

Dawson Neighborhood News

The newsletter of the Dawson Neighborhood Association

April 2009

April Meeting Key to Dawson Plan Team Future

-- David Barker, Dawson Neighborhood Plan Team Chair

The past two years have seen the Dawson neighborhood swamped with developers' requests to change our neighborhood plan's land uses and zoning. In one meeting, we voted on 8 items. Other business was conducted at that meeting, and we had a neighborhood association meeting, so that gave an average of less than 15 minutes to consider each item in the 2-hour meeting. Some of those items were being seen for the first time. There seems to be a consensus that the process for dealing with developer requests was not really up to the task.

The question naturally arises: "How could we do better?" The current pause in development activity brought on by the failure of the credit system gives us an opportunity to reflect on this question and to do something about it.

At our February meeting, I set this process in motion by appointing a committee to look at our bylaws and procedures, to consult with the DNPT membership, and to draft a new set of bylaws that will make our Plan Team a more robust proponent for the Dawson Neighborhood Plan.

The committee has been meeting every two weeks, working to develop our understanding of the problems, and investigating possible solutions. Now it is time for the DNPT membership to weigh in. The committee is developing a draft bylaws document that contains elements of the solution as we see it. We need feedback.

The committee is proposing a representational system that moves us away from the open democracy the

Plan Team now uses. The positives for this system are a team that can manage its process better, coordinate the gathering of neighborhood input better, and develop, maintain and grow its expertise. The current Team we have has not done any of these things well.

The downside of any representational system is that the representatives may represent their own interests rather than the group (neighborhood) as a whole.

The solution to the downside is to build in checks and balances that can be used to enforce accountability. No system like this works perfectly. We are just looking for a system that works better than what we have.

You will see these checks and balances built into our draft. We will want to know whether you think they are adequate, or perhaps inventive enough.

The membership of the Plan Team should be the real author of these bylaws. So please plan to attend the April meeting and tell us what you think. We will post our draft on the DNA list-serve before the meeting so you have a chance to look it over.

After the April meeting, there will be one more meeting (June) to look at a revised draft of the bylaws and discuss them. The final version will be presented as a notice to amend the bylaws or adopt new bylaws at the following meeting (August). We would adopt (or reject) the new bylaws at the October meeting, hold nominations at that meeting, and then elections in December when we normally do.

DAWSON NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

MONDAY
April 13, 2009
6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

South Austin
Multipurpose Center
2508 Durwood

Dawson Neighborhood Plan Team

Agenda

1. Approval of minutes
2. Membership committee report
3. New Business
-- Input and discussion on draft DNPT restructuring
4. Adjourn DNPT meeting

Dawson Neighborhood Association

Agenda

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Old Business
4. New Business
5. Issues in the Neighborhood
6. Adjourn DNA meeting

Next Meeting:
June 8, 2009

Wanna get e-mail updates with neighborhood news?

Lost a dog? Having a yard sale? Or just want to know what's going on in our neighborhood?

Join the Dawson Neighborhood Association (DNA) message forum on *Yahoo! Groups*, and receive neighborhood news by e-mail.

Go online to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DawsonNeighborhood>

or send an e-mail to

DawsonNeighborhood-subscribe@yahogroups.com

NOTE: *When you submit your request for membership, you will receive an automatic message asking for your full name and address. Please reply with that information because your membership will not be approved until you complete that step.*

Once you're a member, you can receive any messages posted to the list, and you can post messages as well.

Volunteers needed to distribute the Dawson Newsletter!

Now's the time to get involved in your neighborhood!

If you would like to help distribute the newsletter in your part of the neighborhood, or have a story idea or other concern, please contact newsletter editor Thom White at (512) 203-7218 or by e-mail @ wilshiregazette@yahoo.com

Many thanks to KAY BROWN for sponsoring this issue of the Dawson Neighborhood newsletter.

DNPT Meeting Minutes, February 9, 2009

-- Kam Magor, Secretary, Dawson Neighborhood Plan Team

Meeting called to order by Chair David Barker

Approval of minutes: no minutes to approve.

Report of the standing committee on membership: the committee had nothing to report.

Discussion of Membership Committee -- Cole Alexander will continue, Genevieve Frisch cannot serve this year. Laurie Ramos volunteered. **Motion** to ratify committee made by Mark Herman, second by Myron Smith, carried unanimously.

Chair suggested amending the standing rules by adding this language: "The term of subsequent membership committee members shall be one year, with appointments made in December of each year. **Motion** by Claire Closmann to adopt language, second by Sandy McMillan, passed unanimously.

City requires we vote to opt in or out of *Restricted Side/Front Yard Parking Ordinance*, prohibiting parking on residential property except in official driveway or parking spot. **Motion** by Becky Scheller to opt in. Second by Dan Opdyke. Discussion: Would be onerous for families to have to pave more land; issue is not a problem in our neighborhood; our neighborhood plan pre-dated this ordinance; 70-80% of driveways in neighborhood are non-conforming. **Motion** to opt in defeated unanimously.

City requires we vote to opt in or out of *Mobile Food Establishments Ordinance*, prohibiting mobile food trailers within 50 ft. of any residence. **Motion** by Claire Closmann to opt in. Second by Kay Brown. Discussion: Concern expressed that some existing trailers would be put out of business. Concern expressed that food trailers might move into residential area of neighborhood. Opinion expressed that this is not an issue in our neighborhood. We cannot postpone decision -- have to report to City by Feb. 28. This issue will come up each year. **Motion** to opt in defeated 22 to 2, with one abstention.

David Barker, chair, stated that his main motivation in taking job as DNPT chair was to start process of restructuring plan team to set up a team that can make better decisions with less neighborhood conflict. Wants to appoint a *Restructuring Committee* to look into how we can solve problems of conflict and poor decision-making. Four directions for the committee to work under:

- By October 2009 at the latest, the committee will produce a new set of bylaws that describes a smaller, elected plan team to make decisions.
- Bylaws will be developed within constraints of City ordinances.
- Consider two-year overlapping terms for members so that members will have time to develop experience and older members can mentor newer members.
- The committee will have at least one or two public meetings this year, probably within the confines of regular DNPT meetings.

Current bylaws allow chair to appoint committees and then membership votes to ratify or not. Committee members: Cynthia Medlin, Charlie Faye, Julie Woods, Mark Herman, Marty Harris, and Dell Shaw, with David Barker as *ex-officio* member. **Motion** by Sandy McMillan to ratify *Restructuring Committee* as appointed by chair. Second by Myron Smith. Discussion: Concern about eliminating open democracy or of committee making all the decisions. Would like committee to be knowledgeable group to present information to membership to make decisions. There would have to be checks and balances. Request for members of committee to introduce themselves:

- Cynthia Medlin was original DNPT chair during neighborhood plan process in 1997, has been continuously active, also served on City Planning Commission.
- Marty Harris has been continuously active in neighborhood association since its inception in 1994. Has worked on many issues, including Alpine Pond and crime.
- Mark Herman has lived in neighborhood since 2005. Has observed that there's no script or procedure for acting on development issues. His area of expertise is process design.
- Charlie Faye has lived in neighborhood one year. Lives in Wilson cottages and had crash course in City regulations last year when she got involved in effort to preserve cottages.
- Julie Woods has lived in neighborhood since 2006. Worked intensively last year on bylaws committee and realized we needed a more major restructuring. Is a former lawyer.
- Dell Shaw: not present at tonight's meeting. Is business owner in neighborhood. Has been involved for several years and has served as officer for both DNA and DNPT.

Further discussion: Concern that committee will not be responsive to members of current plan team. Interest in finding out how other neighborhoods have dealt with these issues, what structures they've set up, what has worked. Concern that there won't be enough people willing to serve. Questions about how this would all work. Reassurance that all stakeholders would have to be involved and that process would be transparent, fair, and documented -- otherwise, membership of larger organization would not approve new bylaws / procedure / process. **Motion** to ratify *Restructuring Committee* members as appointed by Chair passed 20 to 0 with 4 abstentions.

Chair called for **motion** to adjourn; Claire Closmann so moved.

Dawson Neighborhood Association

Draft meeting minutes, February 9, 2009

Old Business:

- Traffic calming update: Myron Smith stated that Anthony is our current point person with the City of Austin. Myron anticipates that the Dawson Neighborhood will have opportunities to provide feedback about the speed cushions to the City of Austin.

New Business:

- Myron Smith appointed Sandy McMillan to be the DNA point person at the South Central Coalition, an informal networking group of South Austin neighborhoods, which meets the first Sat. of the month at the Sazon Restaurant on S. Lamar.
- Myron agreed to contact the city regarding plans to pick up litter after the Austin Marathon on 2/15.

- Jake Gilleland asked the DNA to help provide information on how to encourage the City to pave a "cut through" alley on Durwood.
- DNA members discussed the distribution of the DNA newsletter. More people need to volunteer to distribute paper copies, especially if we want to deliver paper copies to apartments. Some suggested that we only publish the DNA newsletter electronically, but we reached an informal consensus that the DNA would continue distributing paper copies of the newsletter and supplement the paper copies with on-line PDF copies via the DNA listserv.

Meeting adjourned.

-- Rebecca Sheller, Secretary