

## MINUTES

### Downtown Decatur Neighbors General Meeting

January 9, 2019

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by George Dusenbury, President.

**I Minutes** - Motion was made to approve November Minutes and Approved.

**II Treasurers Report** - \$673 Balance. Two expenses pending.

**III Presidents Recap of 2018** – Pedestrian Safety received attention especially following the death of one of our downtown residents. Crosswalks, Signage and Sidewalks continue to be a priority. Greenspace Committee not giving up on downtown greenspace despite lack of enthusiasm from City so will change focus to using the Trinity/Commerce space and finding a new approach to adding greenspace. WestPonce which was birthed by DDN Planning Committee has taken on it's own life now and had their first, of hopefully annual, Event. A Downtown Master Plan remains high on our list of priority needs but again little enthusiasm from electeds. We will need to gear up for the City's 10-year update of their Strategic Plan BUT with little former attention to downtown, more than an Update is needed. WATCH for a NEW Survey – What are your Priorities for the attention of YOUR Neighborhood Association? What are you willing to give your time to?

**IV – Program – Kathryn Kolb**, was introduced by Betty Blondeau, Greenspace Chair. They are working on **Save Decatur's Trees** with the City's Sustainability Board, to update the City's Tree Ordinance. Kathryn has worked on Tree Ordinances throughout Atlanta's greater metro region. She is a principal in Eco Addendum.org a non-profit that educates through hands on experiences. She gave us an enlightened tree history of our region from the 1820's through the 1960's growth boom to today. Our steep slopes, stream corridors, rocky areas allowed us to preserve trees and our older neighborhoods to be built to grade. There was no such thing as clear cutting and leveling the earth to build. PROBLEM NOW is grading destroys the soil so new trees are basically planted in toxic dirt. Teardown lots grade the entire lot for bigger houses so no trees are left in side and rear yards and we lose more trees to house the same number of residents. 80% of trees are in single-family zoned areas. Laws require planting new trees but with the soil damage we can't replace our forests. Process for building doesn't even look at trees until the very end – when too late.

Stormwater Regulations are also destroying trees.

Promoting a 4 Point Approach to turn around our loss of trees:

1. Plan from the beginning of Process.
2. Preserve the best, highest value trees using a tree matrix weighted on native species.
3. Maximum sustainable footprint without grading the entire lot so can save some high value trees.
4. Effective enforcement.

Will need additional tools that a revised Ordinance can provide.

- A minimum greenspace requirement (Not counting apartment balconies).
- Cluster design for new subdivisions.
- Conservation easements and tax relief to homeowners

Benefits can be Documented to show improved health equated to thousands of \$\$ in annual income. Mental health benefits and the preservation of community character to name a few.

Several cities in metro are in process of taking a new look at their Ordinance and it is hoped that Decatur will too. There is a Save Decatur Trees Facebook page and a Petition.

**Kelly Walsh, Commissioner** gave a brief update of City news and welcomed Andrea Arnold as City Manger. Community Planning will be high on the agenda this year.

**V - Committee Updates – Planning – Buddy Harrell** – Committee meets on the even numbered months between general meetings. We meet at the Marlay and need new members. Looking at Code improvements and gearing up for the City's community planning process to get a focus on downtown this time around. Please send an email to [downtowndecaturneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:downtowndecaturneighbors@gmail.com) to join our group.

**Public Safety – Pete Pfeiffer's** report was given in abstention – they are focusing on the e-scooter issue hoping to require helmets, not on sidewalks, where to park and how to ensure enforcement. Our March General Meeting will focus on the scooter issue.

**VI – Nominations and Election of Officers.** The Board acting as the Nominations committee announced the slate of Officers being the current Office holders. The floor was opened for nominations. Seeing none the slate was motioned for approval and all were reelected. An addition to the current office holders is a Co-chair for the Greenspace Committee, Lisa Schreiber was introduced and elected as co- chair.

There will be some By-Laws Amendments at our next meeting to be held March 13.

Submitted by: Kathie Gannon, Secretary