

Old Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
3 June 2014

The Board of Directors (BoD) of OANA came together for our rescheduled monthly meeting on the first Tuesday of the month beginning at 4 PM in the Common Room of the Regency Apartments. Members in attendance included Perry Lorenz, Bill Schnell, Ted Siff, Paul Isham, Ray Canfield, John Horton, Charles Peveto, Michael Portman and Blake Tollett. Albert Stowell and Richard Hardin had sent their regrets.

As we had no guests our first order of business was the approval of the revised minutes. On motion by John seconded by Charles the minutes were so approved and Bill was instructed to post them on our website.

Current News and Action Items was tabled and we proceeded to Committee Reports:

Under Financial, Ted tells us that Albert reports we have around 4 thousand in the bank.

Under Government Relations, John didn't have anything specific for us but did note that there is no longer bus service on Congress Avenue with the buses being diverted to Guadalupe and Lavaca Streets. We discussed the new boardwalk installed on Lady Bird Lake and how it truly will function as not only a continuation of the hike and bike trail but also serve a transportation connection function. The proposed bond election for a new rail system is coming in November with final language due in mid August. Our discussion turned ambitious at this point and we contemplated Austin having a true underground system. Perry told that the digging of the tunnels is surprisingly not that expensive but rather placing stations along the route is where you get cost run ups. The limestone that Austin rests on is ideal for the modern tunneling machines and of course an underground does not take up any surface or street areas.

We then discussed the recent (to Austin) phenomena of Transportation Networking Companies (TNCs), or ride sharing programs, such as Uber and Lyft. These companies use social media to facilitate the connecting of folks needing automobile transportation with private individuals who have agreed to make available and drive their automobiles to meet this need. The TNCs are the paid intermediaries in these transactions and assume a basic level of screening of the for hire drivers and automobiles, usually relying on social media to evaluate the performance of the individual parties. This would appear to be very close to a traditional taxi business model without the governmental licensing and oversight. This has caused some concern amongst interested parties and the City Council is asking for discussions to try and find a way to level the playing field between the two business models. Members of the OANA BoD discussed Austin's current level of taxi service, a service that may be inadequate especially during the many special events hosted by the City, and their experience with using TNCs in other cities. In Austin it was generally agreed that the taxi service, a City regulated monopoly, had substantial room for improvement and that some judiciously allowed competition might initiate an elevated level of consumer satisfaction.

We then briefly touched on the upcoming City's budget discussions that begin in August. An interesting number reported by the Austin Monitor (once known as InFactDaily) is that of the

City's general budget, the Council is being asked to allocate 42% of the monies to the Austin Police Department (APD). The proposed APD budget does not include new funding for non-uniform positions such as 911 operations, arguably an important function of the Department.

We then went to Marketing. Bill reports that it is time for our summer edition of the electronic newsletter. One suggestion for content would be the ongoing and proposed very dense projects on the edges of our neighborhood such as Aspen Heights at W. 8th Street and Nueces and the Riverside project at W. 5th Street and West Avenue. Bill envisions a publication date of mid to late month to coincide with the beginning of summer.

Under Membership, Michael is still seeking a logo that incorporates a QR Code. The QR Code would direct those scanning it to our website, all very 21st century and social media savvy.

Under Planning and Zoning, the Outdoor Music Permit (OMP) allocated to the Allan House at 1102 San Antonio Street is up for renewal. Ted reports that Don Pitts with the City has confirmed that renewal will not be issued in contradiction to the original OMP, in this case a reduction from the standard allowable 85 decibels to 75 decibels.

We then very briefly discussed the upcoming Council resolution to relax the requirements currently imposed on Accessory Dwelling Units or "Granny flats" in single-family neighborhoods. We did discuss how the rolling of our neighborhood from single use commercial to mixed residential and commercial would in some instances not allow needed latitude in encouraging more residential retrofitting of properties. For example, it was noted that our neighborhood is now under the compatibility requirements of the McMansion ordinance. A property with a residential use Certificate of Occupancy (CO) before the enactment of the ordinance in 2006 would be grandfathered from the requirements of the ordinance. The conversion of an existing building on a property from commercial use CO to residential use CO today can place the building outside the ordinance's maximum building parameters thus necessitating a variance from the Land Development Code. The City is looking at ways to make adjustments so that existing properties that received commercial or residential COs prior to the enactment of the McMansion ordinance would be able to convert to or remain as residential uses.

We then left the agenda to discuss the demolition permit being sought at 908 Nueces. It was generally agreed the current structure has no redeeming historical value and there are no heritage trees on site. There is a private restrictive covenant from 2007 on the property restricting it to DMU with 120 feet of developmental height but the proposed project fits under those restrictions as the new owner, Western States Housing, plans to do a 30 unit four story condominium project on the site. On motion, and anticipating that City Staff recommends the release of the demolition permit, the OANA BoD voted unanimously to not oppose the request and Ted was tasked with the writing to the City's Historic Landmark Commission of our decision in time for its meeting on 23 June.

Under Parks, Open Spaces and Trails, Charles reported that the process of having the W. 6th Street bridge over Shoal Creek listed on the National Register progresses. The Friends group will

have a general clean up gathering along with some Shoal Creek Conservancy (SCC) folks this coming Saturday the 7th.

Ted reports that the SCC has received a three-year commitment of \$25,000 per year from the developers of the Riverside project at W. 5th and West Avenue. These funds are in addition to the funds already going to the rehabilitation of the creek that have been spun off this project.

Charles then updated us on the goings on at Wooldridge Park. That Friends group is going forward with an action plan for the park to continue its ongoing transformation. It is still anticipated that there should be some monies earmarked for the park as a community benefit from the development of the nearby Aspen Heights project. The on-site food trailer seems to be doing well and patronage is encouraged.

The only announcement concerned a forum sponsored by the Downtown Austin Alliance focused on the Economic Value of Downtown on June 19th.

Our next meeting was set for the second Tuesday in July, the 8th, and we adjourned.

Blake Tollett-OANA  
Secretary