**UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS**

**Saturday, March 10, 2018, Dorchester County Office Building**

**501 Court Lane (rear entrance), Rm 110, 10:00 am**

Thursday, May 10, Location To Be Determined, 7:00 pm

Thursday, July 12, Location To Be Determined, 7:00 pm

Thursday, September 13, Location To Be Determined, 7:00 pm

Saturday, November 10, Location To Be Determined, 10:00 am

**All CAN Board meetings are open to the public.**

**Everyone interested in CAN is invited to attend.**

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**ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

**Dorchester County Library Meeting Room**

**JANUARY 20, 2018**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Chuck McFadden (President), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Mary Ellen Jesien (Treasurer), Michelle Barnes (Membership Director), Frank Cooke, Sharon Smith, Roman Jesien (constituting a Quorum of the Board under Bylaws Section 11, seven of ten members being present)

**Board Members Absent:** Judd Vickers (Vice President), Jackie Vickers, Dave Thatcher

***NOTE: CAN is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of attendee comments.***

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** CAN President Chuck McFadden opened the meeting at 10:05 am by welcoming the members of the Board, as well as approximately 15 attendees.Chuck explained that the two most important purposes of today's meeting were to hold the election of Board Members and discuss goals for 2018.
2. **Approval of Minutes.**  Chuck McFadden introduced the minutes of the November 18, 2017 meeting, which were previously distributed via email. It was moved (Chuck McFadden) and seconded (Tom Puglisi) that the Board approve the November 18 minutes as distributed, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote of Board members present.
3. **Board of Directors Election Process.** Tom Puglisi introduced the election process. Because Board members serve staggered terms, four positions are up for election this year. Per CAN Bylaws, Vice President Judd Vickers chaired a Nominating Committee consisting of two additional Board members and one Non-Board member. The Committee determined that Judd Vickers (Vice-President), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), and Sharon Smith (At-Large) were interested in continuing on the Board, and that Jackie Vickers (At-Large) wished to step down. The Committee solicited interested CAN members and Greg Boss indicated a willingness to be nominated for an At-Large position. No nominations were received other than those identified by the Nominating Committee (J. Vickers, T. Puglisi, S. Smith, G. Boss) prior to the December deadline established under the Bylaws. As a result, the Executive Committee determined that paper ballots would not be needed for this election. Absentee voting is permitted under the Bylaws. Two absentee ballots were accepted by the Secretary and turned over to the CAN President.
4. **Introduction of Nominees.** Chuck McFadden asked the nominees to introduce themselves and briefly indicate why they were interested in serving on the Board.
   1. Gregg Boss stressed his interest in housing and code enforcement, described his data-oriented activities on CAN's Housing Quality Committee, and noted his experience obtaining funding for his home on West End Avenue in the historic district.
   2. Sharon Smith indicated that she has lived on School Street in Cambridge for over 10 years and serves as a member of the Cambridge Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). She indicated that the HPC over the past year has worked to increase consistency and transparency and that it is seeking community input in developing clearer, more resident-oriented guidelines and procedures. As a CAN Board member she believes it is important for citizens to understand they must be responsible for making positive things happen in the City.
   3. Tom Puglisi stated that he has lived with his spouse, Susan Morgan, at 104 Willis St in Cambridge for four years (first as a weekender and for the past two years as a full-time resident). He indicated that his highest priorities as a CAN Board member are improving housing quality, fostering neighbors helping neighbors, and reaching out to other areas of the City to increase dialogue, understanding, and trust within a City that, while being a wonderful place to live, is also divided in many ways.
   4. Tom Puglisi read the following statement from Judd Vickers: *My name is Judd Vickers and I am a resident of Belvedere Avenue, together with my husband, Greg Bartoo.  It has been rewarding to serve as Vice-President over the last year and I would appreciate the opportunity to be re-elected.  I'm very encouraged by our many accomplishments, which include community clean up efforts, helping neighbors in need and preventing the continuation of non-conforming uses.  In 2018, I'd like to see CAN continue to expand membership throughout the City, work with our City government to improve housing conditions, and reach out beyond our community to welcome additional new residents that want to invest in our community.  Thank you for considering my candidacy.  Cambridge is a wonderful community!*
   5. At the suggestion of several attendees, the other Board Members also briefly introduced themselves. President Chuck McFadden described his strong interest in code enforcement, neighborhood social development, and increasing CAN's membership and diversity across the entire City. Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien and her spouse, Roman Jesien who also serves on the CAN Board, have lived on Belvedere Avenue for many years. Roman stressed the importance of CAN members being attuned to and helping their neighbors with concrete assistance when needs arise. Membership Director Michelle Barnes is a long-time Cambridge resident and described her goals of networking with City Council Commissioners and community leaders to grow CAN membership in every Ward of the City. Frank Cooke introduced himself as a former City Council Commissioner who maintains his primary residence on Mill Street and owns several rental properties in Cambridge. He described the importance of enlisting the younger, more dynamic leaders in other Wards of the City to effect positive change.
5. **Election of Board Members.**  Chuck McFadden called for a voice vote on the slate of candidates put forth by Nominating Committee (J. Vickers, T. Puglisi, S. Smith, G. Boss). The vote was unanimous in favor of these candidates, and they were duly elected.
6. **Accomplishments** - Chuck McFadden distributed a handout that listed CAN's accomplishments during 2018 (see Addendum attached)**.** Among over 20 specific actions listed, Chuck highlighted the following:
   1. Organizing attendance and statements at City Council statements.
   2. Conducting a survey on the new trash collections system (the bottom line is that folks generally like the new system but would prefer an option for a smaller can, and would support collection of recyclables if cost does not exceed $10/month).
   3. Code enforcement activities (e.g., Maryland Avenue, Choptank Avenue).
   4. Development of email list with 534 addresses. Commissioner Canon asked if CAN has ever polled its distribution list to identify where recipients lived. He noted that his Ward (Ward 3) is 52% African American.
   5. Neighbors helping neighbor with concrete action such as cleaning and painting a porch; clearing and old garage and paying dumping fees; buying a power washer for shared use and power washing a porch; and representing (pro bono) a distressed couple in court and getting their fine reduced and timeline extended.
7. **Treasurer’s Report.** CAN Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien reported that CAN now has 84 dues-paying members and a total of $1025.88 in its treasury. The current funds have come primarily from dues payments, although several persons previously made donations to provide start-up monies.
   1. Dues for 2018 have been set at $15 for an individual, and $20 for a household (included individuals must be specified when dues are paid), which represents a reduction from last year since start-up costs have now been met. Mary Ellen is here today to receive money. Payment may also be mailed or submitted through PayPal on CAN's website.
   2. Chuck McFadden noted that one reason dues have been reduced is to encourage membership. In CAN's recent activity distributing door hangers, it was noted that CAN's membership dues may be unrealistic for many Cambridge residents. People wondered why dues were required and how paying dues to CAN would make their lives better. The Executive Committee has discussed characterizing dues as voluntary contributions in lieu of strict dues requirement to encourage expanded membership. Under a voluntary contribution model, CAN membership would be defined by an expressed interest in joining CAN and providing one's email address. In any case, CAN is liberal about waiving dues for interested persons who cannot afford dues payment.
8. **Membership.** Membership Director Michelle Barnes reported that the focus in 2017 (year one) has been to build the core membership; reach out to as many neighborhoods as possible with door hangers; and begin networking with the Mayor and City Council Commissioners to build relationships. The door hanger campaign was not very successful, and the "Block Captain" effort has not taken hold, but good meetings with the Mayor and Commissioners have identified new ideas for reaching out. Several strategies have been identified:
   1. CAN could propose small projects or events in each City Council Ward. Projects/events could include both service activities and social events. The proposal would be discussed with the relevant Commissioner to get feedback, decide if it is appropriate to proceed, and identify people within the Ward to partner in the project/event. The idea is to get CAN more focused on concrete actions around the entire City that can build CAN's network and visibility.
   2. CAN could expand its efforts to partner with existing groups, such as Habitat Choptank, Eastern Shore Network for Change, etc., as well as homeowner and condominium associations. For example, Cambridge Landing has an active association, and obtaining a listing of such associations would be very helpful for CAN's outreach efforts.
   3. CAN could develop a program or regular radio spots and articles in local newspapers article to expand outreach to folks who do have a computer. It was noted that Chuck McFadden recently recorded a radio spot which has aired several times on WHCP.
   4. CAN could conduct a membership drive my sending a brochure electronically to everyone on its email distribution list and/or give a benefit of some sort for successful referrals. Perhaps local merchants would be willing provide a such benefit for referrals and/or to all CAN members. It was noted that three individuals were responsible for the Academy Street beautification project, which they financed by enlisting support from adjacent businesses.
9. **2018 Objectives.**  Chuck McFadden that CAN's next initiative will be to conduct a new survey to identify issues of importance to people in the community and present those findings to City Council as we did with the Trash Survey. The survey would identify priorities and provide metrics, although CAN's email distribution list cannot yet be considered scientifically representative of the entire City population. Commissioner Rideout noted that the City Council is currently beginning the process of identifying priorities, so it is very important to get the survey results as quickly as possible. He also noted that immediate action is needed on issues that CAN has already identified as priorities because the outcome of current budget negotiations will determine whether funds are available to target CAN concerns. Chuck McFadden raised the following already-identified possible objects for discussion.
   1. CAN clearly needs to increase the diversity of its membership. CAN needs suggestions and assistance to identify ways to address the concerns of people in African American neighborhoods. It was suggested that CAN could provide assistance in getting state money to anyone interested in fixing up their homes, and what CAN could team up with the activists Ward to provide this service. Commissioner Rideout noted that the City has pulled together close to $1M for enhancement of homes in the Pine Street Triangle. The effort will be headed by Habitat Choptank, and CAN members could volunteer to assist in these Habitat activities. Wearing a CAN t-shirt while doing so would increase CAN's visibility and demonstrate commitment to this area of the City.
   2. CAN wants to continue identifying concrete activities to promote neighbor-to-neighbor awareness and assistance. This is one of CAN's core missions.
   3. **Housing and Code Enforcement.** Many CAN members are extremely unhappy with how the City handles code enforcement. Sharon Smith indicated that code enforcement is also a hot button concern of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), and that the HPC has written to the Mayor and City Council emphasizing need for additional enforcement. HPC constantly hears complaints that it denied or required substantial changes to someone's application but somebody else down the street just did the same thing without a permit or HPC approval. Frank Cooke indicated that the City needs different structure for code enforcement because the Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) and the Planning and Zoning Department do not coordinated their activities, so rental permits are issued for properties without regard to zoning requirements. Commissioners Canon and Rideout recently met for two hours to develop an strategy to address this issue, and the City Manager has promised a report to City Council on Code enforcement. Attendees expressed frustration with (i) a passive code enforcement process that only responds to complaints; (ii) recent efforts to intimidate individuals who have filed complaints; (ii) staffing shortages (one inspector, one contractor) that preclude effective code enforcement; (iv) an ineffective property lien system as the primary enforcement mechanism; (v) the presence of so many out-of-town, out-of-state, even out-of-the-country rental property owners (about 1/3 of landlords according to CAN's recent calculations); and preoccupation with lawn violations to the exclusion of more important violations. CAN is trying to expand its code enforcement activities but needs more volunteers (see Judd Vickers or Greg Boss), if interested. It was suggested that CAN make know is displease with this situation by constant presence and statements at City Council meetings. This effort will begin with the next City Council meeting on Monday, January 22, at 6:00 pm with Sharon Smith as point-person.
   4. **Neighborhood Social Interaction**. Chuck McFadden stressed that he is extremely interested in fostering CAN's neighborhood social interaction initiative. Last year, several block captains were identified but CAN still doesn't have a coordinator for social events (i.e., a Neighborhood Development Director). The Belvedere and Choptank Neighborhoods held successful social events and the West End Avenue Neighborhood was active, but other neighborhoods did not hold social events. The "Block Captain" approach has generated only limited enthusiasm, so CAN is looking for other social networking approaches. CAN needs volunteers to step forward to develop and implement a master plan to get neighborhoods involved on a social level throughout the city. Ideas discussed included the following:
      1. CAN could be build upon the CAN Membership Director's plan to identify and target, with help of City Council Commissioners, specific individuals in each Ward around whom to build a social events. CAN specifically needs to identify and reach out to key movers and shakers, including influential individuals in organizations like the Eastern Network for Change with whom to partner in social events and other initiatives.
      2. Another approach is to organize and staff a booth at the many large events and gatherings held on a regular basis in Cambridge.
      3. CAN could hold an event at the Empowerment Center, or cosponsor events with other community organizations.

**10. Adjournment.** Chuck McFadden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Puglisi seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am.

**ADDENDUM**

**CAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2017**

* + - 1. Established bylaws and elected Board of Directors
      2. Incorporated as an official non-profit
      3. Started a bimonthly newsletter which set the record for being the longest civic association newsletter in North America
      4. Established a member e-mail distribution list and a contact list with of 534 people
      5. Signed up 82 paying members
      6. Conducted code enforcement activities:
         1. Stopped Maryland Avenue house expansion
         2. Stopped Choptank Avenue house conversion
         3. Identified all the rental units in the City
         4. Followed HPC and Zoning meetings and reported back to the members
      7. Completed survey of the new trash system and presented the findings to the City Manager
      8. Organized mass turnout for City Council meeting to protest changes to the City Manager position
      9. Held 4 neighborhood social events
      10. Organized and/or participated in several clean-up events:
          1. The fishing pier
          2. Great Marsh Park
          3. Several street clean-ups
      11. Assisted neighbors
          1. Cleaned and painted a porch
          2. Cleared an old garage from a residential property and paid for dumping the remains
          3. Power-washed a porch
          4. Bought a power washer for neighborhood use
          5. Represented (pro bono) a distressed couple in court and got their fine reduced and timeline extended
      12. Developed post cards and door hangers
      13. Canvassed several neighborhoods
      14. Met with the Mayor and several City Council Commissioners to enlist their support