



Notes to Meeting of

January 22, 2002

Meeting # 63

Westminster Neighborhood Association

A. Welcome/Introductions

Ten people attended the meeting. The Secretary took notes. In her introductory comments, Tania Shand thanked everyone for their holiday spirit and for the hard work and participation that went in to making the holiday tree lighting and party a success.

B. Review of Agenda

- Two items were added to the agenda:
 - (a) WNA neighborhood house research.
 - (b) Garden Resource grant application.
- A discussion with our PSA police officers about crime in the WNA neighborhood will be put on next month's agenda.

C. Treasurer's Report

Westminster Neighborhood Association Financial Statement for January 2002

Balance as of December 1, 2001		\$ 888.82
Receipts:		
Dues	\$ 90.00	
Donation - Laird	350.00	<u>440.00</u>
Disbursements:		
Service Charges	8.00	
Playground Expenses	203.53	
Party-Sitter & Cleanup Help	90.00	
DCRA filing fee	50.00	<u>351.53</u>
Balance as of January 1, 2002		<u>\$ 977.29</u>

D. Public Safety

Fire Chief Charles Diggs and Officer Daniel White of the 6th Battalion, Platoon 4 were invited to speak on the topic of Fire Safety.

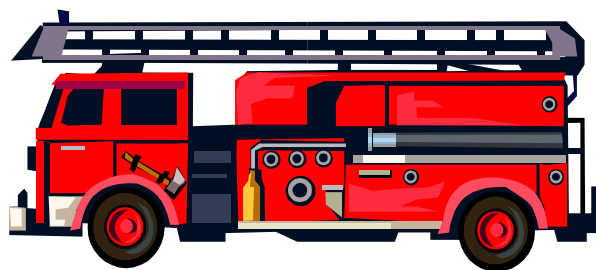
Chief Diggs gave a brief description of the organizational structure of the Fire Department. Chief Diggs commands the 6th Battalion, which covers the area south of Florida Avenue to the river and as far west as Georgetown, and which consists of mainly federal buildings. Within the 6th Battalion, Engine #4 is closest to our neighborhood. Chief Diggs explained that each Battalion has 10 Companies, which consist of trucks, ladder towers, EMTs, and heavy-duty rescue squads. Each Battalion also has some specialty equipment such as fireboats, foam units, and dry chemical trucks. Foam units and dry chemical trucks respond to emergencies in high-rise buildings and when the president and dignitaries take off in planes and helicopters.

Chief Diggs explained that in a fire situation, his job is to continually assess and respond to each change in the fire situation. We learned that normally three engine companies respond to a typical fire situation, with one engine in front of the house, one in the rear of the house and one to backup where needed. The recent fire at 1815 10th Street, which was a basement fire, was a First Alarm assignment with four engines – one in front, one in the rear, one back-up in front and one back-up in the rear.

During a question and answer session, we learned the following useful information:

- The fire department generally responds to a fire within three to four minutes.
- You should always call the fire department, even if you can put it out yourself because a fire is unpredictable and can get out of control very fast.
- You should have a Class A extinguisher good for combustibles – one for every 100 feet. A dry chemical extinguisher is ideal for grease fires and electrical fires.

- There are several companies (listed in the phonebook) that recharge extinguishers. You can also purchase disposable extinguishers. Disposable extinguishers have a shelf life and so periodically you need to check the indicator on the extinguisher to make sure that it is still good.
- Extinguishers are required in multiple family dwellings but not in single-family dwellings. Multiple family dwellings must also meet other requirements such as having diagrams showing exits and a placard indicating where the alarm is located.
- All ladder companies include a metal saw for getting through barred windows. Some ladder companies will also carry wood saws for getting into hatches.
- Every home should have a fire evacuation plan and the family members should practice fire drills so that if a fire should occur, every family member will know what to do independently of one another. The plan should include a meeting place outside the house. For example, each person should evacuate the house and meet across the street so it can be quickly determined and reported who may still be in the house.



We also learned the meaning of the mysterious orange squares that have recently appeared on vacant houses in the WNA neighborhood. The orange square is a symbol used to alert firefighters to structural weakness in a building (such as weak floors) and is painted on vacant buildings as a safety measure to protect firefighters who

might have to enter the building. Unfortunately, since some of the orange squares were being painted on natural brick and since no one in the neighborhood knew that the orange squares were painted by the fire department, it was assumed that the orange squares were graffiti and some were removed by WNA members.

After some discussion, Chief Diggs agreed that the community needed to be better informed about fire department neighborhood projects. Chief Diggs also understood the concern voiced about painting the orange squares on brick and promised to look into that issue.

Before leaving, Chief Diggs and Officer White passed around the following flyers and brochures:

- (1) District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department - listing community service programs
 - (2) Exposing an Invisible Killer – fact sheet on the dangers of carbon monoxide
 - (3) D.C. Fire and EMS Department Fire Marshal's Office Smoke Detector Give
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- Away Program – application for smoke detector
- (4) Free Home Fire Safety Inspections Now Available
 - (5) Danger Above – fact sheet on hire-rise fire safety
 - (6) Home Safety Brochure Tips on Living in a Safe Home
 - (7) Information on Smoke Detectors
 - (8) E.D.I.T.H. Exit Drills In The Home
 - (9) Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit



E. Committee Updates

Streetscape

Lynn Johnson presented Ronnie McGhee's Streetscape report on the WNA "wish list" of what needs to be done in the neighborhood. The list was created at Mr. Robert Horton's suggestion, who works for the District Department of Transportation. He was our guest speaker for the November 27, 2001 WNA meeting. The "wish list" which includes 24 items, is attached to this newsletter. Loretta Johnson said that she had been trying to get the Washington Gas Company to remove the tar and replace the bricks they removed when

they did work on T Street. She asked that this item be added to the "wish list."

Please contact Ronnie McGhee or Lynn Johnson if you can think of any other items that need to be added to the wish list.

Playground

Art Tile Project: Chuck Baxter collected some photos of neighborhood children but needs more photos for the art tile project. If he does not have enough photos of neighborhood children, the artist may supplement the photos with historic photos.

Mural: Chuck reported that it has been determined that the parging on the wall may not be solid enough to support a mural. The playground committee members and the artist

have been doing research on possible solutions. It may cost about \$10,000 to parge the wall and the DC Arts Commission will not pay for the cost of parging. One option would be for an apprentice to provide the labor. Another solution might be to attach panels to the wall and then paint the mural on panels. The District may pay for this, but there is still a question of whether the wall is strong enough to support the panels. Consequently, Chuck said that WNA might have to raise funds to complete the project. Chuck made a motion that the donation made by David Laird to WNA (which may be matched by his employer) be set aside to be used as a base for fund raising if WNA needed to raise funds to complete the project.

A discussion followed, including whether all or only a portion of the donation should be set aside. In addition, there was a request to open the discussion of setting aside the donation to include a discussion of the mural itself, and whether any changes could be made to the colors that will be used in the mural. Since the time for deciding on the design of the mural had passed and since the WNA had made a commitment to the project as agreed to earlier in the process, the discussion was limited to the motion. After some discussion, the motion was seconded and the motion passed by majority. (Yea – 7, Nay – 1, Abstain – 1) Ronnie McGhee and Lynn Johnson are working with the artist to come up with other solutions, which may not require fundraising to complete the project.

F. Police Matters

No police officers were able to attend the meeting. There was discussion of an increase in crime in the neighborhood, including a number of break-ins, one mugging at gunpoint on 11th and T Streets, and con artists working around the U St. Cardozo subway station. An effort will be made to have police officers attend next month's meeting. In the meantime, Tania asked Lynn Johnson to e-mail Lieutenant Dikes with our concerns. Emmanuel, whose house was broken into, said he felt that the police who responded to the call tried to discourage him from filing a report. He asked that this issue be brought to Lieutenant Dikes' attention.

Glen Melcher reported that the police have indicated there has been a big increase in "convenience thefts" and that police patrols are down. Glen said that Commander Peacock

has promised to increase the patrols, but there has been no real number increase – there are more officers on the street but there are fewer officers on follow-up.

Chuck announced that the Federation of Citizens Association of DC would sponsor a **Civilian Emergency Preparedness Program on February 22nd at 7:00 p.m.** at the Sumner School. The meeting's focus will be how to protect yourself and prepare your home and vehicle for various types of emergencies.

There was no report on drug baggies found for the month of December.

G. Committee Signup

The WNA has eight committees that you can sign up for to help make the neighborhood the best it can be. The committees include:

- Public Safety (police/fire/disaster-emergency preparedness)
- Community Enrichment (community survey, vacant property renovation, historic preservation)
- Streetscape (trees, tree boxes, tree trimming, signage, call-boxes, U St. Streetscape, Park Service property)
- Playground (mural/alcoves/maintenance);
- Refuse (garbage removal/rat abatement/abandoned cars)
- New Member Packet (about WNA/where to shop, etc./work with 9th Street Business Assoc.)
- WNA House Tour Fundraiser
- Membership (recruitment)

When you sign up for a committee you are making a commitment to work on that committee for only the rest of the calendar year. Throughout the year, the WNA will have additional opportunities for those of you who cannot make that one year commitment to participate in short-term projects such as tree planting, bowling, clean-up day, etc.

If you are interested in signing up for a committee or working on a specific short-term project, please contact Tania Shand at (588-8060). Please remember that we all need to stay involved if WNA is to continue making progress improving our neighborhood.

H. Projects/Activities

Chuck Baxter announced that CSNA would be having its Spring Clean-Up the first part of May. Less money will be available for this clean-up because Community Impact, which

was a source of funding for this event, no longer exists. In addition, CSNA will not be applying for an ANC grant (which would supply plants) for this event. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate. Chuck will let us know when the date is set.

I. ANC Report

Glen Melcher, our ANC representative, reported that there were several applications for ABC licenses in the 1800 block of 9th Street. One application was for a restaurant with a nightclub upstairs. The ANC voted to oppose the license of one nightclub but not the restaurant.

J. Other Matters

WNA Neighborhood House Histories

William Lewis expressed an interest in researching house histories in the WNA neighborhood. Tania suggested that anyone who is interested might periodically meet as a group at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, National Archives or other resource facilities to do research. It was suggested that the WNA invite a DC archivist to be a guest speaker at one of the future WNA meetings.

Garden Resources Grant:

Chuck Baxter reported that a grant for a tree from Garden Resources was due in February. A discussion followed on the pros and cons of planting a Christmas tree or cutting a Christmas tree each year for the annual tree decoration and lighting. It was suggested that it would be more ecologically sound to plant a tree. On the other hand, it was also suggested that the central location of the cut tree was more aesthetically pleasing than the possible location of a planted tree. In addition, there was concern that planting a tree would disturb the aesthetics of the design of the azaleas planting. It was decided to table the discus-

sion and wait to see how the playground looks in the spring and possibly apply for the grant if it is available next year.

K. Good Neighbor

Our Neighbor of the Month is an easy choice this time. The award will be shared by four outstanding neighbors who saved a honeymoon. That's right, WNA will take on any task.

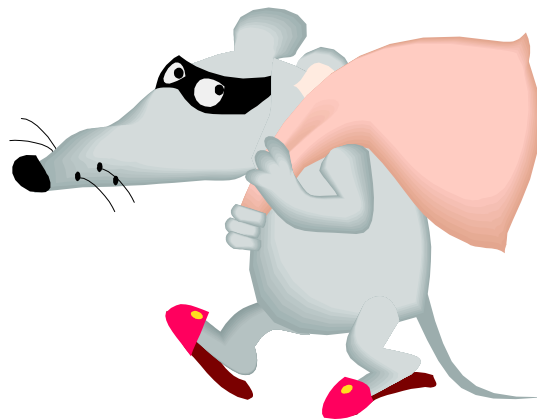
It starts with two (it has to be two) of our newest neighbors who were away in the Big Apple celebrating their happy nuptials. Unfortunately, back in the hood, one of our local burglar businesses was looking for work. Lo and behold they found it at the soon-to-be home of our newlyweds on Westminster Street! Much to their delight, they found not only great contractor tools, but also a loaded cache of brand new appliances—and still in their boxes! Doing the Mikey Jackson moonwalk, it didn't take them long to figure out what they had to do. With agility and great speed, they absconded with many of the contractor's tools. However, they couldn't keep their minds off those new appliances sitting in their boxes. There was only one thing to do—come back!

And come back they did. The following night, with hammers, bolt-cutters and all the tools needed for complete access. However, they didn't plan ahead for the transportation of those bulky appliances, so they contented themselves with taking more of the contractor's tools. When the contractor discovered that he had compulsive, repetitive guests, he contacted the happy couple to discuss the guests' likely return. Oh glums! The happy couple's smiles soon turned to frowns and they made emergency plans to return to Washington that very day.

Enter stage right! Four of our ever-vigilant WNA neighbors got together and decided to try and salvage the situation. They banded together, went to the happy couple's house, and beat the burglar at their own job. The fearless foursome¹ took the cache of the appliances out of the house, carried them a few doors down the street, and stored them in one of their garages under lock and key, thus, giving back the newlyweds the balance of their honeymoon. The happy couple was indeed very happy that they chose Westminster street as their new home.

L. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on the **fourth Tuesday in February 2002 (the 26th) at 7 PM at 922 Westminster Street**. If the weather is nice we will hold the meeting in the playground. **If you want to put anything on the agenda, please call Tania at 588-8060.**



¹ And the Fearless Foursome were:
Otis Joyner
Jesse Foster
Chuck Baxter
Lynn Johnson

WNA Membership List

Please take a moment to find your name on the following list. If you do not find your name it means that you have forgotten to pay us for this year's dues. Get that checkbook out and make out a check (\$15 per household or \$5 if senior citizen) payable to "WNA." You may mail it or just drop it in the mailbox for Margie Perko at 924 Westminster. Get *your name* published.

2002		
Maebelle Algee Chuck Baxter Ermanuel Blackwell Sophia Frimpomah	Lamont O. Hames Loretta Johnson David & Michelle Laird Tim & Patsy Mack	Tania Shand Tim Shannon & Paige Van Wirt Michael and Denise Wardlaw