

Minutes  
Cottontown Board of Directors  
Special Called Meeting  
Thursday, June 26, 2008  
6:30 p.m.

Members Present Paul Bouknight, Ellen Cooper, Carol Latimer Finethy, Tom Walters, Rusty Sox

Members Absent Amy Herin, Doug Aylard, Josh McDuffie, Patrick Thiele, Mary Broadwater

Guests Cathy Novinger, Chair, Midlands Housing Alliance; Sam Davis, City Councilman

Call to Order President Paul Bouknight called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Purpose of Special Meeting Mr. Bouknight explained the purpose of the special meeting is to hear from the Midlands Housing Alliance, which is purchasing the Salvation Army site and intends to operate a service center and shelter for the homeless.

Ms. Novinger introduced herself. MHA has received a \$5 million grant from the Knight Foundation to address homelessness in the midlands. It chose the Salvation Army site because it was already appropriately zoned. She said her organization is not currently in a cooperative relationship with Christ Central Ministries. The MHA's next steps are to continue to assess the feasibility of its proposed programs and to bring stakeholders, like Cottontown, to the table.

Mr. Davis expressed concern that, if MHA opens its shelter and Christ Central Ministries opened another center for the homeless across the street, there would be too much concentration of the homeless for this area.

Mr. Bouknight noted that the special zoning exception granted to the Salvation Army for that site in 1999 limits the operator to 65 overnight rooms sheltering a maximum of 260 people per night. He asked Ms. Novinger what her organization plans to do if the demand for their services exceed the current limits of the special exception.

Ms. Novinger said the MHA has no plans for expanding the program beyond what the current special exception allows. She

also noted that they are in discussions with the Columbia Police Department about adding foot patrols in impacted neighborhoods. She expressed a need for stronger ordinances and enforcement regarding loitering, littering, sleeping in public, etc.

Mr. Davis commented that neighborhood concerns are not unfounded, and are based on their previous experiences with negative impacts from shelters located too close to neighborhoods. He agreed that the city needs to look at the ordinances Ms. Novinger mentioned.

Ms. Novinger said the MHA needs the support of neighborhoods to make this venture succeed. She said that funds from the United Way and other grants will fund continuing operations at the site. She reiterated that the MHA will not collaborate with Christ Central Ministries. The MHA used the 501-c-3 status of the former South Carolina Cares organization.

Mr. Davis urged Ms. Novinger and her board to meet with other impacted neighborhoods: Elmwood Park, Earlewood, Arsenal Hill, and others.

Ms. Novinger said the MHA wants neighborhood representatives to serve on their boards. She said her organization is ready to hear from neighborhoods on ways they feel would lessen the negative impact. She suggested an MHA board meeting with neighborhood representatives.

Mr. Davis suggested that the neighborhoods meet together to define a common list of issues and concerns to take to the MHA board.

Ms. Finethy expressed a desire for a formal presentation for neighborhoods about the planned facility and programs.

Ms. Novinger departed the meeting at 7:45 p.m., asking that the neighborhood organize a group of people to attend a MHA board meeting. Mr. Davis departed shortly thereafter.

There was further discussion. Ms. Cooper suggested that every board member present write down questions/concerns/issues as a starting point for talking with the MHA.

Adjourn

There was no other business. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.