

# MEETING RECORD

## Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting December 2, 2014

**CAC in Attendance:** Gure Ali, Lisa Cote, Adam Dow, Peter Flanders, Kelli Aiken Flynn, Belinda Gerry, Joe Gray, Adam Lee, Doris Russell, Mitch Thomas, Judy Webber and Rick Whiting

**Consultants:** Frank O'Hara

**Staff:** Reine Mynahan and Lori Lewis

**Guests:** Eric Cousens, Bates College Students

### Welcome:

Committee Chair Adam Lee welcomed everyone back to today's meeting.

### Minutes:

Review the meeting minutes of November 18, 2014

**Motion:** by Belinda Gerry to approve the minutes of the meeting on November 18, 2014.  
2<sup>nd</sup> by Judy Webber

**Vote: 11-0-0** in favor, motion carried.

### Discussion of Prior Meeting Comments:

Eric Cousens, Deputy Director of Planning and Development, gave an overview with a hand out regarding the Building and Enforcement Regulations for the City of Auburn.

- There is currently the equivalent of one full time and one part-time code enforcement officer doing inspections in the City of Auburn
- Auburn adopted the Uniform Building code which is a State of Maine code— State adopted codes make it harder for us to make changes specifically for Auburn
- We have solid codes for life safety and new structures
- We could improve maintenance codes if there are specific concerns that we are not addressing in current codes.
- Fire Department does some of the inspections, but code enforcement could be more proactive (vs. reactive) more staff on the streets
- Garbage and junk cars are in the top five issues for Code Enforcement
- If the citations and fines are not paid/don't work, then the City can start a lawsuit to be reimbursed but that does cost and the City might not be paid or the problem fixed. We weigh the severity of the violation and the likelihood for reimbursement in the decision.

### Questions/Comments:

- *Are homeowner situations taken into consideration when issuing a citation or summons? Code enforcement does work with individuals to help create a time line to fix the issues.*
- *Code enforcement officers can use "Authority having Jurisdiction" and issue a waiver of some permitting standards during renovations, but that comes down to the individual inspectors and use of discretion*
- *How can we get landlords to not be absentee landlords and be more responsible?*

*Create an incentive for the good landlords. Also help landlords write better lease agreements so that there are less code violations and the tenant is held responsible by the landlord if there are issues that they created.*

- *Is there an appeals process for citation or summons? Yes, they can contact the supervisor and talk to them and appeal to the Zoning Board.*
- *Have Housing Authority work more closely with the City's code enforcement staff*
- *Building and Renovation Codes have to change at the State level not the City level. The City can change local housing codes.*
- *What city or town has a good model for us to look at? Manchester, NH is a good model for a housing licensing program but that might be a little more stringent than we need or the public would accept in Auburn.*
- *Work closer with CDBG to generate loans/grants to fix properties*
- *Raising fees for larger issues and repeat offenders would be helpful; especially for garbage issues. A summons for the existence of a repeat trash violation vs. a citation for a failure to correct a violation after being notified might help.*
- *Keep end goal in sight with permitting decisions. Support from the top elected officials to utilize more discretion could help supervisors enable staff in the field.*

Eric will talk with Code Enforcement and get back to the CAC on other ways that this committee can help.

#### **Presenters:**

A team of nine Bates College students from the Environmental Studies working on their Capstone project presented their findings on the target area neighborhood survey. The team was able to complete 77 surveys by going door to door and meeting at public areas such as parks and malls. The findings for each of the target areas, Downtown, New Auburn and Union Street, were as follows:

#### **Downtown:**

- Transportation and pedestrian safety were major concerns for this area;
- Walking was the main mode of transportation; most did not take advantage of the bus or know the bus routes
- Most of the people rent vs. own their units
- The average income from this area was \$20,000 a year or less

#### **Union Street:**

- 90% of the people surveyed would like to see a change in housing; need more low income housing
- There is a lot of vacant/abandoned houses
- Lack of safe sidewalks. If there is sidewalks they are never plowed or they are too icy to walk on so people walk in the street
- People drive much to fast down the streets
- Not many people use the bus; doesn't run often enough, fares are too expensive, lack of knowledge on the routes
- Over 50% of those surveyed earn under \$20,000 a year

#### **New Auburn:**

- Would like to see the older houses fixed up
- Most use private transportation, 80% have not taken a bus in the last year
- This area has a higher average income—over \$50,000
- Would like to see more “green space”; parks, trees on the streets, community gardens, bike/jogging trails

**Bates Student Recommendations:**

- Promote the bus system and work on finding out what the areas need for bus routes
- Fix the sidewalks for pedestrian safety
- Create better housing and help the tenants with landlords that are not living up to their responsibilities
- Creation of parks and green spaces for each of the areas could generate community pride
- Allocate Community funds to help with these projects; take abandoned/vacant houses and turn into low income housing or homeless shelters

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Lewis  
Community Development Assistant