Wednesday, June 1, 2016

**Members present:** Danetta Stevens-Miller, Frank Hoge, John Moyer, Teresa Miller, Steven Foust, Howard Blackmon, Rosemary Medrano, Jean Barton, Brandon Barnett

**Members absent:** Nancy May, Don Perkins, Rita Moyer, Hi Stockwell, Michael Bradley, Johnny Reb, Katrina Bayless, Elinor Cowell, Jamie Slack

**Excused absence:** None

**City staff present:** Sasha Haehn, Monique Glaude´

**Guests present:** Roger Gibbs

Meeting called to order by Brandon at 6:41 p.m.

I. **Welcome**

II. **Roll Call**

III. **Approval of Minutes – April 13, 2016**

   Motion to approve April 13th minutes, Motion by Steve Foust, 2nd by John Moyer
   All in Favor

IV. **Neighborhood Leaders Training, Saturday, June 25th – Director Sasha Haehn**

   Director Sasha Haehn informed the members it is a requirement for all NIAs planning to apply for either the 2016 Empowerment Grant or SORT grant must attend the upcoming neighborhood leaders training scheduled for Saturday, June 25th.

   The following neighborhood leaders RSVP’d: North Topeka West NIA, Quinton Heights NIA, Valley Park NIA.

V. **Neighborhood Newsletters Discussion – Director Sasha Haehn**

   Sasha shared that the Department of Neighborhood Relations spends $50,000 annually to print and mail neighborhood newsletters. The feedback from the neighbors is that a lot of residents don’t utilize the newsletters. This addresses a large part of the lack of engagement in the neighborhoods. It is imperative that neighborhoods use the most effective form of communication.

   The Media Director and City 4/Communications is going to create templates options for postcard, ¼ page, ½ page and tri-fold newsletters that neighborhoods will be able to use. Upon completion the CAC will review and hash out the options. These layouts will allow neighborhoods the opportunity to just plug-in information. Sasha stressed the importance of surveying your respective neighborhood to find out if neighbors want the newsletter electronically or a hard copy. Any savings captured from newsletter a reduction in printing will be applied to the Empowerment Grant budget line item. The Empowerment Grant funding was reduced by HUD from $150,000 to $120,000. HUD no longer will allow funds to be rolled over to the next year. DNR will also provide programming information that can be included in newsletters.

   Hard copy newsletters will not be taken away. And, DNR will assist neighborhood leaders and volunteers with surveying to hear from neighbors in finding out what is the most effective tool. Additionally, the City’s new website should go live in the later part of the summer of this year. DNR will have a page which will allow neighborhood newsletters to be posted on our website. Neighborhoods will be able to provide that hyperlink on their newsletters.
Please contact Sasha or Monique if you have ideas on items for the website. Suggestions provided area as follows:

- Community Resource information
- “If You’re a new resident” please let neighborhood leaders know

Teresa Miller indicated that in the past neighborhoods were allowed to come into DNR and make copies of their newsletters and prepared them for mailings. She wants to stress that neighbors appreciate receiving the hard copy newsletters. Her suggestion is to provide rentals with a hard copy and provide the choice to homeowners.

Sandy Swartz shared that in Hi Crest East 50% of the properties are rentals; 80% are rentals in Hi Crest West. Her concern is that due to such a transit neighborhood new residents would miss essential information if the newsletter was electronic. She indicated in the past newsletters were hand delivered and there was an incentive program which enhanced larger attendance at the meetings.

Jean Barton suggests adding the verbiage “If new please let us know” to the newsletter. Can the money saved by each neighborhood or the city as a whole?

Jamie Slack thinks the point person handling the newsletter should gather the data if which form of communication the neighbors prefer.

Frank Hoge feels that neighborhoods should print and distribute the newsletters. He wanted to know the number of DNR staff. Sasha informed him she has 14 staff members.

Sasha will have the newsletter topic be a on the September 7th CAC agenda.

VI. Neighborhood Summit – John Moyer
John posed the question – “How many people know what it is interested in neighborhood or city as a whole?”

The Neighborhood Task Force (NTF) was formed after the 2012 Neighborhood Summit. Their accomplishments are as follows:

- The reorganization of HND and other departments
- International Property Maintenance Code
- Special Structures Unit
- City Budget Line item - $400,000 which affords for 44 homes to be demolished
- Request for a LMI training centers in NIAs

A 2017 Neighborhood Summit is in the planning stage for October. NTF will continue will planning at their next meeting, June 15th at 6:00PM. The agenda will include the following:

- Preliminary plans
- Discuss the progress
- Where do you want to go?
- 1 day event for 4 hours

Frank would like to know what has been accomplished. Do you really want to spend time talking about this again? He indicated that Marc Galbraith is looking for more members to join the Code Compliance group. He feels that the NIAs have no authority to do anything. And, that the neighborhoods need to accept accountability. He feels that Sasha needs to listen to the neighborhoods. Her number #1 job as a public servant – how do you serve if you don’t listen?
VII. Topeka JUMP Discussion – Director Sasha Haehn

JUMP is for justice and unity. They are comprised of a number of churches located in Topeka. They have an annual topic. The first year was an issue with USD 501, year two was the ability for mental health individuals to obtain employment. And, year 3 is affordable housing.

They researched affordable housing and have had meetings with both the city and affordable housing providers. The annual Nehemiah session was scheduled for April but was postponed to May due to inclement weather.

What they want - $2 million for an Affordable Housing Fund in the City of Topeka Code in HOME. Currently, we have one grant from HUD which funds TOTO & Cornerstone activity. The Federal legislation would allow a trust fund on the books to be created to get funds which would fund development activity for new units. It was never funded. In previous years when the City of Topeka and the Topeka Housing Authority parted ways it ended the activity for public housing.

The City of Topeka is an organization and not an expert on development. We are experts of roads, water; sewers, public safety, etc. we don’t build houses. The Topeka Housing Authority is autonomous along with other organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Cornerstone who are affordable rental experts. Sasha explained all of the above to JUMP. If the City Council gave Sasha the directive to find the money in the HUD funds she would request that they determine which programs would need to be removed. The current programs were created based upon the community needs. They have been encouraged to located other funding opportunities, potentially from the private sector.

The Mayor and Sasha presented at the Nehemiah session. The City shared two things that would need to happen to have effective change:

1. Education programs for tenants to learn their rights (JUMP could provide the church to host the event and volunteers)
2. Volunteer program – (JUMP could provide physical and financial assistance to fix properties). They have 5,000 members. She inquired on how many could volunteer? JUMP’s response was, no. She would need to contact each church individually.

The decision was that the Mayor will host a committee that will consist of the following:

- Topeka Housing Authority
- Cornerstone
- Community Action
- Habitat for Humanity
- JUMP – 3 members
- CAC – Chair
- NTF – Chair
- Code Compliance Committee – Chair

Jean Barton suggested that Sasha have someone from the Shawnee County Landlords Association be a member. In addition, Jamie shared that JUMP contacted her to be one of their representatives. Sasha will inform Mayor Wolgast and let Jamie know his response.

The City informed JUMP that we are ecstatic to have them as a partner and welcome them to the table. In addition, there isn’t an additional $2 million dollars in the general fund budget, the money isn’t available unless we increase either a property tax or sales tax.

Topeka JUMP topeka.jump@gmail.com
VIII. Other Items for Discussion
Jean shared that as a landlord there was a shooting on SW Taylor and the video footage showed her apartments in the background. How do you encourage someone to buy a house in that area and put money into it?

IX. Adjournment time: 7:45 pm

Motion to adjourn by Howard Blackmon, Second by Jean Barton, ALL IN FAVOR

Please note the next Citizen’s Advisory Council meeting will be held September 7, 2016.