

Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association

April 15, 2024

Minutes

[Hybrid Meeting at Mark Clark Hall and via Google Meet]

WTNA website address: www.wagenerterrace.org

The April meeting was called to order at 7pm by Vice President Jarett Nicholson. We had several new attendees introduce themselves: Jon Rehffuss from 311 Grove Street, Drew Stiles 95 Gordon Street, and Kip Watson from 106 Dunneman Avenue.

MINUTES: The previous month's minutes are posted on the WTNA website. Gail Thomas moved to approve the minutes from the March meeting as posted on the website. Susan Cale seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were approved.

FINANCIALS: Former Treasurer Thomas informed us that we have \$7,185 in Checking. Amber Cote from Patrick Properties was present, and she said a \$5,000 donation check has been cut, and we should receive it shortly. We have \$22,511 in Savings, with \$17,500 of that set aside for the Oyster Roast.

CITADEL: Zach Watson was present from the Citadel to address neighbor concerns about Citadel students using WT streets for parking. Dr. Reyfuss explained that so many students are parking in the vicinity of Grove St. and Wagener Ave. that neighbors are having trouble finding parking near their houses. This issue is especially frustrating for neighbors who have children. He noted that the cars stay for days at a time - often parking on Sundays and then sitting there through Fridays. In addition, there is disruptive behavior - vomiting outside their cars on the street in the early morning hours, parking illegally in a manner that partially blocks sidewalks and driveways, and changing from civilian clothes to uniform inside the cars. Another neighbor observed that Dunneman Avenue is often empty of cars now because the cadets have been sufficiently warned off from parking there and instead park one street over, and he also noted that the students parking within our neighborhood seem to be freshmen and sophomores who are not supposed to have cars. Mr. Watson said the Citadel has tried hard to warn students away from parking in our neighborhood, but there is only so much they can do since it is technically legal parking. He advised that people call the public safety phone number if there is an issue. Mr. Bill Smith said he has not been able to get a response from calling the public safety number, but he reminded everyone that if a car is sitting in one spot on the street for too long, you can report it to the City as abandoned. Mr. Watson said this problem will end shortly since the school year is concluding soon, but the Citadel will remind students again when the next school year starts.

Mr. Watson also reported on the Citadel's planned concert series. The Citadel is working on zoning issues now, with a zoning appeal planned for May 7, and they will be working with the City on special events permits. He said they will be using the various Citadel parking lots and the MUSC parking lot, and they are working with CPD on traffic mitigation. He thinks the artists they get will be those "on reunion tours", rather than new artists. There would be a max of 10 concerts a year, likely aimed for the summer months when the cadets are absent and there is plentiful parking. He said the Citadel hopes the series will be an exciting addition, and the money will go towards supporting the athletics program, including improving facilities and increasing scholarships.

PRESENTATIONS: Representative Wendell Gilliard was present. He said he has made several of his local, annual visits today, including to Joseph Floyd Manor and Gadsden Green. He emphasized that one of his biggest concerns and priorities is public housing, and he noted that those in public housing continue to experience significant problems including lead poisoning, mold, and rodent/pest infestations. Rep. Gilliard collaborated with filmmaker Travis Pearson on the documentary, Back Da Green, which chronicles the Gadsden Green community from 1938 to present day. There is a one-time screening on June 19 (Juneteenth) at 8:30pm at the Terrace Theater. Mr. Pearson interned with Spike Lee and now makes documentaries and feature films on history in SC and Charleston. Rep Gilliard said his ultimate goal is to go to HUD in Washington to show the film because many of the same problems here are occurring in public housing elsewhere.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. There is a neighbor-created petition to add a stop sign at the intersection of Ashley Avenue and Maple Street. There are several blocks on Ashley without a stop sign, so motorists use Ashley as a bypass of Rutledge Avenue and drive at dangerous speeds. The petition has received several emails of support by residents who live on Ashley between Maple and Simons Streets. Mr. James Bishop moved that WTNA provide a letter of support for the stop sign request. Mr. Nathan Durfee seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed, so President Petar Lemajic will send a WTNA letter of support along with the petition and documentation of neighbor support.

2. VP Nicholson noted that the Berkeley, Dorchester, and Charleston County Councils have asked neighborhoods to support the federal grant application of the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA). CARTA is seeking grant funds to purchase 6 additional DASH buses and charging units so that they can expand DASH shuttle service on the peninsula. Mr. Blake Scott moved that we write a letter of support for this grant application, and Mr. Smith seconded. All were in favor, so President Lemajic will submit a letter of support on behalf of WTNA.

ZONING:

1. Drew Stiles was present to request support for renovation of his home at 95 Gordon St., which is the corner of 11th and Gordon. He bought his home in 2019, and now has one child and another on the way, and they are looking to expand their space. He said they currently have a big deck off the back of the house, and they want to build a living room over the same footprint. They are requesting a variance from the BZA to continue a nonconforming setback. They have received support from all of their neighbors. They also have an old shed in the back corner of the property that was built in 1947. It is about to fall down and has termite damage, so they are seeking BAR approval for demolition. Their current guest bedroom will become the baby's room, so they want to demolish the shed and replace it with a garage with a bedroom above it so that there is space for their children's grandparents to stay and babysit. They have received neighbor support, and he said they will not be doing any short term rental of that space. Since the first floor of the new garage is less than 600 sf, the City has said they do not need variances for that project. Mr. Durfee moved that we write two letters of support - one to the BZA in support of a variance to continue a nonconforming setback, and one to the BAR in support of shed demolition. Ms. Thomas seconded. All were in favor, so we will submit letters of support to the BZA and BAR.

2. Joel Adrian, Architectural Designer, was present to represent Derek and Maggie Burke, owners of 200 Gordon Street. They are seeking 2 special exceptions. Zoning requires a 9 ft setback, but the existing house sits over the line by 1.5 feet. They would like to add an 8-foot front porch to make the house more attractive from the front, but to do so, they are requesting a special exception to extend a nonconforming side yard setback. The front stairs have

already received approval from the BAR for demolition. They plan to extend the front porch and then rebuild the stairs in a similar look. They are requesting a second special exception to vertically extend a nonconforming setback on the right side of the house where they are 12 inches over the side yard setback and would like to add a 2nd-floor bedroom. These two exceptions are part of a relatively large expansion, but the rest of the project conforms to the zoning requirements.

Kathleen Donnelly is the direct neighbor, and she expressed concerns about the expansion because it will overlook her backyard, which is currently private. Mrs. Burke noted that they do not need a special exception on the side of the property that borders Ms. Donnelly because it adheres to the setback requirement. The existing house is a little over 1200 sf, and while Mr. Adrian never specified what the planned sf would be, it appeared from the plans that the expansion will at least triple the size of the home. Mr. Edmund Most expressed that the addition is out of scale with the neighborhood, and with a house that large, there should not be a need to get any exceptions. Mr. Durfee moved to write a letter of support for the special exception to extend a nonconforming side yard setback, and Mr. Smith seconded. 4 were opposed, and then 9 were counted as in support. Concern was then expressed about whether there is a quorum, as we require 15 votes for a quorum. Mr. Smith then moved to write a letter in support of the special exception to vertically extend a nonconforming setback, and Secretary Nancy Wilson seconded. There were 5 votes in support, and 5 opposed. There was not a sufficient quorum for either vote, so we deferred the decisions to next month.

3. Chelsea Anderson, Architect, was present to represent Brian Mahon, owner of 1 Kyle Place. There used to be a house there that was in poor condition and in a state of partial construction/renovation, but it was demolished, so the lot is currently empty. The lot is only 2500 sf, and due to setback requirements, the buildable area is only 400 sf and 10 feet wide, which means the only buildable option without a variance would be a tiny house, which is not in character with the neighboring properties. Mr. Mahon is therefore requesting a special exception for a single family residence that extends a nonconforming setback. There is a tall, brick wall along the north side of the property, and the previous house was 7 inches off of that property line, and what they are now requesting is 23 inches off of that line. They are also requesting a variance for a rear setback and noted that the back of the house will just have a small deck and grass. Ms. Anderson noted that the majority of lots on Kyle Place are small, but this one is especially small. She said Mr. Mahon already went before the BZA with another architect and was approved, but he has decided to scale back to 1.5 stories from that original plan of 2.5 stories. Since they are reducing the height and scale, they would like to get this exception. This house design is more in character with the neighborhood and resembles the neighboring houses both in design and in house alignment within the lot. She said the design plans include a 2-car driveway on the south side of the lot, which is a City requirement and very necessary in this location since street parking is limited. The north neighbor was in favor of the previous demolition, and Mr. Mahon will be requesting additional support for this but has not had time yet to do so. Ms. Thomas moved that we write a letter of support for the special exception and variance, contingent on the support of the immediate neighbor to the north. Mr. Durfee seconded, and all were in favor. We will submit a letter of support to the BZA.

4. Mr. Joel Adrian was present to represent the owner of 906 Ashley Avenue, who is seeking a variance to the required rear setback and a special exception to extend a nonconforming left side setback. The owner has owned the house since 2018 and is looking to add a master suite to the back of the house in a modest 1-story addition. The extension would be in line with the neighboring house. Mr. Adrian noted that Lee Batchelder, the City's Zoning Administrator, is in favor of this type of addition, which is also in line with what the BAR and BZA prefers for lots like this that are nonconforming to the minimum square footage requirement. Mr. Adrian is unaware of whether his client has yet contacted the neighbors for support. Mr. Bishop likes the proportions and thinks the addition is attractive. Secretary Wilson moved to write a letter of support for the variance and special exception contingent on

receiving support from the immediate neighbors, and Mr. Durfee seconded. All were in favor with none opposed, so we will write a letter of support to the BZA.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

1. Rebecca Bishop does not have an update yet on the potential family event at Corinne Jones Park. She said President Lemajic has been working with her and with the City to try to figure out a plan. The complication is that the event falls between a festival and a recreation event, so they are still working through the details.

2. Madison Lee and Virginia Swift were present from the Preservation Society. They reminded us that they presented their WTNA Area Character Appraisal to us last fall, in collaboration with the Historic Charleston Foundation. They reported that last week the Area Character Appraisal went before the BAR and was accepted by the City. This Appraisal gives historic context of the neighborhood and denotes character-defining features of the neighborhood so that people looking to make changes have something to guide them. They also reported that there will be an unveiling of a new State Historic Marker on 10th Avenue for Gibbes Landing on Halsey Creek, which was a significant spot during the American Revolution. The event will be a block party with food trucks on Friday, June 7 from 6-8pm, and 10th Avenue will be closed between Gordon Street and Winyah Alley from 4:30-8:30pm.

COMMITTEES:

1. Yard of the Month – Congratulations to the May YOM Winner, Estella Justice at 67 St. Margaret Street!

No other Committee reports.

NEW CONCERNS:

1. It was reported that Tim Jarosch has been communicating with the City about how to resolve the flooding issues where Gordon St. meets Rutledge Avenue.

2. Cheryl O'Donnell, Executive Director at Florence Crittenton, was back to give a quick update. She reminded us that she was here a couple of months ago with their prospective buyer to request support for continuing a nonconforming use and for demolition of the Chapel. She said the developers went before the BAR, and the Chapel demolition request was denied. Since the demolition was key to meeting the parking requirement for the number of units they have planned, she said the developers are now reevaluating how to proceed.

3. Mr. Scott said the MARSH Project and the Friends of James Simons are collaborating on a Litter Sweep on Saturday, April 27, from 10am-noon. Volunteers are meeting at James Simons Elementary and then walking from there to pick up litter along the border of the Wagener Terrace and North Central neighborhoods. He welcomed any volunteers to join them.

Ms. Thomas moved to close the meeting, and Secretary Wilson seconded. Meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

The next WTNA meeting will be May 20, 2024 at 7:00pm.