

Minutes (Draft)

Downtown Decatur Neighbors

8 July 2015

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm.

I May Minutes - Motion was made to approve as emailed, properly seconded and approved unanimously.

II Treasurers Report - Jean O'Callaghan There is now a PayPal donate button on the DDN website. George Dusenbury, the DDN president, is still owed \$200 for his initial stake in the DDN start-up and agreed to wait for payback rather than pulling it out of the \$250 balance in the DDN bank account. A concerted membership drive will be discussed and planned starting with the September DDN meeting with an expected kickoff slated in the first quarter of 2016.

III Committee Reports - Buddy Harrell, chair DDN planning committee and resident in one of the 168 units at the Decatur Renaissance Condominiums, gave a brief oral summary of a requested land-use change for the three-acre parking lot adjacent to the four buildings that make up the Renaissance mixed-use development. Extreme Realty has recently requested permission to modify or override the existing easement agreement for the lot above the parking, on behalf of Alpharetta-based North Point Community Church, which wanted to build its seventh church in the metro area on the lot. Buddy said that by a three-to-one ratio the condo owners voted to decline the request for the land-use change. He said that it was his understanding that the City of Decatur would much prefer to see the large parking lot kept on the tax rolls and perhaps used for a senior-living housing development, according to a conversation he had with Lyn Menne, who is the "point person" for City of Decatur Development Authority.

IV Presentation – Fred Boykin, Jr., Decatur City Commissioner - District 1
Fred, who's well-known as a bicycle enthusiast and pedestrian rights advocate, updated the DDN meeting attendees regarding three major roadway and sidewalk projects now underway that would positively benefit bikers, walkers and drivers in downtown Decatur:

1. The Clairemont Road – Church Street – Commerce Street corridor from the McDonald's restaurant to W. Ponce de Leon Ave.

At the intersection by the corner of the First Baptist Church, expect to see changes to the current "slip lane" leading from Clairemont onto Commerce that would narrow the turn lane to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety as well as a change to the traffic signal timing. Once the new housing developments are completed behind Fidelity Bank, the sidewalks will be improved, he added.

2. Two railroad crossings: (a) near the site of the old Dairy Queen on E. Trinity Place and South Candler Street as well as (b) near the Decatur High School on McDonough Street.

The City will work with the railroads to shave the crest of the hill at the Trinity-Candler intersection and install sidewalks. It will also add sidewalks near the railroad crossing by high school at McDonough, which will aid the Ride To School program. These improvements should finish by early 2016.

3. North McDonough streetscape and traffic calming improvements for bikes and pedestrians. Fred noted that the road diet improvements and added bike lane on W. Ponce by the U.S. Post Office will be added to by continuing the bike lane on W. Trinity Place to reach City Hall and then to further link the bicycle path to reach the new streetscapes by Decatur High School and Renfroe Middle School.

Other comments between commissioner and attendees:

Fred's overview sparked a lively discussion among participants about street traffic and desire of many in downtown Decatur to increase walkability in spite of the fact that many commuters living outside the downtown area cut through the city to and from work.

Fred noted that there are plans to build a wide sidewalk with a separate bike path on Church Street from Suburban Plaza to Commerce Street, but that it may take four-to-six years until fruition. Attendees from 335 W. Ponce complained about the danger of turning left or right from the building's parking lot onto W. Ponce with what seems like increased traffic flow on W. Ponce even before the new 250-unit development at 315 W. Ponce is fully built and rented out.

Those who live in the neighborhood of single-family homes behind the 315 W. Ponce apartment development are concerned about the new residents cutting through their quiet streets to access Clairemont Road. Fred said he supports a "no left turn" exit policy from the 315 W. Ponce parking deck onto Ponce de Leon Place and that DDN should consider supporting his position on this.

The commissioner also suggested that DDN should consider designating a representative from its Public Space or Planning Committee to regularly attend City Commission meetings and ask for time at the end of the meeting to advocate for pedestrian rights and request a more specific timetable for the completion of major crosswalk and sidewalk projects now underway.

He said there have also been preliminary discussions within the City to build a bike path from Columbia Drive to the new development planned around the Avondale Marta station.

Wrap up: The next Downtown Decatur Neighbors meeting will be on September 9 at 7 pm at the Decatur Recreation Center on Sycamore Street.

Submitted by Brian McGreevy for Kathie Gannon, Secretary