

Advisory Committee Retreat  
Village of Arden  
Saturday, November 21, 2009

**Present:**

*Advisory Committee Chair* - Bill Theis

*Town Officers* - Steven Threefoot, David Michelson, Elaine Hickey

*Committee Representatives* - Lisa Mullinax, Denis O'Regan, Warren Rosenkranz, Ray Seigfried, Cookie Ohlson, Cecilia Vore, Elizabeth Varley, Larry Walker

*Trustees* - Carl Falco, Connee McKinney, Mike Curtis

**Advisory Committee Chair - Bill Theis**

Meeting called to order at 10:15 a. m.

Bill successfully negotiated with Arden Club President Steve Cohen to waive the rental fee for all future Arden Town Meetings held in the Gild Hall. Bill read the letter that Steve sent to the Advisory Committee confirming the waiver and thanking the Town for proposing an annual donation to the Club.

**Town Chair – Steven Threefoot**

***Town Meetings***

The new process of having the Motions that will be made at Town Meeting typed up ahead of time and available for the attendees to pick up at the reception table, is working well. In the future the handouts on the reception table will be better organized and labeled so everyone can clearly know what is available.

The Advisory Committee will set the priority of Motions and decide which items need to be presented before Committee Reports and set a time limit on discussion if they feel it is necessary. However, the Town Chair would like to see all Motions brought up in Committees since that is where issues should be resolved.

***Animal Control***

Resident Joe deGrazia has two indoor/outdoor cats and he reported that neighbors are complaining about them interfering with the bird population. Arden does have a dog control ordinance but none relating to cats. Residents should contact the County regarding cat issues.

***FOIA Reminder***

Committees need to give ample notice – 7 days - prior to all their public meetings. Bulletin Board notices should be on 3x5 cards; announcements made in *The Page*; and the official notice on the Arden.gov website. The announcement must include: date, time, location, and brief agenda. Minutes should be posted on the website.

***Record Retention***

The Secretary will find out from the State Archives how long we need to keep our different types of records, especially the election ballots. She will also pursue getting the Town Records into electronic format.

## **Trustees – Connee McKinney**

### ***Trustee Website***

The Trustees would like to develop a website, linked to the Village of Arden website, that will be password secure and allow leaseholders access to their own records.

## **Treasurer – David Michelson**

### ***Vouchers***

All committees are reminded to submit their vouchers in a timely manner.

### ***Grant Applications***

All committees must send the Treasurer copies of any grant applications they submit. The Treasurer needs to be aware of all Committee financial resources and also any grant fund restrictions.

### ***Committee Funds Updates***

Each month Committee Chairs will receive via email an update of their current budget funds. The Treasurer will compile these updates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed. of the month.

**Budget Committee** – There was no Budget Committee Representative in attendance but David Michelson presented the following Budget issues:

### ***Treasurer Position***

When the Treasurer position comes up for nomination the Budget Committee would like to vet the names to ensure the nominees have the required skills.

Discussion: The Treasurer's Procedure Manual and the Job Description can be used to measure an individual's qualifications. An audit system, both internal and external is also in place. It is best to avoid too much structure or codification on procedure in order to allow for useful changes to be made in the future. Town Officers are accountable for how the Town money is received and spent and must ensure transparency on what our obligations and resources are. Financial policies and procedures have been put in place over the last six months and they will be documented.

### ***Fiscal Year***

The Budget Committee would like to align the fiscal year closer to when the Budget is forecast. They would like to figure the Budget when there is more certainty on what the expenses will be, especially the County Taxes.

Discussion: Since there were no representatives from the Budget Committee present to address Advisory Committee questions, no action on fiscal year alignment will be taken at this time.

### ***Capital Funds***

The Budget Committee would like to set up a Reserve Fund.

Discussion: There is no mechanism in place at this time for the Town to build up funds from year to year in its Budget. There is a zero based Budget every year. If something happens that requires the use of Capital Funds the Town asks the Trustees for the funds. The Trustees Reserve is set by the Assessors.

## **Community Planning – Ray Seigfried**

### ***Committee Policy & Procedures***

Community Planning would like to see that all Committees have documented Policies and Procedures. Each Committee should submit their current policies & procedures in a Word document to the Town Secretary. The Red Book will then be updated.

### ***Annexing 5 houses***

There are 5 properties on Harvey Rd. and Meadow Ln. that are not incorporated into any of the Ardens. Community Planning would like to explore the possibility of incorporating them into Arden.

Discussion: It would be totally up to the residents of those homes as to whether or not they wanted their properties to be incorporated into Arden, or if the properties came up for sale Arden could possibly consider purchasing. The residents of those homes are welcomed to participate in the Arden Community to whatever extent they wish. Some are very active in the community.

### ***Vacant Houses***

Community Planning would like to pursue the County regarding vacant houses in Arden. What responsibility does the Village have for dealing with this issue directly?

Discussion: Do we want to get the County involved by bringing up Code violations which may be purely aesthetic? Perhaps the Trustees could approach the problem from the standpoint of how these neglected properties affect adjacent property values. The Safety Committee may also be able to enforce Code violations. Unfortunately the Assessors have not changed the assessment on those houses and the Trustees could not take action from the devaluation standpoint. As a municipality, we need to decide how the safety issues need to be addressed either through the Safety Committee or the County. Connee McKinney pointed out the keywords in the Lease are “injurious” and “disorderly” and whatever decision is made it needs to be fair and not arbitrary. The Trustees, Community Planning, and the Safety Committee will meet and work on it. They will come back to the Advisory Committee with a recommendation.

### ***Sign Ordinance***

Arden’s single commercial property, located at the community entrance at Harvey & Marsh, displays a very large unattractive sign. The Committee would like to pursue some type of sign ordinance.

Discussion: It is not a good idea to legislate on aesthetics.

### ***Arden Zip Code***

Could Arden pursue getting its own zip code and have Arden designated as a legitimate address?

Discussion: Arden is not likely to ever get a separate zip code from 19810, but we are able to use Arden as our legitimate address. However, on Driver’s Licenses we are unable to have Arden alone as the address. The Driver’s License will say Arden, Wilmington, DE. We could pursue through our State representatives to have that changed. Also, magazine publishers/distributors and other commercial mailing establishments identify zip code 19810 strictly with Wilmington in their databases, and that is not likely to change.

### ***Arden Website***

Danny Schweers, our website manager has set up guidelines for posting – what gets posted and what doesn't get posted. Those guidelines are on the website.

### **Buzz Ware Village Center – Warren Rosenkranz**

#### ***Long Term Contract***

The BWVC is about to sign a one year rental contract with a spiritual group who will use the entire space from 8 AM-1PM on Sundays starting in January. There will be 40-60 people, 20-40 cars. They will need permission to park on the Sherwood Green.

Discussion: One year seems like a long period when it is unclear how the presence of 20-40 cars on the Sherwood Green will affect the community every Sunday morning. What about the ACRA usage for 5 weeks in the summer? Warren said they have agreed to work around that. How does this impact community life every Sunday morning if the Green is used as a parking lot? The suggestion is to negotiate a 6 month contract with the option to renew. The BWVC will consult with the Village attorney and definitely incorporate an out clause in the contract. The Village Officers should also be involved in the signing of a long term contract. Warren will send the information to Steven who will forward it to the attorney. The subject will be brought up at the January Town Meeting for Assembly input and a decision made at the March Town Meeting as to whether or not to extend the contract for another 6 months. It was also suggested that the group place an invitation in *The Page* for the Arden community to join them at their Sunday meeting.

#### ***Town Office Sign***

Town Chair Steven Threefoot suggests a sign be placed outside the BWVC Building to indicate that this is the location of the Town & Trustee Office. Civic will arrange to have a sign made and installed.

### **Registration – Cecilia Vore**

#### ***Absentee Voting***

The Committee will present a proposal for Absentee Voting at the January Town Meeting. It has been modeled on other direct democracies that have Absentee Voting. The process cannot be in place by the March Town Meeting since it will require a change in legislation and readings at three consecutive Town Meetings.

#### ***Volunteer Involvement***

In January we will be asking for nominations for committee elections with the March Advisory Meeting as the deadline. All Committee Chairs are asked to submit any changes to their Committee description to Cecilia so that she can update the “How Arden Works” and have it sent out with *The Page*. Steven pointed out that it is also beneficial to record volunteer hours. This data is valuable information to provide when applying for State grants.

How do we encourage more volunteer involvement?

Discussion:

- 1) We need to stress that we really do need an individual's help when we ask them to become a nominee – they are not just a name on a piece of paper.
- 2) Encourage newcomers to get involved in the community:
  - a. By attending Committee meetings and offering to help even if they are not Committee members.
  - b. By becoming involved in Arden Club and ACRA activities so that they can get to know the community and the community can get to know them.

- 3) Ask longstanding committee members to not run again in order to give newcomer nominees a better chance to get elected.

### **Forest – Elizabeth Varley**

#### ***Taking down Forest Trees***

Some residents, and even some non-residents who live on adjoining property, have asked for forest trees to be taken down because they pose a threat to nearby homes. This is the reason why the Forest Committee requested an increase in their Budget in the coming year. The Committee needs guidelines on how to fund it. Will cutting down forest trees set a precedent? Do we ignore it and take a chance on a tremendous liability?

Discussion: We should find out how the State and County Parks handle this issue and have a codified procedure put in place. The Committee could possibly use Schroeder Bequest funds, but the application process for those funds has not been finalized yet.

#### ***Harvesting Forest Wood***

There is a need to address the Forest Policy on harvesting forest wood. It is not a good idea to harvest for burning but Denis O'Regan suggested that Arden artists be allowed to harvest it if they would like to work on a project for the community use, e.g. signs, tables, chairs, etc.

### **Playground – Larry Walker**

#### ***Soccer Goal Posts***

The posts are not in good enough condition to sell. The Concord Soccer Association has agreed to take them.

### **Audit – Cookie Ohlson**

Cookie stressed the fact that Committee Chairs need to send copies of any grants they applied for to the Town Treasurer so that they are in the records when audits are performed.

### **Safety – Denis O'Regan**

The No Parking sign is going up in front of the Field Theater. The previous one was too faded to read. A Stop sign is going up at Sherwood and Lovers Lane, and a Do Not Enter sign at Sherwood off of Harvey Rd.

The third reading of Ordinance 11 will be at the January Town Meeting.

The Safety Blog is on the website. A blurb about the blog will go in *The Page*.

### **Archives – Lisa Mullinax**

Archives has hired a part time curator, Keith Minsinger who has a Masters in Museum Studies. He will be there during all the Museum open hours and some additional hours for a total of 8-10 hours a week. He is salaried by a grant's restricted funds for one contract year.

### **New Business**

Elizabeth Varley suggested that the Village look into long term funding to finance an expanded parking project around the BWVC.

The Meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Elaine Hickey Secretary, Village of Arden