



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DOWNTOWN ADVISORY BOARD

Downtown Program Office | 125 Fifth Avenue West, Suite 200 | Hendersonville NC
28792



Tuesday, November 14, 2023 – 4:00 PM

MINUTES

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – In attendance: Chris Cormier, Phil Wilmot, Carol Sitzler, Matthew Hickman, Caroline Gunther, John Ryan, Mark Pavao, Nancy Neikirk
After minutes were approved: Aaron Adams, Joe Dinan, Sam Simmons

Absent: Heang Uy, Michele Woodhouse, Anthony McMinn, Councilwoman Debbie Roundtree

Online: Jerry Fitzgerald

Staff present: Jamie Carpenter, Sgt. Garret Gardin, City Manager John Connet, Terrye Jacobs, Dakota Parker, Lew Holloway (online)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Caroline Gunther requested changing the agenda to the following:

- Remove Earth Day expansion request – The Environmental Sustainability Board rescinded their request.
- Add to Old Business – presentation by John Connet on Homelessness

Caroline made a motion to remove New Business Item A and add under Old Business – 1. Presentation about homelessness by City Manager John Connet

Matthew Hickman seconded. All were in favor.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - October 2023 Downtown Advisory Board Minutes – Mark Pavao made a motion to approve minutes. John Ryan seconded. All were in favor.
5. **NEW BUSINESS** - 2024 Meeting Schedule - Downtown Advisory Board – leave January 2 for subcommittees. Leave September meetings and cancel later if we decide to do so.

Move November 5 to Wednesday November 6 for subcommittee meeting

Motion to approve amended meeting schedule. John Ryan. Aaron seconded. No discussion. All in favor.

6. OLD BUSINESS

1. Homelessness Update with John Connet – City Manager John Connet provided an update on homelessness in the City that was presented to City Council a few months prior.

In order to gauge the size of the Homeless population, cities do what is called a ‘Point in Time Count’ – which is a federal day where members of the service community go out to locate camps to try to count the number of people in the community. The point in time count was the only number up until recently and this number is unreliable because it is in the winter and people find places to go at that time.

Current / Recent initiatives by the city:

- Police have collected data regarding the homeless population in the last 18 months as it pertains to calls. The chart reports the number of calls that is specifically with homeless people. These calls may not reflect the full amount of people – one call may be for multiple people.
- Code enforcement has taken an aggressive approach to moving people off public/private property as it relates to homeless camps.
 - They use a heavy and soft hand – there are some legalities the city has to follow. City has established a policy that if it is on public property they are given 14 days. They contact Blue Ridge Community Health Services for mental health outreach to attempt to help the people in need before removing a camp.
 - The presentation included a list of homeless camps removed – records kept by Kathy Bragg (Code Enforcement Officer).
- Ordinances already in place:
 - Cannot panhandle in public right of way.
 - Sidewalks are considered a place of free speech.
 - We also have a broad disturbing the peace ordinance that can help in enforcement of nuisance issues.
 - Noted that in the West Coast – courts have ruled that the courts cannot move homeless unless they have a place for them to go.
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Homelessness Committee is a committee of the different Homeless Service organizations in the city. Recently, discussions have been:

- Seeing people we do not know, much more obvious of worsening mental health issues.
- We do not currently have data on who are ‘local’ homeless vs out of town homeless.

The Hendersonville Rescue Mission has about 75 beds. The board members present then had a discussion of high barrier vs low barrier shelters. We do not have a low barrier shelter in Hendersonville. There has been a lot of conversation about the merits of each type of shelter.

City’s approach going forward:

- Individuals have the right to be homeless, they do not have the right to be a nuisance.
- Working to develop a Strategic Plan – bringing committees together in December in coordination with the County, with 4 areas to review. We do not have the capacity to handle mental health or substance abuse.
- County has established drug court. Funding to come from Opioid Settlement.
- Have to make decisions and have the conversation as a community for what to do with people who will not or cannot go to the Rescue Mission.
- Strengthen ordinances to give more tools for code enforcement and law enforcement.

Board questions / comments:

John Ryan asked about low barrier at cold temperatures – it was noted that the Rescue Mission will open when there is extreme temperatures (code purple)

There was discussion among board members regarding the level of support that the community should offer for the homeless population.

5:20 John Connet left to attend a different meeting.

Caroline Gunther requested to board members that they share the information from today's meeting. Share about PD and what they are doing. It is not something the city is not working to find a resolution for.

Would like to revisit the underhoused topic at Downtown Board at a future meeting. Jamie Carpenter will provide

2. 7th Avenue Streetscape Update – Jamie provided a brief update on the streetscape, with information that had been shared with the board and discussed in depth at the Community Character Committee meeting.

- 3.. Downtown Team and Workplan Updates – This topic was not discussed due to time.

8. ADJOURNMENT – Motion to adjourn – Mark Pavao

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