

Asylum Hill Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Summary of the March 11, 2021 Meeting

In attendance:

Lynn Johnson, Michelle McFarland, Sarah Morin, Autumn Florek, Paul O'Mara, Yvonne Matthews, Caroline Austin, Jackie McKinney, Janine McMahon, Luisa Barton-Duguay, Ken Johnson, Bernie Michel, David MacDonald, Ted Carroll.

Absent: Michael Barr, Esther Gonzalez-Torres, S. "Viji" Vijayalaksmi

Welcome and Introductions:

After chairman Ted Carroll welcomed and thanked people for participating, each member introduced themselves and indicated their reason for joining this committee.

Committee purpose:

To support and guide the development of the Asylum Hill neighborhood's strategic plan so that a diverse array of residents and other stakeholders can work collaboratively to:

- Determine where we want to go as a neighborhood
- Identify key goals and priority projects for 2021 – 2025
- Participate in and support more deeply the work of AHNA
- Map organizational changes and new partnerships to oversee/implement the plan

To accomplish this work, the Steering Committee will likely meet 2 – 3 additional times over the next 6- 7 months. Noting that the planning process may not have as much staff support as needed due to funding constraints, Ted solicited volunteers and several stepped up. Bernie agreed to serve as the "Zoom-meister" and Michelle as the scribe for at least this first meeting. Autumn will be our link to data. Sarah will assist in the publication of our final report.

Norms for working together:

Drawing on both positive and negative group experiences, committee members suggested that we remember to do the following:

- Ensure that everyone participates
- Listen to and respect one another
- Remember our mission
- Establish a "drop box" where we can all store and view shared documents
- Use smaller groups if necessary to drill deeper into issues
- Take a few minutes at the beginning of our meeting to check in with one another as a way of spurring a greater sense of community
- Be sure to take stock of what's working and what's not working at various points in our process

Ted asked that we give more thought to this question and that we add to or clarify these norms as we go along.

Formation of Task Forces:

Most of the work will be done by Task Forces that will be organized to address the eight issue groups established by the AHNA board of directors. Those Task Forces and their chairs, along with candidates suggested at the meeting, are attached to these minutes. The chairs were asked to reach out to candidates over the next two-week period and to hold their first meetings by mid-April.

Planning Schedule:

Ted outlined the overall planning process as follows:

January 30	meeting of the AHNA board - <i>done</i>
February	identify and recruit committee members - <i>done</i> Plan for first meeting - <i>done</i>
March	first meeting of the committee - <i>done</i> Organization of task forces – <i>in process</i>
April	first meeting of task forces
May	second meeting of task forces
June	second meeting of the committee to receive, review and prioritize task force's recommendations
July	AHNA board receives and discusses draft recommendations
Summer	special meeting(s) of AHNA membership to receive and discuss draft recommendations
September	committee to finalize recommendations and draft report
October	board meets to finalize report

Final thoughts:

Committee members felt good about the enthusiastic participation of so many people and of the substantial progress made. David and Bernie offered their support in any way they could as chairs did their outreach. Ted agreed to reach out to three members of the group who were not able to attend this meeting to ensure that they are still interested and, if so, to catch them up.

Asylum Hill's Strategic Planning Task Forces

(1) Economic Development – Wayne Benjamin

Issues:

- Transit-oriented development (TOD) @ Union Station and at CT Fast Track Hawthorne site
- Continue traffic calming efforts
- Examine effectiveness of current grid plan and modify as needed
- Work with FAA to improve Farmington Ave. streetscape, storefront signage, street lighting
- Attract new businesses i.e. Aetna/CVS pharmacy?
- Promote small businesses (building off AH Neighborhood Guide)
- Employer incentives to buy homes in neighborhood (to work with Housing TF and NINA)
- Key development opportunities: Comet restoration, 185 (or 285?) Sigourney, former Hastings Hotel/Aetna training center, Hawthorn North (to work with Housing TF and NINA)
- Remediation of Hawthorne South (to work with Green TF)
- Expand the Business Improvement District to include more of AH

Partial List of Potential Members: reps from local colleges and universities, HEDCO, CRDA, Chamber, and BID. Others could be Glenn Davis of Liberty Bank, Michael Schifton? (commercial property owner?), David Hopkins of Urban League and Toni Gold, an economic development consultant.

(2) Environment – Lynn Johnson

Issues:

- Increase tree canopy using native species –
- target Park River North Watershed
- Work with City to ensure use of environmentally friendly materials/processes in new construction and renovation projects
- Share information with residents on how best to conserve energy
- Discourage new paved lots
- Sponsor clean-up projects
- Remediation of Hawthorne South (to work with Econ. Dev. TF)
- Green transportation e.g. electric charging stations

Partial List of Potential Members: note – Lynn has already reached out to numerous people, gotten commitments from many and has scheduled her first meeting on April 14.

(3) Youth Enrichment/Education – Michelle McFarland

Issues:

- Work with local employers, churches, and colleges to Identify and help recruit volunteers for well-established mentoring and tutoring programs
- Develop strategies to connect AH residents to library services

Partial List of Potential Members: Troy Stewart of the City, church leaders Gary Lee (Mount Olive) and Jordan Rebholz (AHCC), NP leaders Enid Rey (OPP), Joe Bumpers (Boys and Girls Club), Cathy Zeiner (YWCA), Cheryl Oliver (Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative), Kyrinda Richardson?, reps from The Village, Wheeler, Spring Street, etc.

(4) Housing, Historic Preservation and Blight Remediation – Ken Johnson

Issues:

- Increase supply of market-rate and affordable housing
- Prevent creation of any additional restricted deed housing
- Assist landlords committed to taking care of their rental properties
- Educate tenants and advocate for their rights
- Stop demolition of historic properties and work to restore them
- Secure City adoption of AHNA's Zoning and Land Use plans

Partial List of Potential Members: Frank Hagaman, Jonathan Clark, Gustavo ?, Calvin Richardson, Horizon Management or other landlord, tenants

(5) Arts & Culture – Jackie McKinney

Issues:

- Promote AH as an Arts & Cultural Hub with an emphasis on the Farmington Ave. Corridor (Art Space to the east and the Stowe Center, Twain House, Hartbeat Ensemble to the west)
- Establish outreach efforts to connect residents to art and music opportunities
- Reclaim Sigourney Park as a venue for performances and cultural celebrations
- Continue South Marshall block parties

Partial List of Potential Members: reps from Stowe (Quoran?) and Twain, Godfrey Simmons of Hartbeat, Shelly Best of 224, Thulani Davis of Spectrum in Motion, Ann Cubberly, George Kinsley

(6) Human Services - Esther Gonzalez-Torres

Issues:

- Strengthen collaborations among non-profit service providers
- Ensure residents are well informed of available services
- Support new programs aimed at addressing food insecurity, substance abuse, and health care

Partial List of Potential Members: Ted to work with Esther who could not make this meeting

(7) Public Safety – Janine McMahon

Issues:

Increase police visibility i.e. reinstate CSO, reactivate police sub-station, etc.)

Deploy more cameras and other crime-fighting technology

Build stronger police-community relations through establishment of block watches, community events, etc.

Continue addressing panhandling problems (work with Econ. Dev. TF)

Partial List of Potential Members: Officer Palmieri, Alexis Dwyer, neighbors, small business owner and others interested in block club organizing, corporate security from The Hartford

(8) Employment – Yvonne Matthews

- Connecting employer needs with resident skills (to work with Econ. Dev. TF, SINA and Chamber)
- Connect residents with job-training/adult education programs
- Connecting employer needs with resident skills (to work with Employment TF, SINA and Chamber)
- Working Cities

Partial List of Potential Members: reps from Capital Workforce, Chamber, United Way, The Hartford, neighborhood job developers and training programs, temporary employment agencies

