

Downtown Decatur Neighbors

General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

7:00 – 8:00 pm

Decatur Recreation Center

231 Sycamore Street

Decatur, Georgia 30030

Downtown Decatur Neighbors meet on the second Wednesday of odd number months at the Decatur Recreation Center. The meeting tonight was chaired by **Buddy Harrell**, the Planning & Development Chair, instead of by the absentee president **George Dusenbury**.

Instead of the usual DDN format whereby committee heads give oral reports, the DDN meeting in September featured five special guests.

First up was **Rebecca Hadaway**, who operates the downtown Decatur-based retailer Splash of Olive. She gave a brief introduction to what she called the “fun European tradition” of tasting and comparing gourmet olive oils and balsamic vinegars. Her store features domestic and international extra virgin olive oils that are estate-produced and can be traced from tree to bottle like fine wine. Tip: olive oil doesn’t age well, so it’s important to find what she calls the “crush date” on a bottle to ensure its freshness.

Like wine, balsamic vinegar is made from grapes, Rebecca explained. The farmer presses the juice from white grapes and before it ferments into wine, the artisan begins the long and slow vinegarization process through natural fermentation, followed by progressive concentration by aging the fledgling vinegar in a series of casks made from different types of wood and without the addition of spices or flavorings.

Program. The remainder of the DDN meeting was given over to all four of the current candidates for District 1 City Commissioner. Each made a short introductory presentation and some responded to questions. One of the candidates will succeed Fred Boykin, who will retire later this year, after serving as a Commissioner for more than 15 years.

Life-long Decatur resident **Betty Blondeau** (BettyForDecatur.com) said she thinks Decatur is at a crossroads and she wants to help preserve what makes the city special while balancing a need for “smart sustainable growth.” Now retired, the former arts activist and fundraiser said her previous work skills can transfer to public service: marshaling advocacy groups and maintaining a strong base of support within the business community. Betty wants to devote her newfound free time to Decatur and its citizens, especially the 28% who live downtown.

Melissa Manrow (MelissaManrow.com) who will soon retire from the DeKalb County Sheriff's Department, said her campaign themes will be Community, Consensus and Collaboration. She'd like to see the community character of Decatur remain diverse by having the city promote access to affordable housing. Melissa would also like to see improved safety measures for pedestrians while the burgeoning city better manages the traffic flow.

Tim Martin (TimForDecatur.com) moved to Decatur in 1999 after graduating from Emory University. He has two kids (ages six and four) in Decatur elementary schools. As a financial advisor, he manages people's money and thinks public officials should spend the people's money very wisely. A member of the Decatur Business Association since 2007, Tim served as its president from 2015-2017 and worked closely to build consensus with the city's Downtown Development Authority. Like the other candidates, he thinks the city should increase its walkability and get creative to add more greenspace downtown, such as working with developers to include pocket parks.

Small town girl **Kelly Walsh** (VoteKellyWalsh.com) moved to Decatur in 2005 and now lives here with her family and children. She ran the PTA at Clairmont Elementary School but became more involved in the well-being of her new community in Decatur when she joined the Active Living Advisory Board and its Pedestrian Subcommittee. She won the Hometown Hero Award in 2015 for her community involvement. Kelly said her campaign theme is Keep Decatur Moving and wants the city to become even more walkable, especially in the downtown area. She'd like to see more greenspace in the city for both passive (art exhibitions) and active (sports) users. But given budgetary constraints facing the city, how do we balance doing more with less, Kelly asked.

At the end of the candidate presentations, Rebecca of Splash of Olive set up a table full of bottled samples to taste along with crusty bread to sop up the many flavorful tastings. One can also add the versatile oils and vinegars to many cooking recipes, she added.

The meeting adjourned at 8 pm.

Next General Meeting is November 8, 7:00 PM