

**Minutes of the General Monthly Meeting of SBIC
Tuesday, March 6th, 2007
Olive Branch United Methodist Church**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Jim Salvucci at 7:37 PM. President Marci DeVries could not be here, so Jim's main purpose as VP is being fulfilled. The new secretary Jocelyn Rodgers was introduced.

BUSINESS MEETING

The January 2nd minutes were read. Kathy Hodson noted that Al Hodson should instead be Al Evans. Since there were no other objections to the minutes, the minutes passed. The February 6th minutes were read and there were no comments or objections, so the minutes were accepted.

Erika Haws, the treasurer, was not present so there was no treasurer's report.

SPEAKERS

Jayson Gordneer from the office of Stephanie Rawlings Blake, the City Council President, spoke first. He is a community outreach liaison for the South, Southwest, and West districts. His job is to inform council members of issues and concerns in community, and he hopes to learn from the communities what those issues are and also what helps communities thrive.

One of his motivators is concerns about Baltimore and its lack of diversity. He is a fan of looking for grants for nonprofit programs, and he plans to attend many of the community association meetings. He made sheets available for community complaints, issues, or concerns.

City Councilman Ed Reisinger also spoke. He thanked the SBIC members who have worked to deal with problem tenants in the neighborhood. Be sure to report any crimes.

He noted that there was a midterm budget meeting last night at City Hall, and they discussed spending \$17-25 million more on police overtime. Overtime has been dropping, and we need more police on the streets. He also suggested getting state money towards community policing initiatives as a measure successful in other locations.

The 2007 City budget (ending in July) has a significant surplus. Reisinger would like to cut property tax rates by more than \$0.02 for 2008. For every 2 cents off the tax rate, the City loses \$4.6 million in revenue. Given that over the past few years the city has had a \$40-\$70 million dollar surplus, it is time to cut property tax rates further. He asked the community to initiate a campaign to city politicians through email and mail to get votes.

Councilman Reisinger then answered several questions:

Question: The full appreciation on houses seems to be one of the problems for property taxes. If they want young people to keep coming to city, then the city needs to work on that.

Answer: The city only controls the property tax rate, not the assessments.

Question: A Sun article mentioned that Baltimore City had a higher concentration of tax exempt properties than anywhere else in Maryland. How does this impact taxes?

Answer: Many hospitals honor an agreement to pay taxes. Mayor Dixon wants to tax nonprofits at some rate and has a task force on changing the tax structure.

Question: (from Al Evans) The Liquor Advisory Committee is trying to set up meeting with Councilman Kraft to talk about the poker machine bill introduced for the beverage association.

Answer: Reisinger will talk with Kraft about doing a meeting. Any amendments will have to come through City Council.

Question: What about the armed robberies in the business district?

Answer: Armed robberies have been a problem on the whole peninsula. E-mails from community leaders have resulted in 10 more officers in Cherry Hill. Continue sending e-mail asking for more police to combat the robberies and auto larcenies.

Question: What can be done about the parking burden linked with redevelopment?

Answer: Any development that passes through the Land Use Committee has 1.5-2 spaces per unit. Reisinger negotiated the hour of free parking at the garage to reduce the pressure, and he has been having discussions with Main Street.

Suggestion: Some of the budget surplus could be used for more staff in the recreation centers. Marie is amazed at what the two staffers at Ella Bailey Rec Center can accomplish with so few resources.

Question: What about parking enforcement? Many cars around here park for well over 2 hours without a permit.

Answer: There has been discussion of going to a 0 hour parking time limit, but these time limits mean nothing without enforcement. The parking authority is looking at a new system which scans plates to see if there is a permit. Inviting someone from the parking authority to a meeting might be a good idea.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Sanitation & Beautification (Patrick Mutch) The February cleanup went well, and the student volunteers and the volunteers from the shelter were a great help. Steve volunteering his truck during cleanups really helps make the neighborhood cleanups succeed. Perhaps Jayson could look into this as a general community idea. The March 24th cleanup will target the 1500-1600 block of Light Street. Please volunteer!

There is a lot of discussion of affordable housing in the City. Get involved if you're interested.

Parking (Donnie Fair) Donnie asked for issues to raise with the Parking Authority through the Community Advisory Board. Donnie is currently trying to convert the island of Area A within Area 30 into Area 30. Speak up if you notice anything illegal going on with parking such as renting out spots to friends on game days.

Police/Community Relations (Sharron McCulloch) The next Third Thursday meeting is 3/15 at 7 PM at the Southern District. Colonel Douglas Deleaver of the transit police and someone from the South Baltimore Learning Center will be speaking. On 5/17 City Council President Stephanie Rawlings Blake will be at the meeting.

The next COP (Citizens On Patrol) walks are 3/21 at Riverside Park and 4/5 and 5/8.

In February there were 9 larcenies, 2 house burglaries, and 2 robberies. Many have been in the Barney Street area which is dark; please turn on your front lights. Larceny from auto is still a problem in the area; keep stuff out of sight.

When calling 911 about repeat problem locations, make sure to give an address so that they can be found in the 911 database. If you say you want to be anonymous, the computer erases your number. Share information about problems you've been having with the community so that the whole picture is clear. Ask the police officer to check around the general area when they respond.

Newsletter Editor/Business Liaison (Julie Tice) Newsletter submissions will be due the 15th of each month; articles are welcome. Advertising sales are going well. We will be holding a labeling party each month on a floating date; this makes the task go quickly.

We are looking for a volunteer to drop off the labeled newsletters downtown. It takes two hours and the bulk mailing center hours are work-friendly.

Social (Ugur Erickson) Ugur sent her update through Donnie Fair. The next social is Monday March 12th at Rub at 7:30 PM with discounted food and drinks. Want to help organize socials?

Youth Council (Marie Sennett) Please volunteer Thursdays at 7 PM at the Ella Bailey Rec Center. Currently the kids are planning their service learning projects. During Spring Break on 4/12, the kids want to go to work with someone. The age range is 13-17, and volunteers are wanted!

Design Review Committee (Steve Zaleskiwicz) Jake Rupert of Rupert Homes is building where the Gas station was across from Cross St. The committee had previously reviewed their plans, but now they need a setback variance on the rear yard from 30 feet down to 5 feet. They are revising plans and will share them with the Design Review Committee.

On the subject of taxes, there is a construction tax credit for complete renovations. You must sign up within 90 days of purchase and follow up each year.

If you notice construction work without permits, call 311 and get a confirmation number. Talk to Steve if you do not get a response.

Liquor Advisory Committee (Al Evans) If anyone is interested in joining the committee, let Al know.

NEW BUSINESS

Grants (Donnie Fair) Donnie and Erika are applying for a grant for the sitting parking at Light and Heath for \$5-10k to redo a park. The grant process is time-consuming, essentially requiring a full business plan. If you want to help with the grant to transform the park from a mudhole, contact Donnie.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Rodgers
Secretary