



CLEARWATER NEIGHBORHOODS COALITION

Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition – Meeting April 1st, 2024

Bill Jonson – President

Annette Pardue– Vice President

Rudy Michalek – Treasurer

Chelsea Gird - Secretary

26 people were present at the meeting.

The April 1st meeting of the Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition was held over Zoom. Notable speakers included Newly Elected Mayor Bruce Rector, Assistant City Manager Dan Slaughter, and neighborhoods coordinator Samantha Moullet.

Bill Jonson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and went around the room, asking attendees to introduce themselves and their neighborhood.

Then he introduced Bruce Rector- Clearwater's newly Elected Mayor.

Bruce began by thanking everyone who helped get him elected and then gave reassurances that he wanted to work with and help everyone toward the forward progress for the good of Clearwater and Clearwater residents. He also expressed his desire to work with the CNC and said he wants to work closely with Neighborhoods. He considers us all as a team and firmly believes that we can all pull together to work as a team and accomplish the goals of a greater Clearwater. He also expressed his wish to be a very accessible Mayor and be available to all community members.

Bill thanked Bruce for his time and introduced the next speaker, Dan Slaughter, Assistant Manager for the City of Clearwater.

Dan gave an update on the Duke Energy Tree situation happening around Clearwater in which seemingly healthy trees are being removed. He explained how the city had created an internal Policy regarding the trees, they have every intention of saving as many trees as possible unless they are in very bad shape and just cannot be saved. There are a lot of parts to this they are contracting a Palm tree trimmer to trim the palm trees on the city easements. They are also creating a tree steward program for neighborhoods. Planting a tree program for those residents willing to be responsible for

that tree, this would even include training on how to take care of the tree. They are also working on finding a new Tree Survey company that will take regular assessments of all the trees in Clearwater and do what is needed to plant new ones and keep the ones healthy that are there and give an idea of the longevity of the particular trees.

Dan reminded us of Arbor Day on April 27th, 8 a.m.- 1 p.m. Until supplies last, they are giving away two trees for every household.

That said, Duke has easements, and the city has no jurisdiction to stop them from cutting the trees down on them. Duke's higher-ups have not been very helpful, but the city continues to contact them regarding this issue to get some agreements in place.

Bill thanked Dan for all his help with this issue and the update. Next, Bill told us that Glenna Wentworth, who was scheduled to give us some successful actions in her neighborhood, could not make it. Neither was a police representative due to a scheduling conflict.

Bill then introduced Samantha Moullet – the City of Clearwater Neighborhood Manager.

Samantha gave information about a grant program being offered to non-profits in the area. This could greatly benefit neighborhoods with nonprofit status and other nonprofits in Clearwater working on a project that will forward Clearwater's Sustainability 4.0 agenda. The city is looking for the letter of interest no later than April 30th; we have a grant writer, so we need the letter of intent.

Samantha also recommended that all community leaders sign up for the free online webinar regarding disaster Response on May 20th between 1 pm and 4 pm.

She suggested a workshop called Continuum of Care, which has valuable data on how to help people in your neighborhood who need help, such as elderly or handicapped people. This workshop provides resources that can be offered to them.

Also, an ADU online webinar will be held on April 2nd at 6 p.m. You must register for it.

Bill Thanked Samantha for all her input and talked about the success of Neighborhoods Day and how well it all went.

Bill then asked if the Secretary had anything.

Chelsea Gird, CNC secretary, said the minutes had been submitted and would be posted on the website.

Rudy Michalak – CNC Treasurer, also stated that Treasurer reports would be on the website.

David Lillesand – reported on a meeting between CNC President Bill Jonson and CNC General Counsel David Lillesand and Jay Daigneault, the private attorney representing Clearwater’s Community Development Board (CDB) in quasi-judicial.

Regardless of the neighborhood’s opposition to a particular project, the CDB is limited by law to accepting as “competent, substantial evidence” only that of expert witnesses speaking within their educated fields. The statements of common citizens are not competent evidence upon which the Board could use to rule against a developer.

A state statute may have changed that 50-year evidence rule. Mr. Daigneault would not give David or Bill his legal opinion on the issue. Thus, when a project is before the CDB for a ruling that it meets the requirements of the City’s land use code, it does not matter that 2,000 lay persons in the community testify to their vehement opposition to the project. If the developer presents “competent, substantial evidence” from one or two highly paid expert witnesses, the developer wins every time unless the neighborhood opposed to the project hires an attorney and an expert witness to appear at a cost of \$50,000 to \$100,000 to present testimony and prove the developer’s proposal violates the Code via a neighborhood-paid expert witness. The CDB quasi-judicial hearing is not a popularity contest; it is a legal proceeding subject to the evidence rules of competent, substantial evidence standards which at the current time, requires expert witness testimony.

The CNC’s 88-page report called **“Leveling the Playing Field – Final Report of the CNC Land Use Conflict Resolution Committee”** – completed over 14 months of CNC monthly meeting, reviewing 4,799 pages of materials on alternatives to Clearwater’s quasi-judicial system, is available on the CNC website.

Bill adjourned the meeting at 8:38pm