

Eastgate Garden Civic Association General Meeting Minutes

Date and Time: 01/7/2019 at 6:30 pm

Participants: Tim Anderson, Pat Fluellen, Colleen Manley, Jonathon Tomko, Erin Eichel, Anthony Brown, Principal Wilson, Officer Rogers, Kate Curry De Souza (NEAC), Joe Weingart (President of the Woodland Assassination), Ken Laurie (NPA/Chief Operating Officer Orlean), Devon Palmowski (NPA/ABC Management), Ryan Cassell (Columbus Housing Network) and many Eastgate Residents (their names are listed on the meeting sign-in sheet)

Location: Eastgate Elementary School

Topics

- 1.) Officer Rogers updated us on Near East Crime stats. Car theft has gone down but the burglary rate has increased on the Near East Side. Officer Rogers said the police department is working on bringing this number down. He also reminded us that if we have any further questions about these stats, we can contact him at his email address arogers@columbuspolice.org or on the Nextdoor App.

Tasks In Progress:

- ☐ Reach out to the new Commanders at CPD and invite them to a future meeting.

- 2.) Ken Lurie, presented plans for the future of the Nelson Park Apartments. He explained how the housing authority has reported that the too many units exist on property (current total is 177 units comprised of 120 family units and 58 senior units). The management company's plan to resolve this issue was to tear down all the family units and convert to strictly to a 5-story building with 12 units each for senior housing only. However, Ken said the City blocked this plan because of the current affordable housing shortage. According to Ken they are trying to move forward with their contingency plan to renovating their existing buildings and convert the buildings from having 4 units per building into 3 units (approximately 900 square feet) per building.

However according to Ken, they believe the current rent that tenants are paying is below market and they can't start their renovations plans until they generate more money. They have submitted a proposal to HUD for a waiver to raise rent in order to afford the new construction. They are also filling out an application for 9% tax breaks, but this is on hold until HUD reconvenes following the shutdown. This has delayed construction to end of 2019, early 2020.

Numerous neighbors shared their concerns about the potential displacement of the Nelson Park Apartment Residents. Ken explained that any Nelson Park Apartment Resident facing displacement will receive a voucher to relocate anywhere within the HUD housing system, a relocation manager will help them with the transition process, and ABC management is legally required to cover their moving expenses. He added that the impacted residents will have the option to re-apply to return to Nelson Park when the construction is finished.

Principal Wilson voiced concerns of how these relocations will affect the academic year of any impacted affected students. Devon Palmowski explained how they will provide a special third-party relocation coordinator to work with Eastgate Elementary School to help any impacted student with transitioning to a new school.

Principal Wilson also asked if the management company has notified their residents about their redevelopment intentions. Ken advised that have only told the residents that they are reviewing the grounds. Devon added she didn't want to say anything to residents until they had more official plans ready to report. Principal Wilson suggested that they hold a meeting with their residents as soon as possible and advise them of their intentions.

Some neighbors voiced their concerns about the public safety issues associated with giving all Nelson Park Apartment Residents the opportunity to regain their residency. Some current residents have a engage in criminal activities. Devon advised that the residency return policy is a tiered system established by HUD and all residents wanting to return must re-apply and go through a criminal background check. Any felonies, violent and sexual crimes are automatically denied residency. Misdemeanors are viewed based on specific crime and time since the crime. Devon then went on to say that the site staff are trying to remain vigilant with removing the current criminal element from Nelson Park.

Furthermore, a neighbor asked if any plans exist for developing the remaining space that will be left over from the unit downsizing. Ken said they are open to suggestions but have no specific ideas on the table. A neighbor then asked if they have any plans for converting this remaining space into commercial space. Ken said he would be open to discussions if rezoning can happen. Kate Curry De Souza then advised the management company that they would have to go through the proper guidelines for rezoning such as presenting a more formalized and coherent plan for the Near East Area Commissioners and City Council to review.

Tasks In Progress:

☐ Continue to develop a community action plan to work with Nelson Park Apartment ownership to ensure future development is aligned with our neighborhood's needs and interests. In 60-90 days, Ken is to return with more concrete plans.

Potential Tasks:

☐ Help advocate for our Nelson Park Apartment Neighbors by making sure they have been notified of these development plans and are being connected to all their available resources (vouchers, relocation manager managers, moving expenses).

- 3.) Ryan Cassell made a very brief presentation on the Community Housing Network's plans for building a group home at 500 Nelson Road. The proposed plan is to build a 63-unit structure to house homeless individuals with mental and emotional disabilities

Tasks In Progress:

☐ The Community Housing Network has been asked to provide more details about their project at our February Association Meeting.
☐ Develop a community action plan to ensure that any future development is aligned with our neighborhood's needs and interests.

- 4.) Some of our neighbors expressed their concerns about the civic association not meeting their current neighborhood needs. For instance, one resident told us that within the last 6 months some Eastgate homes have become infested with rodents. They believe that litter is to blame and garbage cans/dumpsters in our area are not being properly secured with lids. They also discussed the concern with motorists speeding down our neighborhood streets. Additionally, this same resident expressed their frustrations with the street lights being outdated and having constant maintenance issues.

Tasks In Progress:

☐ Still trying to find volunteers to help with bringing back the monthly newsletter so we can inform the neighborhood better about what we are doing and what our improvement goals are.

Potential Tasks:

☐ Form a committee to start planning this year's spring clean-up and garden maintenance, especially now that Mary has resigned as our garden caretaker.
☐ Follow up with the city on how to do a traffic study and ways to slow traffic.
☐ Find out more concert details about when smart lighting will be installed in our neighborhood.

New Business

- Anthony Brown updated us on the Matters Laced Together project. Their first Book Club meeting will be at the MLK Library on 03/07/2019, at 6:30pm. They will be discussing the book, "Tigerland" by Wil Haygood. Check out the new Facebook page for more details: www.facebook.com/groups/276564966314623/
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Info on the next EGGCA meeting will be posted on social media.