

Old Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA)
8 March 2016

The OANA Board of Directors (BoD) came together at the Common Room of the Regency Apartments at our regular time and day, 4PM on the second Tuesday of the month. BoD members in attendance were Ted Siff, Charles Peveto, Paul Isham, Perry Horton, Bill Schnell, Michael Portman, Diana Zuniga, Blake Tollett and Austin Stowell.

Guests included Ted Eubanks and Roger Cauvin.

We began by unanimously adopting, on motion by Charles with Diana seconding, the February 2016 minutes.

As Diana had to leave early, we went off agenda and she spoke to us about an expected rezoning of property she holds at 602 West 7th Street and at 701 Rio Grande Street. The properties are currently zoned GO and the application will request DMU-60 in accordance with the Downtown Austin Plan/Northwest District (DAP/NWD). As a condition of OANA's support of the rezoning, her group is willing to prohibit certain uses such as bail bond services, a stand alone cocktail lounge, a pawn shop, a liquor/package store or an outdoors entertainment/amplified music use. Everyone seemed to be comfortable with the plans and we were thankful for the courtesy notice.

We then turned to Old Business, Current News and Action Items:

Over the last 36 months there has been an amazing transformation occurring at Wooldridge Square brought about by the infusion of \$350,000 of public monies and the initiation of a long term planning process. As the public stakeholder meetings that are integrated into the Master Plan for Wooldridge Square have progressed, there has been identified a need for an defining vision statement to base the report on. Is Wooldridge to function as a traditional park, or is the vision historical, that Wooldridge function as a civic square? Whatever the function, wouldn't this be the time to envision the space within its geographical context as a focus of the Northwest District (I.E.-our neighborhood). At this point, the stakeholders and Friends of Wooldridge Square (FOWS), PARD and the Daniel Woodroffe Group (DWG), the landscape architects, all agree that there needs to be a pause in the process and this defining vision formalized.

Our guest Ted Eubanks has extensive international experience in the development and rehabilitation of municipal squares and has shared with the OANA BoD and PARD the following comments:

“Charles, thanks for the note. Let me add a little perspective to what you have said. This visioning step should not take long. I think that most of the basic concepts have already been expressed. I appreciate what Robert has said, but I also understand the basic premise behind PARD wanting to ensure access to all of the square. There are reasonable solutions, and I believe that, with direction, DWG can do a wonderful job with the plan. Wooldridge is a square, a civic space, and not a park. As a civic space, it must be integrated into the social fabric that surrounds it. The Heman Sweatt Travis County Courthouse, Duncan Park, and the Austin History Center

are additional key components of an overarching cultural landscape. The fact that these parts have never been integrated only underscores the potential. For example, Shoal Creek Conservancy is interested in formally developing this cultural district in partnership with all of the other stakeholders in the area. One of the goals is to formally connect the Shoal Creek hike-and-bike trail to Duncan then Wooldridge via West 9th and/or West 10h. Since DWG is also under contract for the Duncan Park plan, I cannot imagine a better time to be looking at this larger landscape.”

Under such a holistic vision for Wooldridge Square, one of four public squares designated by Edwin Waller in the original plan for Austin, and the only one of the three remaining squares to remain relatively unaltered since its opening, the transformation of this civic space would be completed.

On motion from our Ted with Michael seconding, the BoD voted unanimously to embrace the draft vision Mr. Eubanks shared with us and we encouraged him to continue working with all the stakeholders to come to a consensus and move forward.

We then revisited OANA’s support of the political action group Ride Sharing Works that was organized earlier in the year to bring regulations of the Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) directly to the voters under a citizen’s initiated petition as opposed to going through the City Council process. Ride Sharing Works was formed as a coalition of organizations, but that coalition has fallen apart, our friend Mark Nathan has left his public relations position with them, and the effort is now basically under TNC financing and control. After extended discussion with special focus on the wording of the ballot that will be brought to the voters, and while OANA continues to support the concept of TNCs, at this time we have decided to rescind our January 2016 endorsement of Ride Sharing Works. This was a unanimous vote.

Blake then spoke to the BoD about the rezoning request by the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) going before the Planning Commission this evening. They are asking for DMU-120 for both 1204 San Antonio and 1205 Nueces Streets, and OANA is supporting City Staff’s recommendation of DMU-60, a position in line with the DAP/NWD. In addition we are asking for other conditions that prohibit uses we feel are detrimental to the neighborhood. Blake will attend the meeting and advocate for our position.

Michael first gave us a Treasurer’s report (we have just over \$4,900 in the bank but we need more members) and then gave us a progress report on how the OANA ad hoc committee idea is evolving. Apparently well. He will be sending to the BoD an executive summary with draft highlights that we can further discuss next month.

Ray was not able to join us so we had no Flood Mitigation Task Force updates. The City Council originally set a deadline for reporting back to them by early April, and although this may not be met, there has been substantial progress.

The BoD thanked Perry Horton for representing us at the meetings with the folks interested in the Butler Trail closure requests coming from the SXSW organizers. The festival organizers have scheduled after concert fireworks for three nights, and the displays will for safety reasons require

the trail to be closed along Auditorium Shores for an hour or so each of the three evenings. The concern is this sets precedence, so there is going to be some further discussions to come up with a policy to address these types of requests going forward. Perry will come up with some suggestions and we will discuss the issue at a future meeting to set a policy that we can advocate.

Under Committee Reports and Action Items:

Charles spoke to us briefly about the Preservation Austin event recently held at Wooldridge Square. The 200 or so folks on hand seemed to enjoy themselves.

Ted reported meeting with Travis County Commissioner Gerald Dougherty to discuss the next step in the Civil Courthouse expansion plan. The Commissioner expressed concern that even with creative thinking, the area just to the east of the current courthouse may not have the capacity to accomplish what is thought to be required to meet the demonstrated needs. OANA was encouraged to continue meeting with the County Judge and the complex's master planning team. As an aside, it was again reported that a group of private developers are considering making an offer for the County property on W. 4th Street, erecting a specifically designed building, and then long-term leasing the space to the County for courtrooms and administrative offices.

Turning to the proposed Bowie Street Underpass and the possibility of rehabilitating the W. 3rd Street railroad trestle over Shoal Creek for pedestrians and bicycles, it appears that both projects are still alive. Paul reports that the agreement between the City and the Union Pacific has still to be formalized but that he and Ted will continue to monitor the situation. There continues also to be room to discuss the possibility of expanding the TIF so that the monies being sequestered for transportation improvements in the district could be steered towards the trestle rehabilitation to improve connectivity between the Butler Trail and the bikeway. This also might be a way to do some work on the Shoal Creek Trail between from W. 2nd and W. 4th Streets.

Having reached 5:30, we adjourned. Because of scheduling conflicts, our next meeting will be on the first Tuesday in April, the 5th, rather than the second Tuesday.

Blake Tollett-Secretary
OANA