

MINUTES
Board of Director's Meeting
7:30PM Wednesday, March 15, 2006
Room 155, North Decatur Building (@ Burlington Rd)

Call to Order - Bruce MacGregor, new President, called to meeting to order.

Introduction of Board members – Bruce MacGregor asked each Board Member to identify himself.

Ratification of Executive Committee – Bruce MacGregor introduced the Executive Committee and asked for ratification of Paul Shanor and Rob Benfield as members. It was moved and seconded. Motion carried.

Preview of Upcoming Year - Bruce MacGregor listed some of the activities for the coming year. The Tour was the first item. Bruce would like to find some way of welcoming new neighbors to the neighborhood and letting people know that they live in a historic district. We would like to reactivate our committee structure, with committees reporting to the board; keeping discussions in the board meetings to a minimum. We have a number of important committees that need staffing. Several land issues will come up this year along North Decatur Road and the Ponce corridor. We need to decide what we want for these major corridors. Many more issues will come up during the year.

Officer's Reports

Secretary (approval of minutes) - Walter Saunders asked for any changes to the minutes for the February Board Meeting. Alida Silverman asked for a clarification to the details on the changing of the budget to bring it into a surplus. She asked for a change in language on the section dealing with the Strategic Redevelopment Report. She wanted it clarified that the Landmark District Historic Preservation Committee was offering substituted language to that in the Report. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes with these changes. Motion carried.

Communications VP - Pam Terry reported that the website has only a few pages that are still under construction. One of those pages is the communications page. The alert system will be transferring from Tricia to Pam and Barbara. We need to think about how we want this system to work. Pam and Barbara will be able to update the website starting next week.

Treasurer's Report - Rolf Grun presented the budget as approved at the February Board Meeting with some brief explanation.

1st VP Reports (Land Use, Zoning, Historic Pres.) - Jeff Rader introduced reports on the following issues.

- **NPU-N/Atlanta Ordinance** – Jeff presented a report for Camara Jones, the NPU-N representative to the Board, from NPU-N (attached) on a proposed ordinance for “Demolition Permit Procedures.” The NPU-N thinks that the ordinance should be strengthened, extending further some of the protections that the Landmark District now enjoys. Alida Silverman moved that Board endorse the points made in the testimony by NPU-N Chairman, Anna Copello. The Motion was seconded. An advisory vote was taken of the entire board. The vote was unanimous in favor of endorsement. A vote of the Board Members in Division 1 was likewise unanimous in favor of endorsement. Martha Porter Hall abstained due to her position on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

- **Historic Preservation Task Force** - Walter Saunders reported on a task force called by Commissioners Gannon and Waldorf the previous week. The taskforce consists of Sue Apolinsky and John Harrington, members of the Historic Preservation Commission, Amy Stankus and Walter Saunders. The task force looking at revising the procedures currently employed by the DeKalb HPC and at revisions to the guidelines. The goal is to streamline the monthly HPC meetings which currently begin at 7:00 pm and can run until 2 or 3 in the morning.

- **DeKalb Private Street Ordinance** - Jeff Rader reported that this ordinance has been around for the last year. Most community councils are against this ordinance. Last week the planning commission voted to support this ordinance. Some progress has been made in strengthening the ordinance however two key provisions, namely limiting private streets to R-100 zoning designation and to parcels of no fewer than 5 acres, were left out of the ordinance. There are 3 courses of action: 1) Stay the course and oppose the ordinance; 2) try to amend the ordinance on the floor by reintroducing the two missing conditions; or 3) trying for a deferral until April when one the supporting commissioners is leaving the BOC. A motion was made and seconded to empower the Exec. Committee to act in the best interest of the neighborhood. Motion carried.

- **Strategic Redevelopment Task Force** - Jeff Rader briefly explained the report generated by the taskforce. He suggested that this be tabled until the May meeting, after Board Member Training.

- **Nunan Property Update** - Jeff Rader described the battle that has been going on for some time. There may be some additional court battles on this issue.

- **N Decatur/ Burlington High Rise** – Jeff Rader reported that a developer is interested in building a 5-story apartment building on this parcel of land. The developer had applied for a variance in the front yard setback to provide for a parking garage entrance. The variance was denied. The developer is now interested in taking with the DHCA.

- **Board Member Training** - Jeff Rader announced that BOARD MEMBER TRAINING will take place on SATURDAY, MAY 6TH, 9:00 – 11:30AM.
- **1st VP Report (Transportation)** - Jeff Rader reported that the County transportation plan will possibly come before the BOC in April. The CCTMA will be holding an informational meeting on March 23rd at the Emory Conference Center.

Admin VP Reports - Becky Evans reported on the following items:

Notebooks for new members – Members will be receiving notebooks in the next few weeks.

DHCA Administrative Contractor- Barbara Morey is our administrative contractor.

Tour Update - Barbara Vogel reported that the tour is in very good shape and will be very successful. There are 5 residences and 2 other buildings. We will, as usual, be serving a lunch, this year with a special cupcake developed just for the tour.

Artist Market - Joanna Stroud reported that we did a pilot project of the Artist Market two years ago. We are doing it again this year only as a fundraiser. There will be an opening reception on Thursday night (April 20th) before the Friday opening. People with tour tickets or members of the association will get in free. This flyer will be in the Druid Hills News. There will be 23 artists. The market has its own posters this year. All expenses have been covered by sponsors. All entrance fees will be profit.

Committee Needs - Becky Evans reported that there are several committees that have open chairs. Becky will look at the committee lists to try to fill the chairs.

New Business - Amy Stankus pointed out that the April meeting coincides with the Tour Preview Party. Becky announced that the April Meeting will be rescheduled for Tuesday, April 18th.

Amy also introduced the new process whereby people can get help from the Civic Association's Historic Preservation Committee. When people receive an application for a Certificate Of Appropriateness from the County, they will also receive a flyer from the Civic Association offering to help by reviewing their project prior to the monthly HPC meeting. This will hopefully eliminate some of the incomplete applications which come before the HPC each month.

Jeff Rader announced that he is going to run for Commissioner Waldorf's seat on the Board of Commissioners.

The meeting was adjourned.

NPU-N

- Cabbagetown Neighborhood Assoc.
- Candler Park Neighborhood Assoc.
 - Druid Hills Civic Assoc.
 - Inman Park Neighborhood Assoc.
 - Lake Claire Neighborhood Assoc.
- Poncey-Highland Neighborhood Assoc.
- Reynoldstown Civic Improvement League
 - Little Five Points Business Assoc.
 - Little Five Points Community Center
 - Ponce Corridor East Assoc.

Anna Copello – Chair
404-538-2729

Re: 06-O-0470 (11) An ordinance by Councilmember Natalyn M. Archibong to amend Section 8-2076.1 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Atlanta, Georgia, entitled "Demolition Permit Procedures for Residential Structures and Ancillary Buildings" so as to provide for public notice of the issuance of any such permit; and for other purposes.

NPU-N recently reviewed this proposed ordinance and our neighborhoods have expressed concerns that I'd like to share with you. We support the intent of the proposed ordinance to insure public input before demolition permit is pulled, but believe that it needs to go further to address a growing concern around the ease and speed with which a permit can be pulled for demolition of commercial, residential and other public structures (such as churches) without consideration of the age or historic nature of the structure.

For most of our history it has been the policy of this city to encourage growth by the tearing down our historic buildings and replacing with more modern structures. As a result we have little of our historical past around us to share with our children or visitors to our wonderful city.

Pressure since the Olympics and new pressure from the proposed beltline redevelopment make property within our city limits prime for development but this does NOT have to mean that it is prime for destruction.

Our current local ordinances and state laws place more power in the hands of property owners than in the rights of citizens and this city to preserve our history. We can all think of a small handful of cases where citizen involvement preserved an important structure (the Fox for one) but we can't even begin to count the number of historically significant structures we have lost except to history books because the existing ordinance makes it simply too easy to blow it and rebuild new.

It time for a change.

First I'd like to discuss with you some concerns I have with the existing ordinance 8-2076.1.

1 - There is no review process or background research on the existing structure required by the applicant or preformed by the City when a permit is requested on an older structure that would give the City or the UDC an opportunity to weigh the historical significance of a commercial or residential structure against the proposed redevelopment. This means there is no way for the city or citizens within the neighboring community to know about the soundness of the structure or potential for preservation and adaptive reuse rather than complete elimination.

Until this is a codified part of the process for obtaining a demolition permit, we will continue to see our history in rubble and our visitors looking at pictures of our past rather than experiencing it.

2 - In order to do so the current permitting fee is probably way too low to support any expansion of the processing or reviewing of demolition permits. I would encourage a restructure of this fee - perhaps to include a tiered approach (residential vs. commercial) so there is some flexibility and support for an expanded review process.

3 - Under the current ordinance it is simply too easy to obtain and renew permits with little or no review or oversight, regardless of the historical significance of the structure.

A troubling example of this is the ‘standing’ demolition permit on the Varsity. A City landmark by every sense of the word and yet not a protected building because the renewal process is essentially a ‘rubber stamp’ the renewal of the demolition permit on this important part of Atlanta’s history.

I encourage the involvement of the Atlanta Preservation Center, Atlanta Urban Design Commission, the NPU’s and the Beltline Neighbors Coalition’s Preservation Committee in the review and redesign of the demolition permit ordinance.

Now I’d like to specifically address the proposed ordinance.

First let me say, I think the ordinance should be drafted to specifically exclude properties that have already been designated as a public hazard and where the neighborhood supports the removal of the structure immediately – whether residential or commercial.

1 - That being said, the proposed legislation does not appear to include a posting public notification for commercial structures and yet these are the most at risk and least likely to have an advocate. The proposed ordinance should be expanded to require public notice for **all** structures, commercial, residential, statues, cemeteries, and other public building (churches for example).

2 - Under the current demolition permitting process there are no requirements that the structure be demolished immediately (except smaller structures), so permits are renewed and renewed again on structures that before had little historical significance but later become quite significant due to their age or use – the Varsity is an example of this. Or worse, the building is a hazard and continues to stand long after it should have been removed. The proposed ordinance should outline a timeframe for demolition included in the permitting process and a limited number of renewals permitted thereafter.

3 – Under the current ordinance there is no requirement that older structure – over 50 years of age, be treated any differently than newer or less significant structures

(warehouses, for instance). The City has no authority to withhold a permit unless some protection, like Landmark designation is proposed. This proposed ordinance should include the requirement that structures over 50 years old automatically have an historical review completed on the property and be included with the request for demolition permit.

4 - Finally, property owners should be required to consider other preservation options and adaptive-reuse for historic structures (those over 50 years old) that are not an imminent danger. This proposed ordinance should include an architectural review and opinion by UDC before a demolition permit is issued on structures on these older structures.

You might remember that recently the 100 year old Excelsior Mill (Masquerade) building was recently saved from a demolition permit only because a handful of concerned citizen, with the help of the UDC and the Atlanta Preservation Center beat the demolition application to the permitting desk by a matter of hours with a filing to request Landmark Designation. The original proposal called for the complete demolition of the Mill and the construction of a 120-foot high residential condo complex. Today a creative compromise saved the ENTIRE Mill (not just the façade or a small section), improved the overall project and allowed for cooperation with the owner of the adjacent property in a mutually beneficial way. A PERFECT example of how the process should work.

There are over 900 historic buildings along the Beltline alone that have been identified by the Atlanta Urban Design Commission in their Beltline Historic Resources Survey, and most of them are NOT protected by any historic or landmark designation. In my neighborhood alone we have the Ford Factory, The Telephone Factory and the Claremont Hotel and several other structures of historical importance along Ponce de Leon – none of which are protected.

I encourage this committee to work on a substantive review and revitalization of the existing demolition ordinance and propose a more comprehensive solution that will protect what the citizens of City of Atlanta value highly and are losing daily - our history.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this very important issue to our historic in-town neighborhoods.