

MINUTES

Downtown Decatur Neighbors General Meeting

March 14, 2018

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by George Dusenbury, President, at the Decatur Police Department.

I **January Minutes** - Motion was made to approve as posted on the DDN website, seconded and approved unanimously.

II **Treasures Report** – DDN has a balance of \$488.

Introductions made as several City staff in attendance due to the subject of pedestrian safety related to recent pedestrian death in downtown Decatur. Deputy Chief Richards gave the Welcome. Commissioner Kelly Walsh, Peggy Merris City Manager, David Junger Assistant Manager for Public Works, Courtney Frish, and Michele Rosy.

III Pete Pfeiffer introduced the **Program on Crime and Pedestrian Safety**

Sgt. Joe Bender was the first speaker on Crime. He is with the Downtown Business District, Special Units. They respond to all business related calls. There are also Officers for Traffic Safety and School Resource. He explained the difference between Crimes of Robbery and Armed Robbery. Mantra for the group and to pass on is Be Aware/Alert/Pay Attention!

TIPS: Walkers should pay attention to what's around them; Make eye contact, especially if person makes you feel "uneasy." Look them over; criminals want an easy victim so this can be intimidating. If you are talking on phone, texting etc. you are an easy target.

When entering your residence Do Not Hold Door open for anyone you don't know. If someone pulls door away from you, don't resist AND call police.

Car Break-ins most Always something was left in the car – chargers, bags, anything. If see someone in a parking deck and they make you feel "uneasy" or don't recognize, call police. Check to see if you have cameras in your parking deck.

Recent Robberies: Can't give out details; it takes time to piece together clues. People post rumors and can't control so wait for official reports. Two were at Verizon in December – cell phone stores are like the new banks, can quickly convert to money; Pinewood – was bad, an armed robbery, perpetrator was caught. Several Snatch N Grabs – mostly phones off tables; caught older juveniles who had history of same offenses.

Q and A:

1. Increase in \$\$ solicitations, how to handle? **A:** Atlanta recently closed very large shelter and seeing increase since then. Also we have MARTA station and homeless come there. Police 1st, give verbal warning and pamphlets about rules and resources, 2nd, Written warning. 3rd Arrest.
Always say NO to \$\$ solicitations.
2. Many walk dogs late at night before bedtime, any tips? **A:** Keep your phone in your hand on the police number. Response to downtown call is 2 min.

Downtown Beats: W & E Ponce Ave from Post Office to Church St; South to the High School; North to McDonalds. If see their car parked in an area means they are walking around.

Initiative to Establish a Camera Data Base. Police will collect all voluntary submissions of camera locations and plot them on a map. Police will contact you as needed, for footage possibly capturing crime related activity. Several hundred positive responses to date. Check your condo garages, businesses and contact Sgt Bender. Policy details are still being finalized.

The audience quickly brought up the related issues of traffic danger to pedestrians from speeding cars and running lights.

Hilary Merlin spoke to the audience about her mother Judi, an active downtown resident who wanted the pedestrian lifestyle. She was recently killed in a tragic car/pedestrian accident while in the crosswalk at the Kroger store on Commerce. Our condolences to the family and the downtown Renaissance condo community where she lived.

Audience comments reflected the concern of downtown residents about speeding, not stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalks, and how can we protect our pedestrians from these dangers. Many feel they are not heard when such issues are raised at meetings and that it is important for us to know what the City is doing.

City Response to Pedestrian Safety Concerns. City Manager Peggy Merris assisted by the Public Works engineers gave comments on the City's activities, noting:

- City looks at all intersections as often as they can.
- County owns the signals and City has a consultant who works with the county on signalization (ADD: timing).
- Whenever a problem is reported they look at the buttons and lights bulbs, etc.
- Commerce is a State Route so their hands are tied. City engineers explained they are working with State Department of Transportation (GDOT) engineers to provide for a pedestrian lead-time on the Commerce cross walk.

They explained how the timing of signals works – so the “*don’t walk*” message provides for lag time to finish a crossing that has already started. This will give peds. an earlier start plus the lag time.

Q and A:

1. Everyone knows how bad commerce is and in the DDN safe crossing recommendations we’ve advocated for more crosswalks and improving the sidewalk - What else can we do to help make Commerce safe? **A:** Contact GDOT District 7 Engineer, Kathy Zahul. Also there are two GDOT Commissioners that serve Decatur, Robert Brown and Stacy Key. Plans for road diets and bike lanes are part of the City’s on going Transportation Plan. **(NOTE: Transportation Final Plan Update scheduled for May 10, 6:00 – 8:00 at Decatur Rec Center on Sycamore.)**

2. Oliver House residents asked about the mid-block crosswalk they have been asking for over 2 years, with no response. They have a mid-block Marta bus stop across from their building. **A:** The bus stop should be moved as it isn’t safe to cross mid-block.

It was suggested the City engineer meet with Oliver House residents to find a solution. Also, perhaps 4-way stops could be used for seriously dangerous intersections.

3. People also brought up speeding/enforcement, the many curb cuts/driveways downtown and many movements at intersections with turning cars and pedestrians crossing. Would it help to have more police or use of motorcycles again? **A:** Basically Yes. City does have to monitor its resources and it has All Officers doing enforcement.

NEXT STEPS: DDN will meet with GDOT Commissioners and Engineers and bring back a Report at next meeting so the downtown community can start to formulate a Plan for what they can do.

Business Highlight – Vivid on Ponce Place was introduced to us by storeowner, Michael Minga. A home décor, gift, jewelry shop, they were previously on the Square for 9 years. They count on pedestrian traffic so they too want to be a part of the solution. Stop by, they are open 7 days a week.

NEXT MEETING: May 9, Wednesday, 7:00, Decatur Rec Center.

Submitted by: Kathie Gannon, Secretary.