

## **MINUTES OF THE FAIRFIELD CIVIC LEAGUE MEETING - FEBRUARY 10, 2014**

Matt Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. There were 32 people in attendance.

Matt introduced Susan Pleasants, Tenant Relations Coordinator for Wheeler Real Estate/Fairfield Shopping Center. Wheeler Real Estate strives to build relationships with the community through outreach programs. Upcoming events include:

- **Dance-A-Thon (March 1-2, 2014):** A Dance-A-Thon will be held at Kosama Fitness to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The event is sponsored by Kosama, Center Stage Dance Company and Jenny Craig. There are activities for the whole family.
- **Cause For Paws (April 5, 2014):** This event will benefit 12 local animal shelters and rescue organizations and will include adoption opportunities and a pet supply drive.
- **Spring Car Show:** Sponsored by the Southeastern Virginia Mustang Club.
- **4<sup>TH</sup> of July Celebration.**
- **Halloween.**
- **Christmas.**

Additional information on all of these events can be found on the Fairfield Shopping Center Facebook page.

Ms. Pleasants also addressed a question concerning current occupancy. She said that most of the shopping center is currently leased although there have been some businesses that have relocated either due to needing more/less space or issues with burst pipes during the cold weather. She reported that TJ Maxx will be undergoing an extensive renovation in the near future. The store will focus more on home goods and less on clothing. They will remain in the same location.

A question regarding the location of the mailbox was presented. A request was made that the box be moved closer to the curb so that mail could be deposited without having to get out of a car. Ms. Pleasants stated that this was a United States Postal Service issue rather than a Wheeler Real Estate issue.

Matt then introduced Sandy Rice, Branch Manager of the Kempsville TowneBank. Ms. Rice detailed the history of TowneBank. Commerce Bank was originally bought out by BB&T. Bob Aston, President of Commerce Bank, did not like the big bank impersonality after the merger and decided to start TowneBank 15 years ago. The bank is locally owned and operated and offers all of the same services that any other bank does, however, with a local focus.

Ms. Rice stated that the Kempsville branch has done extremely well since opening this past summer. They continue to focus on the local community through various sponsorship programs. Jim Peele shared a story where TowneBank stepped in and saved Iceland Ice Rink from bankruptcy a few years ago.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Current balance: \$1,185.25

Total Year-To-Date income: \$992.00

Memberships (76): \$912.00

Newsletter ads (4): \$80.00

Total Year-To-Date Expenses: \$782.16

After the meeting, Jim Peele asked that the minutes reflect that Betty Virok, Treasurer, has replaced him as the Registered Agent with the Virginia State Corporation Commission, thereby assuming responsibility for paying the annual fee and filing the annual report on behalf of Fairfield Civic League, Inc.

### **Secretary's Report:**

Matt reported for Kathy that the minutes from the January Civic League meeting were posted on Nextdoor.com and Facebook. These forums will continue to be used for the purpose of posting minutes as well as other pertinent neighborhood information.

### **Neighborhood Communication:**

We currently have four main methods of communication which include:

- Website
- Nextdoor
- Facebook
- E-mail

The website has not been updated recently and the previous administrator, Kevin Johnson, is in the process of moving out of the neighborhood. It was decided that the website would not be used as a primary source of information dissemination.

Nextdoor.com has gained a lot of followers in Fairfield. Barb Conyers explained how it works and how to "invite" neighbors to join. Invitations can be made by submitting e-mail addresses or by postcard, sent by Nextdoor at their expense. Nextdoor allows for much quicker dissemination of information than anything else we currently have available. While Neighborhood Watch was originally designed to use a phone/e-mail tree to get information out, it is dependent on having block captains throughout the neighborhood as well as those captains being immediately available to spread information. Barb pointed out the there as several areas of Fairfield, especially south of Balfor Drive, where we have few if any block captains or Nextdoor subscribers.

Some concern was expressed with regard to Nextdoor simply being a forum to vent and argue. While this may be the case, Barb explained that you can adjust your personal settings to filter what information you receive.

Stevie Callahan did point out that Nextdoor was invaluable in reporting on the late-night mugging that occurred at the intersection of Princess Anne/Witchduck/Kempsville.

Neighborhood information is routinely posted to the Fairfield Facebook page. However, some people do not care to use Facebook. Nextdoor.com may be a viable alternative for these individuals.

E-mail is a final means of communication but it is limited by the number of addresses on the database. If the database were only made up of those residents who are current members of the civic league, only 76 households would get information. Building an e-mail database with limited membership is difficult.

### **Newsletter:**

The rising cost of the newsletter was discussed at the last Board of Directors meeting. The cost for printing and mailing the October 2013 newsletter was \$505, which reflects a 77% increase in cost over the last 3 years. Based on two mailings per year, newsletter costs would easily exceed \$1000 per year. The Board agreed to pursue electronic delivery of the newsletter.

Beginning with the spring newsletter, the content will be posted on Nextdoor and on the Fairfield Civic League Facebook page. The Board is considering mailing postcards to all residents when the newsletter becomes available so they can access it. Jim is considering printing and mailing a limited number of copies to those residents who are current members of the civic league.

### **Traffic Committee:**

Matt gave an update on the Witchduck/Princess Anne/Kempsville intersection. The project was originally supposed to be completed in April, however, the City has now pushed that date back to September 2014. The delay in completion affects some of the things the traffic committee is hoping to do. The City will not re-evaluate the traffic on Lord Dunmore until the intersection is complete which will hopefully shift traffic from Lord Dunmore to Kempsville Road.

### **Apartment Complex:**

Matt reported that the City and Jack Pope, the developer of the school property, are still in negotiations over the property. The City presented over 100 questions/concerns to Mr. Pope which he addressed. The list was reduced to 10 questions which have now been answered as well. Mr. Pope hopes to begin developing the land by Easter. The Civic League may then need to address the location and use of construction entrances in and around the neighborhood.

### **New Business:**

Discussion ensued on how to increase membership in the Civic League. Based on a Civic League membership year of September to August, we currently have 76 members which is less than 10% of the total number of residents in Fairfield. A variety of ideas were discussed:

- More events like the Hot Chocolate in the Park gathering this past December. Over 50 people turned out for the event which was put together by the Garden Club and the Civic League. Matt passed around a sign-up sheet for volunteers interested in working on a similar event for the Spring.
- It was suggested that those people involved in the Flag Program could pass out membership information when flags are put on display for Memorial Day. There was some concern that this is asking for more work on the part of the "flaggers" and it may not be well received.
- The use of door hangers was discussed. The Garden Club made their own hangers to advertise the last plant sale and then used volunteers to distribute them to every home in Fairfield. This seems to be a very effective means of reaching out to all of the residents.
- The use of PayPal was discussed as a means of making it easier to pay dues. Many people do not have checks or cash available when they come to Civic League meetings, which makes it difficult to join. If there is an easy means of paying for dues on-line, it may increase membership.
- Posting of Civic League meeting information in the Beacon. This, in addition to the signs posted around the neighborhood prior to meetings, might increase the number of people attending Civic League meetings.

Matt pointed out that we have to have increased participation in order to tackle some of the bigger problems facing our neighborhood, such as traffic.

**Other Concerns:**

A resident stated that a fox had been seen roaming around the neighborhood and reminded all residents to be careful around wild animals.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Betty Virok