

Schofield Community Association (SCA)

Minutes of October 20, 2022 Meeting

Meeting was held at 6:30 PM October 20, 2022 at Smith Hazel Recreation Center. There were twenty in attendance including the City Manager, Stuart Bedenbaugh; the Mayor Rick Osborn; and City Council Members Gail Diggs and Lesse Price.

- Upcoming meeting schedule was announced for which Smith Hazel has already reserved.
- Dates are: November 15, 2022 and the third Thursday of each month through March 2023 at 6:30PM.
- Wayne O'Bryant history lectures were announced to be held at the African American Center for Art, History and Culture on November 10th and November 15th. Everyone is invited to attend these free lectures to gain insight into the history of African Americans in Aiken County from Reconstruction to the turn of the century.
- The need for internet presence was discussed. Mandy Drumming agreed to set up a Facebook page for the organization.
- The need for establishing a 501 C (3) statues was discussed and Sean White and agreed to look into it. The idea is that the group would then be eligible to apply for grants for activities concerning the revitalization of the community.
- The attendance of SCA members to attend City's Board and Commission meeting so that the organization can keep abreast on issues being discussed and actions being taken on matters of concern to our neighborhood.
- SCA had requested that a City Representative meet with SCA members and provide information on the following issues:
 - Smith Hazel Renovation Plans
 - The \$25 million dollar SC Plutonium Settlement Suit ear-marked for Northside & Downtown Development
 - Reopening of Fairfield Street Bridge
 - Safety Issues associated with poor lighting in several areas.
- Attendees broke into small groups to discuss issues presented to the group and to brainstorm ideas for action.
- After reconvening the following issues and information was discussed:
 - Stoney-Gallman Homes: They are is not under the control of the City and any issues such as ground maintained, playground for children, and exterior building conditions should be addressed with the Aiken Housing Authority. The question: To Whom do they answer?
 - The issue of water quality and water breaks was raised. The Mayor responded that there is a \$45-\$50 million project to improve the Shaw's Creek Water Treatment Plant. The needed work will take two to three years to completed. The City has purchased 2500 surrounding acres to protect the watershed.
 - The Mayor spoke about the greenway that is planned to connect to Generations Park.

- The issue of closing of certain neighborhood parks and fees for kids to play at the recreation center was discussed. Bedenbaugh responded that fees had been rolled back to the April 1st rate. He reported that \$7,000 was set aside to pay for these fees (Fun Fund) and that \$4,900 has been spent. No area parks are scheduled to be closed.
- Renovation plans for the Smith-Hazel Community Center were discussed and the body was told that the Parks & Recreation Department was in the early phase of getting the specifics ready for bidding.
- Gyles park was discussed and the question was raised as to what plans are in the works to deal with the homeless who gather there.
- Fairfield Bridge closing was raised, and the funding conditions required to have a reopening.
- DEMO 200 Program: Mayor asserted that the DEMO 200 program removes dilapidated houses and makes neighborhood safer. Several residents strongly disagreed. Mandy Drumming stated that she would like to see the data on how much money has been offered to homeowners to improve and keep their homes rather than having them torn down and how much had been spent on these demolitions. One of the reasons that there is little concern about the loss of these unique, one-of-a-kind craftsman houses that are over 100 years old is that they are not considered "historic" because they are not in a historic district. The question then is whether or not SCA should look into getting the SCA area designated as a historic district.
- Michael Carolina spoke on behalf of the Effingham Lodge #98 on Fairfield and Abbeville. The lodge would be interested in grant opportunities for renovation of the historic building. The building was moved from the Schofield campus.
- Plutonium Settlement Funding: The plans for the \$25 million earmarked for "Downtown Aiken and Northside revitalization" was discussed. A separate \$1.5 amount has been earmarked for improvement at Generations Park. These funds are expected to be allocated by the end of the calendar year. The feeling was expressed that some of the allocation should be designated for community revitalization in the SCA neighborhood. The SCA is part of the original Paschalis grid of the City. City staff stated that this was possible and that there had been no specific commitments on the funds. Proposals would be considered.
- Need for an organization goal statement and by-laws was discussed; Sean White agreed to work on these issues and report back to the body.

These minutes were condensed by BB McGhee from notes taken by Don Moniak.