

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2010 IN THE SENIOR CLASSROOM OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER

The meeting began at 7:40 p.m.

Members Present were: Kevin Hammett, Dea Zugby, Jackie Carrington, Rick Ransom, Dan Hamlin, Emmett Jordan, Council Liaison and David Moran, Staff Liaison.

Spellman Overpass Meeting

Kevin reported on the recent community meeting held regarding the Spellman Overpass. This meeting was intended as a follow-up to the public safety concerns that had surfaced a year ago. Kevin noted that the meeting was emotional. There had been reports of recent break-ins in Greenbriar. Some residents reported that new cameras and call boxes had helped some. There was some discussion about gating the overpass, particularly at night.

Emmett commented that people left the meeting with stronger feelings than when they came in. He wasn't sure the "town hall" style meeting was the best format to solve these kinds of problems. He noted there points during the meeting where it seemed more like a shouting match.

Council Referral – Empirian Village

Kevin stated that the joint meetings with PSAC had been useful, but that CRAB also had a unique perspective on this referral and thought it was valuable for CRAB to have a chance to talk about the referral as CRAB.

Jackie noted that while Council might perceive certain problems at Empirian Village, resident's perceptions might be completely different.

Rick commented on the meeting that had been held with Empirian Village management and that the focus was on the failure of apartment management to address problems there.

Kevin stated that there were a huge number of property standards violations and residents weren't getting responses from the Maintenance department. He also noted that some Empirian Village residents feel isolated from the rest of Greenbelt.

Emmett indicated that Council was concerned with quality of life, public safety and code violation issues in Empirian Village. He noted it was a large, diverse community. He also stated that some residents have lived there a long time.

Dan stated there had been a lot of emphasis on enforcement. He indicated a desire to build a sense of community, but was not sure how the City could accomplish this. He noted that Rosemary had identified youth safety as a key need.

There was some discussion of the previous survey that had been done by the PSAC, the Human Relations Commission and others. Many felt that the questions in this survey were poorly worded. Dan stressed the need to first answer the question “what are you looking for” and then determine the appropriate instrument & questions.

Dea reported that many Empirian Village youth are involved in Boys & Girls Club activities.

Dan discussed the lack of civic engagement and cited the high turnover rate as a cause. Rick observed that some people choose not be engaged in their community because of other responsibilities.

Dan asked about the strengths at Empirian Village and how CRAB could focus on the positives there. He noted that Empirian Village was a mixing bowl with many different cultures represented. He suggested educating people in other parts of Greenbelt about these positives so their only impression was not the Police Blotter. Jackie suggested capitalizing on the diversity there.

Kevin indicated that we needed to know what is and isn't working, as well as what folks like and dislike about living there.

Dan noted that building trust was a slow process. He stated that he wasn't sure a survey would get CRAB the “data” it needed. Dan observed that listening to people empowers them and suggested building on Empirian Village's strengths. He suggested the need to focus on issues other than code enforcement and crime.

Kevin suggested holding a meeting in Empirian Village and reaching out to leaders in the community.

Minutes

CRAB unanimously approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11/4/09 as presented.

The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m.

Prepared by David E. Moran, Staff Liaison