant in NPC2 and what we need to do through this project so that our children and grandchildren are not looking at the same issue 25-30 years down the road.

Lynn Ward Gray noted that is a great point and that the committee should address that in our strategy and plan as we go forward.

Marcelle Heath asked if it is possible to get the information of how many came to the Land Bank as vacant, how many the City of Battle Creek demolished versus how many CCLBA demolished and the history behind it.

Krista Trout-Edwards responded that CCLBA demolished 153 between 2011 and 2022. CCLBA staff will have to reach out to the City of Battle Creek to research and obtain their data.

Krista Trout Edwards asked Ms. Montgomery if she wanted context on this data.

Arneice Montgomery noted that our strategy needs to encompass and do away with the way we got here to ensure we do not come back to this same outcome for future.

Marcelle Heath asked if homes were demolished and then we came to a point of freezing them. He was asking for clarity and understanding around this history.

Janie Brown explained that the freeze was on the Land Bank sales of the properties in NPC2 while the committee was formed. The timeline and reasoning for the freeze was to get the Advisory Committee established so they could be involved in the planning and recommendations process for the properties in NPC2.

Marcelle Heath asked what the average timeline for the process is to approve the sale of properties in NPC2.

Krista Trout Edwards responded it is longer than for property outside of NPC2 as requests must come before the Advisory Committee.

Hannah Frentz asked Ms. Montgomery if the main goal is to keep as many houses as possible in the area.

Arneice Montgomery responded the goal from her perspective is to revitalize the area. Housing is not the only requirement to be a revitalized neighborhood. She further noted that we need to find a way

to focus or narrow down on what we approach first, we can't take 20 issues and address them all at once.

Janie Brown shared that the Land Bank could move on and make decisions about what's next, but the community needs to be engaged in the process. We may also need to partner with other groups and organizations in the community. She recapped the concept that we need to establish a goal identifying what percentage of the properties we expect affect change.

Marcelle Heath sought clarification about the Advisory Committee making recommendations on the strategy and overall plan for the area rather than the specifics residents could or could not pursue on the individual land they purchase from the Land Bank.

Janie Brown confirmed it would be the responsibility of the AC to make recommendations on the overall strategy for the properties in NPC2 not the specifics on the individual land purchased by residents.

b. Review of Properties in NPC2, site visits, and decision-making processes

Amy Rose Robinson presented on the staff review of properties in NPC2, site visits and the decision-making process. She also shared her insight that to begin to transform the neighborhood we must knock down walls and barriers and build our foundational work together. She said that staff is not required to care about this work or this neighborhood, but it is an honor for us to care about it and to work here. So encouraged committee members to continue to bring forward questions, ideas, thoughts that challenge us to be better as we work this process building together.

c. Introduction of Draft Story Map

Amy Rose Robinson presented the Story Map and how to use it, including how to view all CCLBA properties, the historic districts, the Dudley School to Parkway Manor sidewalks issue and the lighting issue along Parkway Dr to Limit St as well as how the committee could honor the history of the Black Businesses.

Arneice Montgomery asked why the Local Historic District for the city is so large and why it is different than the National Historic District.

Amy Rose Robinson responded that she did not know why there is a difference between the two nor why the local one is larger but said that staff can try and find out. She noted that staff from the State Historic Preservation Office had the same question.

Janie Brown noted that the businesses provide on the list prepared by Arneice Montgomery is available for all to review and that members should add on additional businesses that they are aware of. This list is the beginning of the documentation of the history and staff's attempt to reflect the multiple businesses previously in The Bottoms and NPC2, and the possibilities for the future.

Hannah Frentz noted that if we don't pay attention to history as it just repeats itself or we miss out on future opportunities.

Marcell Heath asked to confirm that most of the lots staff has assessed what they should be while others will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Amy Rose Robinson confirmed that staff will follow through on recommendations from the WHNAC to create an overall reuse strategy that would be approved by the board.

Dr. Elishae Johnson asked if CCLBA owned properties with people living in them and how those would be addressed.

Amy Rose Robinson clarified that the properties owned by CCLBA are vacant, primarily vacant lots, and that no one lives in or occupies CCLBA properties. She also noted staff will bring to the WHNAC their recommendations for the reuse strategy for Advisory Committee to review and discuss.

Arneice Montgomery stated it is a good strategy to address in small segments, like Side Lots.

Hannah Frentz provided multiple ideas such as promo videos on how to apply for the lots and share what others are doing in the community with their lots. She said that sharing some of the positives and awareness of what is being done like at WHUMC would also be good. She also wondered if WHUMC or other entities could run a rent to own program. She concluded that sharing some ideas of what could be done could be helpful.

Dr. Johnson asked if staff knew how much of this land previously had homes on it and stated that sharing the property value and how to purchase land, rather than just sharing information on the value of homes, would be helpful.

Amy Rose Robinson reiterated that the CCLBA demolished 153 properties, creating vacant lots, which is astounding. She said that the “why” is important so that the neighborhood can avoid future demolitions, and that there are lots of opportunities to share insights for future decisions.

Marcelle Heath suggested that the CCLBA could host a community forum highlighting properties and sharing the details with residents.

Hannah Frentz asked if it is possible to have another program that is only for community partners to collaborate in a certain area or street to build homes and offer through and to low-income families as rent to own.

Amy Rose Robinson responded that this could be a recommendation from the WHNAC.

d. Introduction of the Bylaws

Krista Trout-Edwards presented the subject and draft By-Laws for the Washington Heights Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

Shanay Settles stated that she was prepared to ask questions. She wanted to know if she could proceed. First question was how Alternate 1 are and 2 were defined.

Krista Trout-Edwards responded that it is based on the voting process and who was selected first and second. She followed up by stating they were defined on the official roster.

Shanay Settles asked about the process for removal.

Krista Trout-Edwards noted that would need to be discussed by the group at the next meeting.

Shanay Settles asked about the attendance policy, and if it applied to all positions.

Krista Trout-Edwards stated yes it would apply to all positions.

Shanay Settles asked about Robert's Rules of Order, and if there was a cheat sheet or cliff note version of it that the committee could access so that members can know what they need to do and when.

Krista Trout-Edwards noted that Ms. Robinson was already preparing an agenda cheat sheet and that staff can look for additional guidance on Robert's Rules of Order that it can share with committee members.

Krista Trout-Edwards then shared insight into the Conflict of Interest policy. She noted that it is not merely that you know a person because they are a neighbor or you went to school with them, but that per the Land Bank's legal counsel, Jim Dyer, it would be based on having a financial impact. She noted a separate supplemental policy would be presented at the next meeting.

Lynn Ward Gray shared an example of if two city commissioners on this committee and this committee discussing and voting on an option to purchase City of Battle Creek property in NPC2. She noted that there would be no conflict of interest as neither commissioner would receive financial benefit from the decision.

7. New Business

- a. Discuss and approve the acceptance of *Statement of Interests* and/or applications (when appropriate) for properties located in the NPC2 area, as well as ensure there is communication about this opportunity during the pause in sales. *Motion WH 22-13***

Hannah Frentz motioned to approve Motion WH 22-13 and Shanay Settles supported as presented.

Roll call Vote: Commissioner Gray – yes; Commissioner Morris – yes; Ron Sweet – yes; Marcelle Heath – yes; Shirley McKinney – yes; Shanay Settles – yes; Dennis McKinley – yes; Hannah Frentz – yes; Dr. Johnson – yes; and Arneice Montgomery – yes.

The motion carried unanimously (10 – 0) by majority roll call vote.

8. Citizen Comment

None

9. Board Member Comments & Announcements

Arneice Montgomery asked what happened to the lighting and sidewalk subcommittee and said that she might be interested. She also asked if the committee could designate someone to attend the city's Historic District Commission meetings to ask the committee's questions.

Krista Trout-Edwards stated the subcommittee is still pending and needs volunteers. She also noted that staff will reach out to the City of Battle Creek Planning Department to join our meeting and share background on historic district.

Dennis McKinley requested information on the CCLBA programs that have proven successful so that the committee will have the background information that made them successful so is can spur inspiration among the committee as we plan for our strategy.

Amy Rose Robinson noted that the property at 276 Kendall St. N. is on the market today at price of \$6,500 which is negotiable.

Lynn Ward Gray announced he City of Battle Creek plans to hire a Diversity and Equity Officer. The public is invited tomorrow to the Burma Center from 5:30 – 7:30 to meeting the candidates. They are asking the public to provide feedback. It will be on the City's You Tube Channel and that people can participate in person or online.

Shanay Settles asked for the names of the finalist.

Lynn Ward Gray noted the names are not in the press release and therefore she does not have it available to share.

10. Adjournment

Dr. Elishae Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting and Shanay Settles seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote (10-0). The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Next Meeting: September 14, 2022, 6:00 pm at Second Missionary Baptist Church