

**Greensboro Neighborhood Congress (GNC)
Meeting Notes
Saturday, November 9, 2013**



GNC Co-Chairperson Susan Taaffe convened the **November 2013** GNC meeting at the Central Public Library beginning with our traditional introduction of all participants and presentations by guest speakers.

Guest speaker:

Barbara Harris, our new City of Greensboro Director of Neighborhood Development in the City Planning & Development Department, described her responsibilities and answered questions about city assistance to neighborhoods. Functional areas of the new Neighborhood Development Department include:

Grants and Finance – managing federal housing rehabilitation funds received annually, home buyer counseling, services to homeless populations, job creation through housing improvement projects, and writing annual and 5-year plans required to receive federal Housing & Urban Development (HUD) funds.

Housing Services – increasing affordable housing for low and moderate income families, senior housing, housing for the disabled, and improving energy efficiency in existing housing.

Housing Loans – loans to rehabilitate housing to acceptable standards, lead paint remediation grants, helping landlords improve rental housing, and minor home repair grants for private homeowners.

Code Compliance –enforcement of zoning, signage, junk/abandoned vehicles, nuisance concerns and support of minimum housing standards.

Housing Code Inspection – Any individual can initiate a housing inspection by phone or e-mail, simply indicating there are violations of the minimum housing code at a specific address. An inspector will arrange to inspect within 48 hours and determine if there are housing violations. Hearings are held with property owners who then receive 30 days to comply. Situations of non-compliance are heard monthly by the Minimum Housing Commission. Ninety day extensions are granted if progress is obvious.

Members of the Minimum Housing Commission and housing inspection staff have recently been retrained to hold more effective hearings. Case numbers have tripled.

A new public education campaign aims to increase homeowner and tenant awareness of safe housing rights and responsibilities. The City is working to update Code Enforcement procedures and systems to make it easier to track housing cases online.

It was observed that “there’s been a sea change in these efforts since Mrs. Harris is in charge” of city housing and neighborhood development concerns.

Glenwood Neighborhood leaders have become very effective in reporting minimum housing issues. To ask about City services for your neighborhood, contact 336-373-2144 or simply call 373-CITY and ask for the Neighborhood Development Department.

Donna Newton praised GNC Co-chairpersons and Committees who remain effective and committed to continuing GNC service as Donna transitions Feb 1, 2014 away from her work as Building Stronger Neighborhoods Liaison, Advisor to the GNC, and Director of the Guilford Nonprofit Consortium. Donna has not yet finalized her plans subsequent to February 1 but will inform the GNC as soon as she is sure what her next role will be.

Donna Gray, Community Relations Manager of the City of Greensboro, will maintain the city-wide list of neighborhoods and will help neighborhoods organize. GNC Co-Chairs will manage the GNC listserv. Our website continues at www.gnnc-nc.org or www.GreensboroNeighborhoodCongress.org.

Several GNC members recently were elected to City Council including Abuzuater, Hoffman, Hightower and Fox.

Committee Reports:

Issues & Bylaws – Marsh Prause reviewed recent I&B Committee efforts. The GNC approved a motion for the GNC to support proposed provisions relating to Community Gardens -- requiring a Special Use Permit if Community Gardens are larger than 1 acre or contain more than 15 subplots – and for the GNC to take no position on proposed provisions for urban farms.

Another motion was approved to support the concept that new home construction should be no closer to the street than the average distance from the street of four directly adjacent houses (two on each side of the new construction) and that communication with adjacent homeowners be required prior to construction.

The Westridge Neighborhood has a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) with similar requirements that have proven helpful. Prause also reported that the City will ask the NC Utilities Commission to make utility companies clean up or remove vegetation cut during vegetative management.

Membership – Peter Kauber recommended and the GNC approved a new member, **Knottingham Forest Homeowner’s Association** comprised of 10 homes.

Treasurer – It was noted that Jack Zimmerman continues excellent work and financial audits are performed annually at his request.

Announcements –

- GNC annual elections will be early in 2014. The GNC maintains strong liaisons with City Council so prepare to volunteer for any unfilled GNC committee positions.
- Our website will be updated with contacts for Cooperative Extension services, Police Dept. Community Watch, and City Housing/Code enforcement contacts.
- Renaissance Co-op meetings continue.
- Glenwood is engaged with UNCG’s expansion for a new 6-story recreation center.
- Contact Membership Co-Chairpersons **Peter Kauber 852-8791** or **Sadie Blue 988-5009** if you want them to attend your neighborhood holiday events to promote the GNC.
- The **next GNC meeting is** our annual holiday dinner **Thursday, December 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Greensboro Children’s Museum at 220 Church Street** across from the central Public Library. Please contact **Susan Taaffe 336-404-6748** to volunteer event coordination and food services.

(Update : The GNC Executive Committee is generously providing our **Thursday December 12** holiday meal. All other participants are invited to bring desserts to share.)

Respectfully submitted by Ann Stringfield of the Fisher Park Neighborhood, November 14, 2013.