**UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS (REVISED)**

Thursday, September 14 (New Date), Dorchester County Council Chamber (501 Court St), 6:30 pm

Saturday, November 18, Dorchester County Public Library (303 Gay St), 10:00 am

Saturday, January 13, Dorchester County Public Library (303 Gay St), 10:00 am

**CAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**JULY 27, 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Open to the Public**

**6:00 pm – PRE-MEETING DISCUSSION with Cambridge City Council Commissioner**

**Robert Hanson and Residents of Cambridge Ward 5** (which extends roughly from Cambridge Creek to Cambridge-Dorchester Regional Airport)

1. **Welcome – Chuck McFadden, CAN President**

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN) President Chuck McFadden opened the discussion at 6:00 pm by welcoming Cambridge Commissioner Robert Hanson and approximately 10 residents of Cambridge Ward 5 who were interested in learning about CAN. Chuck explained that CAN is a new organization started in January 2017 with the goal of enhancing the quality of community life across the entire city of Cambridge through social events, neighborly assistance, and supporting compliance with city codes. CAN currently has a 60 dues-paying members, an email list of 180 persons who have expressed an interest in CAN, and a Cambridge-wide email list of 400 persons (begun prior to CAN’s inception by CAN Board Member Dave Thatcher).

**2. Social Activities.** Chuck described CAN’s Neighborhood Social Component as a vehicle to develop neighborhood cohesion and build community identify through positive social interactions, networking, and community involvement.

Chuck explained that “neighborhoods” are self-identified areas that may consist of one city block, several blocks, or any geographic area that CAN members define for themselves under the leadership of a “block captain.” One neighborhood activity is hosting social events; for example, the “Belvedere Avenue” neighborhood group recently held a successful ice social during which many neighbors met each other for the first time. As another neighborhood activity, the “West End Avenue” neighborhood has organized several neighbor-helping-neighbor work days through which neighbors have painted porches, power-washed houses, and performed cleanup for neighbors who were unable to do these things on their own.

CAN Membership Director Michelle Barnes indicated that she is gathering a variety of materials to assist “block captains” in the development of neighborhood “blocks” but what CAN really needs is people to come forward to define and “captain” their self-identified neighborhood groups.

CAN would like to encourage residents of Ward 5 to identify neighborhoods and “block captains” to participate in CAN – and to make CAN aware of the concerns of Ward 5 residents so we can work together to address those concerns with a strong collective voice. Chuck indicated that CAN has developed survey capability to find out what neighborhoods really think and what issues they want to have addressed.

**3. Housing and Zoning Issues.** CAN Vice President Judd Vickers explained that CAN’s Housing Quality Committee, which he chairs, systematically tracks Planning and Zoning meetings to identify issues of concern and to advocate on behalf of affected neighborhoods. CAN’s activities include conducting research, monitoring meetings and enforcement, and following-up on identified problems. For example, CAN recently supported efforts by Commissioner Hanson and other residents of Ward 5 to address a zoning request that would have greatly increased the number of apartments in a property on Maryland Avenue. CAN submitted a written objection to the proposal and sent representative to the Planning and Zoning meeting to speak in person against the proposal, which was ultimately defeated.

Judd indicated that the Housing Quality Committee needs many more volunteers because there is lots of work to do. For example, Judd explained that the City now entirely prohibits converting single-family housing to multi-unit dwellings. However, because Cambridge has no systematic enforcement mechanism, CAN has been trying to monitor and follow-up on such non-conforming property uses. This will require that people who know their neighborhoods identify multi-unit houses that become vacant so code enforcement can be requested. Judd described two recent situations in which non-conforming multi-unit houses were forced to revert to single-unit housing. Greg Boss noted CAN is developing databases to identify owners of multiple houses who constitute a burden to Cambridge and should be targeted for code enforcement.

Judd noted that CAN would also like to provide assistance to tenants with uncooperative landlords who refuse to comply with city requirements. CAN hopes to develop a “Tenants Corner” on its website where information to assist tenants can be compiled and accessed.

**4. Open Discussion – Attendee Comments**

Chuck McFadden reiterated that CAN wants to foster development of large cohesive groups of citizens, and is extremely interested in encouraging Ward 5 residents (and all residents of Cambridge) to participate in CAN. As CAN attracts more members, CAN will be able to exert increasingly greater influence to address community concerns. CAN needs to learn about the concerns of Ward 5 residents, and CAN needs Ward 5 residents to become active and involved in CAN, if we are to address Ward 5’s concerns effectively.

* 1. **Comment:** Cambridge Landing has implemented the neighborhood concept for 34 years. It works because there is a strong set of rules, and residents enforce the rules. Expectations are clear and neighbors self-enforce the standards.
  2. **Question – Code Enforcement and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC):** Commissioner Hanson explained that the Cambridge Historic District and the HPC follow specific guidelines based on Federal and State requirements. Chuck McFadden explained that CAN wants to work with the HPC to develop consistent guidelines and procedures that work. It was noted that the availability of Maryland Historic Trust monies to assist owners of historic properties depends upon compliance with federal guidelines that require an operating HPC. Establishment of the Cambridge Historic District and the Cambridge HPC in 1996-1997 led to increased regulation resulting in neighborhood improvement. However, inconsistent code enforcement is a major, longstanding issue not only for the entire City of Cambridge. For example, there is a block in the “West End Avenue” neighborhood where every house has been forced to comply with the City sidewalk codes EXCEPT the one house owned by a particular landlord. The “good-old boy” network in Cambridge has consistently opposed strong code enforcement, but CAN is working with Commissioners Hanson and Rideout to advocate strengthened enforcement, which would also result in additional revenue that the City desperately needs to improve its infrastructure.
  3. **Ward 5 Issue – Homeless, trash, drug use on the Fishing Pier.** Chuck once again stated that CAN very much wants to learn about the issues and concerns of Ward 5 residents so we can address these issues with more clout. Ward 5 residents expressed their serious concern about homelessness, trash, drug use, and unsavory after-hours activity on the Fishing Pier, which receives little or no oversight. Chuck noted that CAN is exited about getting Ward 5 residents involved so we can more effectively address problems like these.
  4. **Ward 5 Issue – Crime and Public Safety.** Commissioner Hanson noted that Lexus/Nexus crime maps are now available on the Choose Cambridge website and that the public can now sign up for and get alerts about crime in their neighborhoods. He also noted that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being developed to facilitate oversight of areas where City and County jurisdiction and responsibility overlap or are poorly defined. He also indicated that the long process of trying to get video cameras placed in critical locations is finally about to result in deployment of 18 additional cameras.
  5. **Ward 5 Issue – Help for Homeowners.** It was pointed out that many homeowners in Ward 5 and throughout the City have limited resources to maintain and improve their properties, and that Code enforcement may be difficult of impossible for them. Chuck noted that CAN’s goal is not to target individual owner-residents for strict code enforcement, but to target landlords who refuse to maintain their properties in compliance with City requirements. Can wants to target its enforcement efforts where they will do the most good, specifically, to owners of multiple dwellings with consistently poor code compliance. In the case of individual resident homeowners, CAN is committed to helping those individuals as much as possible, and cited the “West End Avenue” neighborhood’s neighbor-helping-neighbor work days as an example of this commitment.

**5. Closing.** The Open Discussion concluded at 7:00 pm. Chuck McFadden thanked Commissioner Hanson and the residents of Ward 5 for their participation and encourage them to consider membership in CAN. He asked attendees to sign the attendance sheet at the door so they could be included in the CAN email distribution list and receive information from CAN, including the CAN Newsletter, whether or not they choose to become members.

**7:00 pm – CAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**Board Members Present:** Chuck McFadden (President), Judd Vickers (Vice President), Mary Ellen Jesien (Treasurer), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Roman Jesien, Sharon Smith, and Dave Thatcher, constituting a Quorum of the Board under Bylaws Section 11 (seven of nine members being present)

**Board Members Absent:** Jackie Vickers, Frank Cooke

1. **Welcome and Approval of Minutes.** CAN President Chuck McFadden opened the meeting at 7:00 pm by welcoming the members of the Board, as well as approximately 30 members of the public in attendance.Chuck introduced the minutes of the May 20, 2017 meeting, which were distributed via email earlier this week. It was moved and seconded that the Board approve the May 20 minutes as distributed, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote of Board members present.
2. **Nomination and Election of New CAN Board Member.** The Board received a recommendation from CAN Vice President Judd Vickers, as Chair of the Nominations Committee and with the concurrence of the Executive Committee, that CAN Membership Director Michelle Barnes be appointed to one of the vacant seats on the CAN Board of Directors in accordance with Article IV, Section 8 of CAN’s Bylaws. Roman Jesien made a motion to that effect, and Tom Puglisi seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote of the Board Members present (Judd Vickers having left the room temporarily), and Michelle Barnes was added to the CAN Board of Directors, effective immediately.
3. **Treasurer’s Report.** CAN Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien reported a current balance of approximately $769.81 in CAN’s Treasury. Recent expenses include $309.55 for door hangers and postcards. CAN currently lists 60 paid memberships.
4. **Secretary’s Report.** CAN Secretary Tom Puglisi reported that the next Newsletter would be issued during the last week of August and that articles should be submitted to him no later than August 21. Tom noted that the Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy has provided an article for every issue so far, and we would like to have as many community groups as possible providing articles. Although Tom forwarded a meeting announcement to Cambridge Community Radio Station WHPC, the announcement was not aired as expected. Tom will follow-up to ensure that an announcement of the next meeting airs. Mary Ellen Jesien volunteered to have meeting announcements placed in the local newspapers.
5. **Housing Quality Committee Report.**  CAN Vice President and Housing Quality Committee Chair Judd Vickers provided additional detail on the Maryland avenue property described during this evening’s discussion with residents of Ward 5. Although CAN was not successful in having the property converted back to two single unit residents, the Planning and Zoning Commission did limit the property to two apartment units and one commercial space. Greg Boss has developed a database to provide street-by-street detail for identifying neighborhood properties to determine which housing is single family, which is a second residence, which is non-conforming multi-unit housing, and which is in transition. For example, it appears that Belvedere has all single-family owner or rental housing, whereas Oakley has several multi-family houses that are nonconforming, some of which are inhabited and some of which are not. CAN Board member Frank Cooke has been attempting to monitor non-conforming housing and request enforcement once the transition occurs. Susan Morgan will be working with Frank on this and will take over when Frank leaves Cambridge in the Fall. The Committee needs more volunteers to monitor meetings, maintain lists of problem properties, determine the best ways of addressing individual problems, and addressing tenants issues (e.g., bedbug issues recently faced by a number of new tenants). The Committee will also try to incorporate the recent Salisbury State study of Cambridge housing into its database. Formal written requests to the Mayor and City Manager will be needed to obtain full study results. Judd also noted that the Habitat grant will offer rehabilitation assistance targeting owner-occupied residences with code violations.
6. **Neighborhood Development Committee Report.** Chuck McFadden described the recent, very successful “Belvedere Avenue” neighborhood ice cream social. He once again voiced the need for many more Neighborhood Block Captains and for someone to take over permanent leadership of the Neighborhood Development Committee.
7. **Membership Director’s Report**. Membership Director Michelle Barnes reiterated the importance of conducting concerted outreach to all of Cambridge. She reported that door hangers have distributed to Neighborhood Block Captains, and many have already been hung. Postcards will be sent to people who have come to meetings but not joined. Materials and step-by-step checklists for neighborhood development captains and neighborhood events/activities are being developed. Michelle would also like to hold discussions on being effective Neighborhood Block Captains. In Fall, CAN’s goal is to visit groups/organization/churches to publicize CAN and its program of coherent activities (still to be finalized.
8. **Open Discussion – Can Members and Others in Attendance**

* 1. **CAN Membership List.** It was noted that CAN needs to decide (i) who will be responsible for maintaining the membership list, and (ii) how to ensure that relevant information (e.g., PayPal payments and meeting sign-in sheets) will be forwarded to that person. It was decided that, as Treasurer, Mary Ellen Jesien will be responsible for maintaining the official CAN membership list and that she will work with Fred Phillips-Patrick to ensure that PayPal information is provided to her regularly. Mary Ellen will routinely send membership information and email addresses to Dave Thatcher to ensure that Dave’s email distribution lists are kept current. Michelle Barnes will develop a membership form to standardize information received from members
  2. **Circles of 6.** Debbie Haynes described a practice of a neighborhood group in Florida whereby groups of 6 neighbors agree to be responsible for helping each other in emergency situations. It was suggested that establishing “Circles of 6” could be an activity of CAN’s Neighborhood Blocks and could be focused particularly to vulnerable neighbors not only in emergency situations but where persons could benefit from regular monitoring and assistance as needed.

1. **Adjournment.** Chuck McFadden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Puglisi seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.