

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
VILLAGE OF ARDEN
SEPTEMBER 2, 2008

Bill Theis, Advisory Chair, called the Meeting to Order at 7:35 p.m. at the Buzz Ware Village Center.

The Following were in attendance:

Bill Theis, Advisory Chair
David Michelson, Treasurer
Denis O'Regan, Safety
Elizabeth Varley, Forest
Cookie Ohlson, Audit
Larry Walker, Town Secretary
Warren Rosenkranz Visitor

Steven Threefoot, Town Chairman
Jeff Politis, Budget
Willard Glenn, BWVC
Mike Curtis, Trustee
Steven Blades, Civic
Ray Siegfried, Community Planning

The following Committees were not represented:

Archives (No Report sent)
Registration (No Report sent)

The Order of the Committees to report to the Town Meeting will be in alphabetical order.

ARCHIVES – No Report

AUDUT – Cookie Ohlson

Cookie reported that the Committee has been reviewing the Annual Audit, and they will be starting to work on BWVC accounts.

BUDGET – Jeff Politis

The Budget Committee will present the Proposed Budget at this Meeting. Jack Dolmetsch has put in a lot of work assembling the information from the various Town Committees and from the Trustees. Jeff only had one copy of the Proposed Budget, so he will electronically send it out to all Committee Chairs for final review.

Jack said that the projected budget amounts for each committee will be requested in August, and those replies will be included in the Draft Budget. But if any committee does not contact the Budget Committee in August with a different Budget request, the Committee will use the proposed figure from the Three Year Budget Projection. This will simplify the Budget Process, and minimize the many reminder calls that normally had to be made.

David said that the Trustees will make their presentation about the Discretionary Expenditures but the Budget Chairman will present the “Community Standard of Living”, which the Residents actually approve. He said that the Town's expenses will be higher, because the Town will now include some expenses that have previously been paid by the Trustees, like insurance, audit, etc. The overall total will be the same, but there will be shifting of the various categories. The goal of this change is to make the expenditures of the Town more transparent

Jeff said that the Contingency Fund will increase to \$8000, but it will give financial flexibility to the Town.

Steven said we need to put together a policy to allow the Town to spend plus or minus 5% of any line item, so that there is some financial flexibility to minimize situations where a special Budget Referendum would have to be made.

Jeff said that there probably will be considerable discussion about the new format, and that likely will be longer than it really must be.

Mike Curtis felt that the Trustees needed a Prudent Reserve, so possibly there should be a proportional distribution of the funds.

There needs to be additional discussions on the amount of the Prudent Reserve and who should control the account where the funds are kept. This will be added to the Agenda for the Advisory Retreat.

BWVC – Willard Glenn

Willard said that the BWVC will make some changes in their budget presentation so that it will be simpler and clearer.

The YWCA is no longer a tenant, so the building is open more. It will also have a negative effect on the income

CIVIC – Steven Blades

Steven said that the Committee has asked for bids to repaint the speed humps in the Town. Some trees have been taken down in the Stile Garden. Road repairs have been started

Denis asked if the Civic Committee had taken any actions on the Safety Committee's audit of the intersection safety and restricted sight lines.. Steven said that this had not been discussed specifically.

Steven Threefoot suggested that there be a joint Civic-Safety Meeting to discuss this to decide the procedure to be used in the future. Civic Committee does have the initial responsibility to contact the individual Leaseholder to request that the bushes, shrubs, etc. be removed to allow mandated sight lines. Cookie Ohlson asked if there would be a charge if the Town eventually removes the offending vegetation, since no removal charges would encourage residents to do nothing while they wait for the free Town pruning back. Steven said that there would be a charge if the work were done by the Town.

COMMUNITY PLANNING – Ray Siegfried

The Committee is continuing with the ADU process, preparing documentation and certifications. Ray will meet with NCC Land Use in early September to work out some of the outstanding problems and issues. There are two properties that do not really fill the criteria of ADU, but they need to be considered. There are problems with the 5 leaseholds where the owner does not live on the leasehold. Steven intends that all of these special cases will be included in the total list of ADUs to be certified by NCC.

A number of residents have complained that a few residents have used the New Castle County Code Enforcement Process to annoy other Residents, and recently this has become blatant harassment. Ray asked Denis O'Regan to comment on the process and problem, since he had personally been affected.

Denis explained the new "instant ticket" process now in effect. In his case, which went through the normal process, an anonymous complaint was filed with NCC, and a Code Inspector came to the site to see if there actually was a violation. If violations are observed, pictures are taken for the record, and copies are given to the Leaseholder. In some cases, a Courtesy Letter is sent to the home owner, but in other cases an "Instant Ticket" for \$50.00 is issued. Denis said that you can appeal the ticket, but first it must be paid. Maybe you will get your money back in 45-60 days, and maybe not.... In his case, the Code Inspector ticketed some items, and did not mention any other problems. A short time later a second Instant Ticket was issued for other issues that were not mentioned during the first inspection. It is a process that does not seem either fair, nor does it make sense.

Larry Walker said that the roof of his house had been cited by the Code Enforcement Officer, claiming there was too much construction debris still left on the roof. That was an example of how trivial the complaints could be, and that the situation was out of hand.

Steve suggested that a letter be sent to Chris Coons expressing the concerns of the Village of Arden, expressing hope that the Arden situation could be reviewed, and that perhaps enforcement could be temporarily suspended while the Village and the County work on modifying the process and standards.

Denis strongly felt that a letter needed to be sent to the NCC Code Enforcement Supervisor, saying that there are serious concerns among the Town Officials and Residents on how this process is being misused for a very few individuals' personal vendettas.

Cookie Ohlson asked that she sympathized with the people who had been reported and ticketed, but was concerned that there might not be enough thought and consideration in changing this community-wide process.

Steven suggested that a County representative come to the September Meeting to explain the new Instant Ticket Process, and describe the violations they are concerned with. The Appeal Process could be explained, so individuals can know how to proceed. This would give the Residents an opportunity to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the way this has been handled recently in Arden.

Ray will ask that someone from the NCC Code Enforcement Office come to the September Meeting.

Steven asked if Community Planning will make an recommendation on funding by the Village for the FAA lawsuit. Ray said that this had not been discussed.

FOREST – Elizabeth Varley

Elizabeth Varley said that the Committee is working to resolve an encroachment issue with a Leaseholder. There is a tree in the woods that might have to come down because it is a threat to a leaseholder's house. The Committee is looking at creating new paths in the Sherwood Forest Annex, and these will have to be constructed. However, there is no Trails Grant Money in the State Budget for this coming year.

Steven suggested that the Committee present by January 2009 an overview to the Town about the successes, difficulties, and processes dealt with by the Forest Committee after a complete year of being a full Town committee.

REGISTRATION - No Report

SAFETY - Denis O'Regan

After several discussions, the Committee eliminated the Line Item for the Town Watch Coordinator. There has been no connection between Town Watch, and reducing any vandalism or crime.

Denis suggested that the three Safety Committees of the Ardens meet together to decide on how to restart this. The incident reports will continue to be made at the Town Meetings with information provided by the NCC Police. The concern is that the Town is not getting financial benefit for the money spent.

Steven suggested that the Safety Committee come to the Town Meeting with a clear statement on how the issue of Town Watch will move forward, so that it will minimize questions, comments, and discussions.

TRUSTEES - Mike Curtis

Mike announced that the Cressman's are selling their leaseholds, so the Trustees plan to insist that the encroaching fence be removed. The Trustees do not intend to transfer the lease until the fence has been moved back to the property line. Steven said that the difference in this situation was that the fence was on the Right of Way, so the Civic Committee has the responsibility to enforce Right of Way issues. The Civic Committee gave a waiver for a few years in delaying the fence moving, and this statement and agreement have not changed.

Steve Blades said the Committee told the Cressmans by letter that the fence would remain until it needed to be replaced. Mike Curtis was concerned that there are funds in escrow from the previous owners to pay for the fence move, and that the money might disappear in the house sale process..

Denis suggested that the Civic' Committee's letter to the Cressmans be sent to the Trustees stating the existing policy of the Town. Steve suggested that Civic revisit this, and confirm that the policy stands. Then the Realtor can notify any prospective buyer of this pre-existing agreement.

Larry was asked to send a letter to the Realtor notifying him of the Civic Committee Policy and letter about the "fence relocation agreement.". Then the Realtor must notify all prospective buyers of this pre-existing situation. Mike was concerned that the money escrowed for moving the fence needed to be considered, and passed on to the new owner.

OTHER ISSUES

Steven said that the Residents needed an Update on the FAA suit, and it should be covered during Correspondence.

David Michelson will give the Financial Report for the Town Committees and the Town's Budget only.

Steven still does not have any information about the status of the settling of the Johanna Schroeder Estate, and he will ask the Executor if the final amount of the bequest will be available by the time of Town Meeting.

Steve asked if anyone has heard anything about an Alternative Assessment. No one heard anything.

Warren said that there will be Motion to move Town Meeting to the BWVC. Steven said he will not hold a Town Meeting where all of the participants could not see each other, so he would be against this. Steve said that if the main reason for the move were a financial issue, then it might be possible to ask the Arden Club to lower the Rent for the use of the Hall. There is also the issue of inadequate parking and lighting if the Sherwood Green were used as parking. At the present time, it would be difficult. Willard said that a "mock up" of seats might be used to determine feasibility. Warren said that he plans to bring up the Motion as an individual. Steve said that the Motion would most likely be referred to the BWVC for study and recommendations, or the Motion would be tabled.

On October 25, 2008, the first annual Hamburger Lecture will be held. The subject is "Restoring Historic Houses While Going Green."

Bill announced he will decide the date for the Advisory Retreat in mid-November, as well as the location. Some tentative topics are:

1. The Arden Website
2. Leveraged Services Agreement with NCC
3. Prudent Reserve

The cookies and juice will be provided by the Community Planning Committee.

The Meeting was Adjourned is 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by,

Larry Walker
Secretary to the Village