

Community Planning Committee
Minutes, 15 April 2009

Present: Ron Meick, Danny Schweers, Ray Seigfried, and Sally Sharpe. Also in attendance were two Arden trustees: Mike Curtis and Connee McKinney.

Ray Seigfried, convenor, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. at the Buzz Ware Village Center.

Committee Officers and Appointments

The following were elected or appointed unanimously, with enthusiasm and lusty cheers:

Chair: Ray Seigfried

Secretary: Danny Schweers

Memorial Garden Sub-Committee Chair: Ruth Bean

Memorial Garden Liaison: Ron Meick

Before the next meeting, Ray Seigfried will be in contact with a member who has not been able to attend meetings to see if this member is still interested.

Future Meeting Dates

We agreed to meet at 7:00 p.m. (not 7:30) every third Wednesday for the rest of the year 2009:

May 20

June 17

July 15

August 19

September 16

October 21

November 18

December 16

Additional Domicile Units, Split Lots

A leaseholder has requested a new ADU within an existing domicile. While the trustees like this particular request because the domicile and the leasehold are both large, they do not want to begin asking New Castle County to approve new ADUs until they, Community Planning, and the Town Assembly agree to a policy; that is, whatever they do for one leaseholder, they want to do for all.

A policy on new ADUs, for example, might limit approval to houses and leaseholds with certain as-yet-unspecified square footages. Even if the trustees approve an ADU, it still has to be approved by New Castle County.

The trustees also raised concerns about leaseholders who ask to split their lots. Should this be allowed, whatever the reason, and, if there is a financial benefit from this action, who should benefit?

Ray Seigfried agreed to serve as liaison with the trustees and requested that they give the committee something in writing in two weeks outlining their concerns and possible solutions.

At one point, Mike Curtis began to say something about Henry George. Danny, in exaggerated pantomime, rolled back the sleeve on his left wrist and looked at a non-existent watch, as though to say, "How long will this take?" That prompted Mike to tell a story about a Single Taxer.

Years ago, at a funeral in the Single-Tax community of Fair Hope, Alabama, the casket was ready to be lowered into the ground but those gathered for the funeral had to wait while someone ran to get the straps. To fill the time, the minister asked if anyone had something to say about the deceased. When no one immediately responded, one of the mourners said, "Well, if no one has anything to say about Joe, I'd like to say something about the Single Tax." Single Taxers, apparently, are ready at any moment to talk about Henry George and his solution to the world's economic problems and his solution to disparities of wealth.

Instant Ticketing

Danny summarized last month's hearing on New Castle County Land Use code enforcement. He said most of the 25 residents at the hearing were in favor of more relaxed restrictions in some areas of the code, specifically overgrown grass and tree branches on the ground. While some favored total exemption of Arden from the ticketing process, most liked the idea that leaseholders could be ticketed for items left in yards such as junked vehicles, tires and appliances; for piles of trash and garbage, for over-sized vehicles parked on the leasehold, and for unkempt swimming pools. No one wanted tickets issued for branches that fall into the yard or grass growing higher than eight inches. Many residents at the hearing want an orderly process that tickets non-trivial violations, a process that weeds out people who complain needlessly. There was some consensus that the County should monitor who is complaining and should ignore complainers who make repeated calls if many of those calls are for trivial violations.

Two misconceptions about Instant Ticketing are that it is instant and that violations are criminal rather than civil. Tickets, by statute, are not issued until after a warning is issued, giving the violator ten days to comply with county land use code before a citation is written. Violations under the old code were criminal and were tried in court, but, under the new code, violations are civil and not tried in court. Those ticketed have 21 days to appeal a citation but, regardless of whether the citation is appealed

or not, the leaseholder must pay the \$50 fine within 30 days or the fine will be doubled. Tickets successfully appealed result in a refund. Tickets unpaid result in increased tax liability and possible liens on the violator's leasehold. So, while a ticket is easy to ignore, the consequences of ignoring it may not be.

Ray, in discussions with County Land Use officials, learned that they might be willing to have a process where any call of violation must go through the Trustees first before going to the county. Connee said this would be a nightmare since we are amateurs in this area and have no legal structure to guide us. She was told by County Councilman John Cartier that the Trustees would be "out of their minds" to do this, because the legal pitfalls are so many, not to mention the problems deciding which friends get cited and which do not.

Danny agreed to pursue investigations in this area and will report back to the committee in May.

Sherwood Green Parking Lot

Residents have been meeting to plan a paved parking lot on Sherwood Green. Sally wondered why the Community Planning Committee had not been included in these discussions. She was deputized to be the committee's liaison to this ad hoc planning group and to report back at the next meeting.

Prior to 1960, said Mike Curtis, the Arden Club had no parking lot and used Sherwood Green for parking. This practice has continued, as needed, when events at Gild Hall attract more cars than can fit into their parking lot. The overflow then parks on the grass along the east side of the green, adjacent to B.R. Phillip's leasehold. This ruins the lawn, and some drivers explore the entire green, leaving ruts everywhere. Also, now that the Buzz Ware Village Center is being used for so many community events, it needs more parking than the few spots located out front along The Highway. If nothing is going on at Gild Hall, people use the Arden Club's parking lot for Buzz events. If the Club and the Buzz both have events, even an additional parking lot may not be enough to hold all the cars.

Next Meeting

We adjourned at 9:17 p.m. The next meeting will be May 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectively submitted,
Danny Schweers, Committee Secretary