

Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
14 September 2020, 10am
Hampton Community Development Conference Room

Present

Linda Kindred-Chair, C’Faison Harris-Vice Chair, Martha Clark, Sandra Waldo, Susan Elswick-Hampton Senior Center, Barbara Stewart-Social Services

Guests

Councilman Chris Bowman, Mrs. Angela Leary

Call to Order and Welcome

Ms. Linda Kindred called the meeting to order at 10:00am, offering a welcome back to all in attendance and opening prayer. Immediately following was the remembrance of former member Ingrid Kirschmann, who passed away in the early summer of this year. She read the letter of condolence that was sent to her family.

Roll call was performed. In Mr. McCauley’s stead, Linda offered a summary of COVID-19, reminding all of the necessity to continue to follow the Governor’s guidelines on safety and wellness.

Presentation

Featured speaker, Mr. Jonathan McBride, Manager Housing & Neighborhood Services Division was then introduced, and provided what he referred to as an “open discussion” about programs and services offered. Jonathan has been with the City for 15 years and has been with the this division for 6 years. He began his career working with youth guidance for the neighborhood initiative. The Housing & Neighborhood Division supports the efforts of the city’s residents “to improve and maintain neighborhoods by providing coaching and consulting, educational opportunities, and neighborhood grants. The Division currently has 5 coaches/consultants and 2 housing staff. It also partners with Community Development’s property maintenance rental inspectors.

Some of the ways it promotes community engagement are:

- *Hampton 101* – participants spend a day with city leaders and team members to learn how Hampton works and what services are available to residents. It also includes an

afternoon bus tour of the city. The next Hampton 101 is tentatively slated for December 2020 and may feature a virtual tour of the city.

- *Leadership Academy* – this program is mainly for community leaders, such as HOA presidents, civic association leadership, etc. It is a skill-based, six-seven week program that includes such topics as asset mapping, project planning, youth development and organizational skills.
- *Codes Academy* – the Codes Academy is a free, six-week education series designed to give citizens and community leaders a better understanding of the community development process and code enforcement activities. Participants have the opportunity to act as mock city planners and commissioners and review zoning, property maintenance violations, etc. The next academy is tentatively scheduled for February/March 2021.
- *Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) Workshop* – participants learn the principles of ABCD and how it can empower and transform a community.

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, people are encouraged to contact Housing & Neighborhood Division directly for scheduling and registration information.

As a former Councilperson, Guest Angela Leary provided further background into how citizens and the City came together years ago to address several code violations at the old Sinclair Gardens senior living complex on North King Street. After the City purchased the property and rebuilt the complex, asset value was added to the King Street corridor, but now new issues arise with homes surrounding the complex. These properties are overgrown and in disrepair.

Linda asked Jonathan if there were code restrictions on how long a property can remain vacant and/or in disrepair. Jonathan explained that court proceedings may take several months or years which may tie the hands of Codes Compliance in enforcement. He added that this issue, however, can be addressed by his office and city legislation. Currently, Hampton does not have the ability to regulate vacant properties, but he asked that questions regarding property issues be forwarded to his office.

Jonathan added that the Neighborhood Commission began in 1994 with area commissioners appointed by City Council. It currently has 21 members and 10 city districts:

- Northampton
- Magruder Area
- Mercury Central

- North King Street
- Fox Hill
- Buckroe
- Phoebus
- Downtown
- Greater Wythe
- Aberdeen

This commission works closely with “Community Development by providing leadership, policy guidance, support, and a voice for Hampton Neighborhoods.” Ms. Leary asked for a chart of the districts and Jonathan said he would provide such. The Neighborhood Commission meets the 2nd Monday of each month, 5pm, in the Community Development Conference Room in City Hall. He added that commissioners are needed for North King Street, Wythe, and Northampton. Those interested are welcomed to apply online.

Jonathan stated that his Division also works with other area organizations in developing community programs and initiatives. One such collaboration was with the NAACP and the Health Department in setting up COVID-19 testing sites, in addition to Hampton Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services organizing the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPEs – masks, gloves, sanitizer, etc.). Housing & Neighborhood Services also assists the city with strategic planning projects, such as those occurring in Phoebus and Ft. Monroe.

Pervasive housing issues have plagued Hampton communities through the years and his division is working to close the disparity gap between communities. In regards to housing and economic disparities, there are several things that are at the root. Racism, being one, was evident via what is known as ‘red-lining’ where banks and mortgage companies were able to deny homeowners loans in certain areas. Additionally, insurance companies were able to charge red-lined districts more because those were considered to be “unsafe” zones. Areas where most Blacks or persons below an economic level lived had red lines drawn around them. Poverty can be linked to an individual, can be generational in that Blacks and poor people had nothing to leave to the next generation, and institutional – such as red-lining.

Jonathan stated that the Northampton District has the lowest-valued homes right now, adding that several factors attributed to that: the closing of schools, such as YH Thomas Junior High School. During desegregation, white parents did not want their children going to what was considered a ‘black’ school, so YH Thomas students were bussed elsewhere,

thereby closing down YH Thomas. Add to the area's decreasing value by creating a city dump, dividing it with Interstate 64 and adding a policy firing range.

It is the mission and goal of Housing & Neighborhood Services to reinvest in communities through asset-based management – discovering a community's strengths and utilizing them as resources in rebuilding and connecting neighbors to neighbors. These are things the YH Thomas Community Center is doing for the Northampton district, and what is now happening with Little England Community Center in the Greater Wythe district, Fox Hill Community Center in the Fox Hill district, and the newly proposed Mary Jackson Neighborhood Center in the Downtown district to open the end of 2021.

Jonathan also spoke of the programs offered by Hampton Redevelopment/Housing Authority, such as aiding in the redevelopment of downtown Hampton, public housing complexes, and overseeing grants for home renovations and repairs. Unfortunately, HRHA currently has more than 200 persons on the wait list for the grant program, but if someone is in need of wheelchair ramps, they are encouraged to contact HRHA for more information.

Housing & Neighborhood Services also works closely with Habitat for Humanity in its home repair blitz. These organizations also do "Rock the Block" (formerly the Curb Appeal Program), and Habitat for Humanity will soon start a rotating community program that will offer \$15,000 grants to aid in rebuilding neighborhoods.

In closing, Jonathan addressed an earlier need made by Susan Elswick to assist in calling the patrons of the Hampton Senior Center. She and her staff, along with Linda, have been calling more than 200 persons during COVID-19 to do wellness checks and she said while it is rewarding in being able to reach out, it is a daunting task. Jonathan said that senior loneliness is a huge issue especially now during the pandemic, and it is imperative that people stay connected. He said that there are organizations available to assist in making such calls, such as faith-based groups, etc., and to reach out to them for help. He is able to provide some resource contact information.

Lastly, Jonathan reminded everyone to reach out to their neighborhoods, asking them what they value about their neighborhoods and to find out the many diverse skills and levels of expertise in each neighborhood – then use those as viable resources for rebuilding and reconnecting. He said to sign up for the online E-News bulletin to stay informed and to be sure to register your group or organization with Housing & Neighborhood Services.

Barbara Stewart asked if the Leadership Academy is for City employees. Jonathan responded that the Leadership Academy is more for community leaders, while Hampton 101 and ABCD would be good workshops for city employees.

Linda thanked Jonathan for his highly informative presentation and stated that she would be sure to invite him and his staff again for more in-depth discussions.

Newly-elected Councilman Chris Bowman stated that he enjoyed the session and that he will continue to attend SCAC meetings as an observer as time permits.

Barbara asked the date, time, and location of the upcoming SCAC meetings. Linda stated that due to COVID-19, she would have to receive that word from Dave McCauley and would notify members as soon as confirmed.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:36am.

Minutes submitted 21 September 2020