

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2013 - *Final*

Attending: JT Neuffer, Chair; April Stoltz; Karen Kuramoto; Joe Lobo; Nahida Farunia; Barbara Schwartz; Melissa Garrett, Community Relations Specialist. A quorum was present.

Ayman Alkayali attended at the invitation of April Stoltz. He is a potential member of the Commission. Ayman owns the Algebra Tea House on Murray Hill Rd, and is a resident of Lakewood.

Absent: Chris Varano; Paula Maeder Conner; Veronica Youngblood; Dan Saracina; Monique Smith, City Council Liaison

Community Conversation: Much of the meeting was devoted to discussion of ideas for the Community Conversation (Comm Conv) scheduled for November. April, Joe, Karen and Barbara have volunteered to be a working group to plan the Comm. Conv. April, having learned of problems relating to absentee landlords, proposed that as a topic. People think of moving out of Lakewood because of problems with neglected properties and tenant problems. People don't always know what the city can do about such problems, e.g.: if police must be called more than three times the landlord starts being billed for the calls. Karen was concerned that such a discussion will generate a good deal of anger over fair housing issues, section 8, Eden, landlords refusing to rent to immigrants, and felt that would be a difficult topic in that forum. Block watches have tried to address some concerns, and Lakewood Alive has done housing outreach. April felt that it could address more than fair housing problems. She suggested a panel and collaboration with Lakewood Alive, someone from the landlord training program, etc. to let people know what is being done. A major concern about this topic is that it could become a very political issue, and would take a good deal more time to investigate the need, and to prepare for a helpful discussion.

Joe suggested a better topic for November would be collaborating with Ranger 360, because the timing would be better and the partnerships are in place. The focus of the Ranger 360 grant is what we can do to encourage safe relationships. Our Comm Conv could help spread the information to the larger community.

JT asked if these topics fit the purpose of our Comm. Conv. – to educate and make aware.

Ayman said that it was important to uplift people and do things that inspire hope. He used as an example his involvement with the arts in Tremont – a few people planting flowers created a chain in the neighborhood and helped to bring about other positive changes throughout the community.

Barbara proposed that if we can agree on the Ranger 360 program we should explore that further with Abby McGinty and Katie Kurtz, the two women implementing the grant. April offered to do further exploration of the absentee landlord issue for a later time. April moved that the Comm Conv topic be Ranger 360, Karen seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Joe will speak with Katie Kurtz and Abby McGinty about scheduling a meeting with the work group for Tues or Wed of next week, with the purpose of exploring how our community conversation could further support their work. The work group should also consider what format the conversation should follow – either small group facilitated discussions, or a panel discussion, and find and reserve a location.

Ayman left at 7:45; Karen left at 7:50 and a quorum was no longer present.

The next meeting will be Thursday, October 10th at 6:30 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Barbara A. Schwartz, Secretary