

Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA)
1 May 2012

The Board of Directors (BoD) of OANA came together on our new regularly scheduled meeting day of the first Tuesday of the month at our normal meeting time of 4 PM at the Common Room of the Regency Apartments. Members in attendance were Ted Siff, our leader, Albert Stowell, Ray Canfield, John Horton, Rick Hardin, Perry Lorenz and Blake Tollett. Paul Isham and Bill Schnell sent their regrets.

Our first order of business was to review the minutes from last month. As stated in the minutes, due to a lack of quorum at the meeting no official business took place but we took in a lot of information. The minutes were noticed, and with one minor correction and by consent, Bill will be asked to post them to our website.

Albert told us that there had been no change in our bank account, so we have a little over \$3,500.

Although he submitted no formal report, John briefed us on the goings on of the various governmental entities that interface with OANA:

We first paid particular attention to the purchase by Travis County of the parking lot at the NE corner of West 11th and San Antonio Streets. If the 7.25 million purchase price reported in the American Statesman is accurate, and complete details of the transaction are not yet available, then the county has paid around \$800 per square foot for the real estate. This estimated purchase price should be of interest to property owners throughout the neighborhood. John was tasked by the BoD to look more in depth at this.

The County has formed a Citizens' Advisory Task Force to help them navigate through the planned expansion of the Civil Courthouse and OANA has been asked to seat a representative. As our Governmental Relations Committee Chair, John was tasked by the BoD with advising the County on this projected public/private partnership envisioned on the block just to the south of Republic Square. During our discussion it was brought out that the project is conceived as purely office with no residential use, and as preliminarily designed, with very limited if any public parking. In addition, we noted the recently completed Federal Courthouse on the west side of the Square has less than 100 parking spaces of any kind. The BoD wondered that since courthouses by their very nature are open public forums where attendance is more structured rather than casual that this apparent shortage of public parking could be not well thought out. Recognizing a need for the new courthouse campus to be centrally located and easily and conveniently accessible by the public, we went further and discussed whether the required courtrooms might serve the public need better at another location. It was noted that this block is in the heart of a newly vigorous residential/entertainment district and has no Capital View Corridor limitations. John was again tasked with keeping us advised on the situation.

It was noted that in Bill's email of regret for not being able to attend, he did not mention anything being new Membership/Marketing/Camaraderie wise.

Albert and Ted discussed the following Planning & Zoning matters:

The 7 Rio project is under way with beginning demolition to be followed by excavation for the parking garage. This is to be a residential project with ground level retail. So far the developers have honored their monetary commitment to Shoal Creek

At 705 North Lamar the demolition permit has been released and we are anticipating a multistory parking structure with limited retail.

ACC continues to bring forward its master plan for the W. 12th Street campus and Albert and Ted are still engaged with their oversight group. With the ongoing explosion of attendance at community colleges nationwide, the BoD discussed whether the projected enrollment figures for this campus were perhaps somewhat conservative. We will be meeting with the school further down the road as this unfolds so we will have the opportunity to encourage a bolder vision of anticipated capacity. These discussions are to be tempered with the idea that the campus has somewhat limited capacity to expand further into the neighborhood.

We then had a discussion on the newly implemented expansion of the metered parking hours in the south part of the neighborhood. Our understanding was that the northern boundary of the expanded hours was to be W. 10th Street but they are up to W. 11th Street. That cuts into the ability for our residents along W. 11th to sleep in on Saturday morning as Albert reports enforcement patrols hitting the streets promptly at 8 AM. John was tasked by the BoD to explore further into this.

We then discussed generally the proposed sale of the Thomas C. Green Water Treatment Plant by the City to private developers. The original understandings of the terms and conditions of sale have changed over time and this may not come to signing. From news reports, one of the areas of concern is the affordable housing component that will be on the site. The ownership of the multi-level underground parking structure that would be under the entire tract has shifted from the City to the developer and this affects the economics of the project.

Perry reported that his understanding is that the project at 311 Bowie Street progresses. The owners have engaged a tree moving firm to dig up the heritage pecan tree located in the center of the site and relocate it to the Shoal Creek side of the property. This is a relocation of a heritage tree not a removal so no further governmental permits are required. The City and the project need to utilize a 12-foot easement along the creek to relocate some utilities, so OANA will continue to remind the relevant folks that the creek has a master plan with a concurrent vision of seamless pedestrian access and movement.

We revisited the proposed sale of the Thomas C. Green Water Treatment Plant when Ted talked to us about Parks & Open Spaces. Below are the minutes from last month's discussion:

“We then turned to the City's proposed sale of the **Green Water Treatment Plant (GWTP)** site. There are 4 city blocks involved and the current proposal is for three of the blocks to be either residential or hotel use with one block of office/mixed use. It is a big project and from an urban forest preservation view, there are on site seven heritage trees and one protected tree. It is proposed that one of the heritage trees is to be relocated and the rest taken down. We have

established from previous OANA board meetings that we will look at each request to remove heritage trees from our urban forest individually and weigh the proposed mitigation benefits.

In this case, the contract between the City and the developer allows for basically triple the minimum required mitigation, half in cash and half in caliper inches of new trees. These caliper inches for new trees can be achieved either through planting new trees (minimum 4 inch caliper, potential heritage tree variety) in nearby City owned parks or green space, or increasing the size of required trees on site under the Great Streets Development Program. The developer will be obligated to maintain and irrigate the transplanted heritage tree for five years and maintain and irrigate the new trees that are located off site, if any, for two years.

After discussion, and subject to the full OANA Board's approval, our support of the project would be conditioned on the premise that the mitigation is exclusively in new trees, not monetary compensation. The caliper inches would not be available to augment trees already required to be on site, the minimum potential heritage tree caliper would be 6 inches not 4 inches, and OANA would like a place at the table when the location of these new trees off site is decided.

In further review of the proposed sale agreement Ted called our attention to the provision dealing with commitments by the developer to put monies towards improvements along Shoal Creek. As written, the contract calls for the donation to be made piece meal as the project builds out and the City would have discretion to use the funds not only for future improvements to the creek but also to have discretion to use the monies as reimbursement of past expenses related to improvements in Shoal Creek. It was decided by the board members present that at a minimum any monies when received should go exclusively towards new improvements to the creek and not be used to reimburse the City for past work.”

Rather than having the BoD approve through motion this discussion language in toto now that we have a quorum, especially now that the project's future is somewhat uncertain, we gave Ted carte blanche to negotiate as the circumstances dictate. It was noted that going from 4 caliper inches to 6 caliper inches per tree represents a substantial increase in costs.

Ted went on to tell us that his understanding is that the northern border of the TIF implemented to redevelop the Seaholm Power Plant has been extended beyond the railroad tracks.

NOTE: The entry for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in Wikipedia is as follows-

“Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, is a public financing method that is used for subsidizing redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects in many countries, including the United States. Similar or related value capture strategies are also used around the world.

TIF is a method to use future gains in taxes to subsidize current improvements, which are projected to create the conditions for said gains. The completion of a public project often results in an increase in the value of surrounding real estate, which generates additional tax revenue. Sales-tax revenue may also increase, and jobs may be added, although these factors and their multipliers usually do not influence the structure of TIF.

When an increase in site value and private investment generates an increase in tax revenues, it is the "tax increment." Tax Increment Financing dedicates tax increments within a certain defined district to finance the debt that is issued to pay for the project. TIF is often designed to channel funding toward improvements in distressed, underdeveloped, or underutilized parts of a jurisdiction where development might otherwise not occur. TIF creates funding for public or private projects by borrowing against the future increase in these property-tax revenues."

This is important for the neighborhood and the future developments centered on Bowie and W. 3rd Streets in that the City now has a means to finance the Bowie Street tunnel under the railroad tracks.

We then turned to the City's oft-stated goal of initiating and maintaining affordable housing stock within the city. Everyone seems to recognize the need but it just seems to be always just out of reach. We discussed why an affordable housing component is mandatory for all new downtown multi-family projects but these types of projects outside of downtown are not required to. If you allow new developments to pay a fee in lieu of having affordable housing on site and if you then use the money to buy a completely affordable project, you have effectively segregated those folks. To fully integrate affordable units with market units in a project there is going to have to be some permanent ownership by the City of the affordable units to maintain the rents. As for where the money will come from, it was suggested that since new residential projects of all types in the City are required to pay a parkland dedication fee why not an affordable housing dedication fee. Interesting discussion. Albert has been personally involved in this area for years and he could always use some help.

Speaking of parkland dedicated funds from new residential projects, PARD and the City have found \$310,000 to help rehabilitate Wooldridge Park. That should go a long way to bring irrigation to the park.

Blake spoke briefly about a recent phenomena residential neighborhood associations across Austin are having to deal with, vacation or short term residential (STR) use. Despite a current prohibition against renting residential property on a transient or short-term basis, there is real money to be made doing so. The Planning Commission has been tasked by Council to make recommendations as to whether and under what if any regulations the Land Development Code's (LDC) prohibition should be relaxed. Blake has been working with the Austin Neighborhood's Council (ANC) on this and their recommendation is to allow property owners that have homesteaded their property to rent that property on a short-term basis. The ANC's resolution goes further and asks that the prohibition against commercial (non-homesteaded residential housing stock dedicated to short-term rentals) STRs be continued. The ANC feels that these commercial vacation rentals in stable family neighborhoods will be destabilizing and is an inappropriate use. After discussion the BoD decided that although OANA is a member of the ANC, since our association has no single-family zoned property and that this resolution applies only to property within those zoning districts, we would defer a decision on whether to support the ANC resolution for further study. Blake asked that individual members of the BoD weigh in to the City their thoughts on short-term rentals in their home neighborhoods if appropriate.

Having run over our time and after setting our June meeting for the 5th, the first Tuesday of the month, we adjourned.

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