

## **Minutes of May 18, 2006 meeting of the Old Town Residents Association**

Venue: Takoma Park Community Center

Attendees:

OTRA President Seth Grimes

OTRA Vice-President Chantal Worzala

OTRA Secretary Susan Lawrence

Ray Altevogt, Lorena Checa, Yaqir Manela, Clay Harris, Jennifer Carter, Brian Robinson, David Pittman, Dan Aibel, Robert Lanza, Ken Firestone, Mar-E Robnett, Jennifer Glimcher, Chris Simpson, Jason Judd, and two others.

Guest presenters Bruce Levin and David Bagnoli.

Agenda items:

I. Policing: Safe Takoma

II. Policing: New Police Chief

III. Candidate forums

IV. Report from the developer of 7001 Carroll Ave

V. Next meeting

### **I. Policing: Safe Takoma**

1. SafeTakoma cross-jurisdictional policing program. Speaking on behalf of Maryland coordinator Kim Brooks, Seth Grimes asked residents to turn out at the City Council meeting on Monday, May 23, to voice their support for city funding of Safe Takoma in the sum of \$75,000. The District of Columbia has already pledged its half of the total \$150,000 price tag, effective October 1.
2. Asked to explain the program, Seth said it would have two staff who would work to increase communication among various agencies on the District and Maryland sides of the border, work on youth crime prevention, and monitor individuals previously convicted of crimes in order to reduce recidivism rates. He described the two employees as “essentially police proxies” who will be “two more sets of eyes on the street.”
3. The proposed geographic center of the area covered by the program has so far been the Takoma Metro station. Seth said Keats Kirsch had suggested moving the geographic center to the site of the 7-Eleven convenience store, so more of Maple Avenue and of Ward 3 (the WACO district) can be covered. Supporting this suggestion, Seth noted that in Takoma Park, according to Council Member Terry Seamens, 60 percent of the people on parole or probation – the target population for monitoring by the program - live on Maple Ave. The program would cover a half-mile radius from the central point.

### **II. Policing: New Police Chief**

Seth reported that Police Chief Cindy Creamer will be retiring in July. City Manager Barbara Matthews is responsible for hiring a new police chief. Seth proposed a motion that OTRA send a letter to the city manager asking for certain qualifications. OTRA members passed his motion. The text of the letter is appended to these minutes.

Robert Lanza suggested that OTRA push for citizens to have a formal advisory role in the city manager's selection of the new police chief.

Chantal Worzala called for the selection to involve a competitive process.

Seth Grimes called for the decision on a new police chief to be "deliberate, not quick." He also called for a new police chief with a commitment to sustaining programs like Safe Takoma.

### **III. Candidate forums**

Mar-E Robnett reported on plans for forums to introduce candidates to voters ahead of local elections this year. The forums would be co-sponsored by OTRA and the Takoma Voice. The organizers have tentatively planned a June 8 forum for candidates for state delegate and state senator and a June 15 forum for candidates for county council. The organizers have not yet decided whether to hold a forum for candidates for county executive.

Mar-E called for volunteers to help set-up and clear-up at the forums and also for volunteers to distribute flyers about the forums at the Metro station. Robert Lanza volunteered to help review questions to be put to the candidates.

### **IV. Report from the developer of the 7001 Carroll Ave Site**

Brue Levin of Keystar Real Estate, a partner in the development of the 7001 Carroll Ave site, and architect David Bagnoli of Cunningham + Quill Architects, PLLC made a presentation to OTRA about their plans for the site. They noted this was their 19<sup>th</sup> community meeting.

Their current plans call for 71 residential units and approximately 8500 square feet of commercial or retail space. This marks a reduction in the number of units from the original plan for 110 units and a later plan for 82 units.

The eight units facing Westmoreland Avenue would have a live/work configuration, with space for an office at the ground level, and living space above and behind that. The architectural plans calls for dropping the existing parking deck ten feet, creating green space between the street and the units, and installing 30- to 32-foot-tall live/work units over three floors. The developers suggested that the units might be appropriate for architects, doctors, or others.

Of the 8,500 square feet planned for commercial/retail use, 45 percent will be ground floor retail space. Currently 14,000 square feet (or 60 percent) of the 22,000 square foot site is devoted to retail (Taliano's and Re-run spaces). The rest is offices. The developer noted that the live/work units on Westmoreland Avenue, which represent an additional 11,000 square feet of space, will also likely be used in part for commercial purposes.

Parking will be underground and accessed from Westmoreland Avenue. The plan calls for one parking space per unit (i.e. 71 spaces) plus 40 segregated commercial/guest spaces. The developer would like to have cars access the site from Eastern Avenue, but the owner of the Eastern Avenue approach has blocked that option.

In accordance with county guidelines, 12.5 percent of the units, or nine units, will be dedicated to affordable housing.

Several meeting attendees' expressed concerns about the project, including:

- Will the presumably higher retail rents at the developed site hasten the end of "affordable retail" in Takoma Park
- Will the development further stress the already severely stressed intersection of Westmoreland and Carroll Aves?

Other meeting attendees expressed hopes that the development would benefit the community, largely by bringing in new residents. Lorena Checa, owner of an adjacent property to the development site, said the community needs more "vitality," including more residents, in order to sustain businesses. Another attendee said she worries for her personal safety at night because the community is not "vibrant" after dark. More residents walking to and from the Metro, she said, would mean more eyes on the street and a safer neighborhood.

## **V. Next meeting date**

Seth Grimes noted that the next meeting will be on June 22.

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Minutes submitted by Susan V. Lawrence, Secretary, May 23, 2006  
Reviewed by Seth Grimes, President, May 29, 2006