Ghent Neighborhood League Minutes  
February 15, 2018

*N.B.: Before the meeting the Board voted to approve the expense of $18 per month to host the GNL website.

Next Meeting: March 15, 2018, 6:30 PM, The Williams School

I. Call to order and introductions

President Mike Spencer called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm. After welcoming the membership, those in attendance introduced themselves. Those included: Darryl Crittendon, Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces; Michael Nentwich, Bureau of Parks and Urban Forestry (acting city forester); Sam Warner, owner of Dogtown; Courtney Doyle, running for City Council; Don Roby, candidate for Norfolk City Council; Sam Warburton, candidate for City Council. Candace Gabriel, present on behalf of Nate Kinnison, running for School Board. Tanya Bhasin, candidate for School Board, who will be back at the March Meeting as part of a platform of declared candidates for School Board. Councilwoman Andria McClellan joined us.

Board members present: JR Montalvo, Catherine Kilduff, Nat McCormick, George Kello, Emily Birknes, Paige Rose, Tyler Sherwin, Larry Brett

Absent: Ben Crumpler, Karen Reynes, Dan Ross-Li

II. Safety Report – Community Resources Officer (CRO) Samantha Perez

a. Report – Not much has transpired since Jan. 21. We had zero accidents with injuries, several larcenies related to taken license plates. Shoplifting on the business corridor. Robbery on the 800 block of Gates Ave.

b. Porch thief – apprehended. A West Ghent resident had footage of plant being stolen.

c. “Comm Stat” – a meeting with the Chief of Policy and all precinct heads, and special units. It is the second Tuesday of every month and everyone is welcome to attend.

d. Active threat training – March 24, from 9-1. Must register for it. Materials are yet to come out. Projecting that the request will be beyond the 1800 seats available.

e. Cell Phone: 757-409-0028; don’t call after 8 pm.
III. Guest Speakers

- **Darrell Crittendon**, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces – Introduced Michael Nentwich to talk about about tree removal, tree species, and what size caliper tree does the city plant, and volunteer classes that use hand tools to cut basal sprouts off crepe myrtles across the city.

- **Michael Nentwich, acting city arborist** - Cell phone: 757-374-3305. Email: michael.nentwich@norfolk.gov. Michael talked about tree maintenance in general. The City has four levels of prioritization:
  
  - The highest level is Level 1, an “active event.” A tree could be falling, have fallen, or be in imminent danger of falling. Requires a response within 24 hours.
  
  - Level 2 – This encompasses significant decay or structural defects. It could be disease. Requires a response in six months.
  
  - Level 3 – This is routine maintenance. This is in the range of 2-4 inch diameter deadwood, in the canopy, but not an risk to fall within 12 months. Requires a response in twelve months.
  
  - Level 4 – This is aesthetics, like crepe myrtles or hollies with sprouts coming up from the base of the tree. This is where volunteers are helpful. There are 80,000 street trees in Norfolk (the City manages 250,000 trees that are not street trees). About half of 80,000 street trees are crepe myrtles. The City can prune 3200 trees a year. The volunteers can prune 300-400 crepe myrtles on top of that. To set up a training, call Michael (see cell phone above).
  
  - The green infrastructure plan goal is to reach 30% canopy coverage. The old goal in 2009 was 40% canopy cover but some of the areas picked up at canopy was heavily irrigated baseball fields, or other flat surfaces. Now the city is about 25% canopy. That will require planting 120,000 trees. Only 25% of the areas are public land. So to encourage planting on private land, will “adopt out” the trees for planting. On Arbor Day the focus is on medium and small native species for yards.
  
  - How do they prioritize trees causing damage to sidewalks, curbs, streets, or driveways? Norfolk Cares, 664-6510. That will go to public works first because it’s an infrastructure issue, hardscape. They determine whether they can repair it without disturbing the tree. If there needs to be a tree replaced, the City will work with the adjacent property owner. This will be based on the level of risk for public works.
Notifications to civic leagues occur when they do large-sale projects. It’s not feasible to notify civic leagues for every tree. One example was when a few trees by the Chrysler were removed, we got a lot of phone calls. They do notify adjacent homeowners; will do a phone call, a door hang, something to attempt contact.

The City does not do pruning around utilities. The City directs requests to Dominion. They are mandated to have the lines clear and can be fined per day due to their negligence. Dominion does have to get permits through the City and all pruning must follow standards for pruning and safety. If they are topping, let the City know so the City can contact Dominion and work to correct issues where possible.

Contractors in the median – There have been a lot of utility improvements in the City and new construction. Permits have to go through the office so that the root systems are protected. There is required mitigation for damage, including removing and replacing if necessary.

Candidates for City Council

- **Courtney Doyle:** Terry Whibley is not seeking re-election after three four-year terms and will finish her term in June. Election is May 1 for all five wards. Ms. Doyle is from Washington DC, moved to Norfolk 23 years ago. Following university, she worked for Frank Lautenberg, then worked for a trade association, Airports International. She has two children, now 33 and 28, that went through public school, one lives in CA and one in Northern VA. She got her MBA at Old Dominion University and worked for Sentara Health Care. Volunteered at the Chrysler, then volunteered for West Ghent Civic League. Served on Recreation, Parks, and Open Spaces Commission. That showed her how city agencies budget and work. Following that, she was appointed to be on the Norfolk School Board. At Sentara, she works in their marketing, branding, mergers and acquisitions, product development, and integration process (when Sentara has merged). She believes her business background, working in a large industry, and her civic involvement makes her a strong candidate. Her positions are: 1) safe neighborhoods; 2) education; 3) sea level rise; 4) economic development. She thinks city council people must be good advocates, good listeners, and responsive to constituents.

- **Tom Warburton:** He’s a third-generation Norfolkian, raising the fourth generation. One child is at Blair Middle School, one at Taylor Elementary. He wants his kids to have the choice to live here 30-40 years from now. He is worried that Norfolk is dying a slow death; is in a vicious cycle of poverty and failing education system. This leads to inflated social costs, diminished economic potential. Norfolk is stagnant and non-competitive. For
the kids that live here today, that’s the question – do they leave because that’s where the good jobs are? He wants to change the fact that it’s not looking too good in Norfolk. His point of view comes from always working at publicly-held companies or held by private equity. In those situations, you have to have year-over-year growth. In City Council it takes too many years to solve problems and make decisions. The City Council needs to develop a vision for the City, to tackle costs and jump-start growth, to look into budgets, both for the City and NPS. Are we spending that money to maximize every dollar spent? The City Council needs to drive administrative efficiencies, to ask hard questions, to move to a modern, less costly IT infrastructure, to enhance efficiency, and leapfrog using innovation. This is needed for improving growth, and to attract industries that will help existing industries thrive. Bring in industries that will change the world. He’s passionate about this city and the people that live here.

- **Donald Roby**: If he wins the seat for City Council, there will be no barriers between himself and the constituents. As background, he progressed through the military after college. He went through SEAL training, including at Little Creek. He would be on his A game for his constituents just like he was there. His platform is focused on education (funding for teachers and funding for schools; help kids come up through the system to become leaders of the community); flooding (clean out storm drains, getting the system moving, use innovation to update old systems); economic development (we need to retain the highly-trained folks that leave the military, for example to develop an IT cyber-security industry); infrastructure of the city (take care of the blue collar workers). He works as a contractor, so he understands the infrastructure issues. He worked at Blackwater after leaving the SEALs. He lives at Lamberts Point, and is active in the civic league; it has really improved as a neighborhood. He is going to do a ride-along with Officer Perez on Mar. 3 to see what the citizens need from the city, including the police force. Norfolk is a diamond-in-the-rough, all it needs is shining. Norfolk: Our City of Opportunity.

- **Councilwoman McClellan**: There was a lot of money talk; norfolkva.abalancingact.com will let you simulate changes to the budget. She encouraged candidates to come to a City Council meeting. The budget process will be tough this year. Tomorrow starts the mayor’s Commission on Climate Change and Adaptation. Will be kicked off in a month, looking at GHG emissions and looking at what can be done as a City. Not only do we have to look at adaptation, but also look at slowing climate change.

**IV. President’s Report**

N/A

**V. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees**

b. **Membership Report** – Dues are coming up. Look for an email. Our website is coming together and will soon be able to be previewed live and in full color.

c. **Project Review** – No items were scheduled for first week in February’s meeting; today’s meeting included a big project of an EVMS building at the corner of Colley Ave. and Brambleton. They will come back to present to us.

d. **Community Improvement** – The focus was on the trees this month. On Manteo two yellow oaks were removed due to resident requests. The City found them they were diseased. They will be replanted with something smaller due to overhead power lines. Neglected property issue: 426 Mowbray Arch, had a court date since last month, and are waiting for information.

**VI. Reports of Special Committees**

a. **Dog Park** – Issues under consideration at the moment – other than hours – include improving the turf in the park (they will nurture the root system currently in place); and whether to start a log of dog aggression toward dogs or humans.

b. **Flood mitigation report, Andria McClellan.** At the state level, both House and Senate passed a bill to create a position as a special advisor to the Governor to have authority over all the agencies and report directly to the governor. Also Sen. Lewis had bill go through for coastal authority. It would allow elected officials to draw down dollars for resilience.

   The non-profit RISE has a sensor along Mowbray Arch (hanging off street lights) to monitor real-time flooding. The Williams School is going to be a partner with the sensors and kids will help collect data.

   We’re a Wayz-connected partner city to include flooding reported by citizens.

   Mrs. McClellan continues to push for dredging in the Hague and must show it’s needed for navigation, recreation.

   The stormwater drain work continues. Starting an adopt-a-drain program to clean out storm drains before storms so debris doesn’t wash into the water.

c. **Tree report** – Next meeting will have more to present regarding the tree committee.

d. **Mike Spencer’s appeal** - One of the near and dear issues to this community is homelessness. One organization that helps with that is ForKids. Last weekend they had a big fundraiser, and Mr. Spencer was one of the story slammers. Online you can vote for him. This gets at one of our neighborhood’s strategic goals.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm