Southwest Partnership Housing Committee Meeting

Thursday, August 11th

7pm

1 N. Poppleton St

**Present**

Nancy Littlepage

Jea Chapman

Schlonte McGee

Charlene Cowan

Bif Browning

Nancy McCormick

Edith Gilliard

Beverly Jacobs

Suzanne Welch

Robert Meyer

Daniel Rodenburg

Roshelle Kades

Jamie Pitts

Yahya

Sonia Eaddy

Yvonne Gunn

Antony Chambers

**Update on City Water Billing and Discussion of Role of the Committee**

The City is making changes to the water billing process—this is a great opportunity to get the information out to the neighborhoods. The City is going to monthly billing, and there have been tax increases (9% for the water bill and 9% for the sewage as well as an increase in the stormwater fee.

There are flyers with information available to pass out to community members. Brandi Welsh attended the Franklin Square meeting, and Jamie suggested that she could be invited to a Housing Committee to share information with representatives from multiple neighborhoods.

Jea brought up that there are credits that can decrease the water bill, including participating in greening and tree planting projects that improve the quality of the rainwater and runoff.

Jamie discussed the importance of being thoughtful about projects and news so that they were relevant to the Committee or meeting where they are discussed. He asked the Committee what their thoughts were on what they would like discussed.

Charlene stated that she was attending because at the latest Citizens of Pigtown meeting there were multiple concerns raised about the number of vacant houses and wanted to know if they could board the houses themselves.

Dan R. suggested getting a coalition together to call 311 in order to get the City to board city owned properties. For private properties, enough coordinate 311 complaints will help the City build a case against the property owner.

Jea reminded the group that you have to keep watching the houses to ensure that the boards stay up.

Vacants to Value may also be a possibility. Jamie explained that Dan’s strategy is targeted code enforcement, which is a tool that can be used. The Committee is developing a resource guide so that when targeted code enforcement is used people who live on the block can learn what their rights and responsibilities are.

Jea hoped the Committee would be a place where people can come to learn about issues that affect all the neighborhoods and bring that information back to the neighborhoods. She's also concerned about homelessness and wants to know if other neighborhoods are also experiencing challenges.

Anthony asked whether homelessness is an issue that the SWP wanted to address. Jamie thinks that would be an issue and discussion for the wider SWP to develop a strategy. Jea thinks that people can share ideas and resources as well as challenges.

Anthony raised the question about what the position was on methadone clinics and the need to establish a position on what the SWP wants done.

Jamie wanted to know if a topic such as lead paint was something that the Committee wanted to know if that was something that the Committee wanted to bring the Board. He sees the role of the Committee as developing positions and asking the Board to sign on to them.

Bif reiterated that the SWP was founded to protest against the clustering and overconcentration of drug treatment facilities. He sees the role in addressing homelessness as helping folks who are experiencing homelessness access the resources and support that they need.

Anthony suggested using places where people were organized and together as platforms to share information about the SWP.

Jamie suggested Twitter as a way to share information, ideas, and put pressure on it—including with politicians. Let SWP know what pressure or information would like to share.

Elizabeth talked about what Profiles does and the ways in which they could work with the Housing Committee about what messages they wanted to share. Jamie said that if folks were interested in topics they should form a subcommittee and share information about what they wanted to work on. Anyone interested in working with Profiles on social media messaging and the projects and concerns of the Committee should contact Jamie. If people had ideas for topics to be shared on social media they should contact Elizabeth.

Charlene—people in Pigtown feel frustrated and stuck because they don't think anything's moving and once they see projects moving they will become more involved and enthusiastic. Jamie suggested that Carol Ott, a resident of Pigtown who runs Housing Policy Watch/The Slumlord Watch blog could be a potential resource for folks in Pigtown as well as the Committee.

Beverly: City Board of Estimates August 31 9am in reference to the changes in the water billing and the price increases

410-396-8966: Brandi Welsh, DPW liaison phone number Bif added that under the new water billing there is no minimum billing (being billed whether or not use your water).

Jamie urged people to pay their water bill so that you don't receive a lien. Robert emphasized the importance of educating community members so that they know their rights and what the processes will be, and that could be a role of the Housing Committee. He suggested a forum on tax sales and ways that people could be have information shared.

Nancy L. said that the City over the past few years has been pushing the enforcement of tax liens and tax sales.

**Warhorse Update**

Jamie: Warhorse is a development company owned by Scott Plank. In the past they have done Belvedere Square and the Western District Police Station. They have subsidiary LLCs and have been purchasing residential properties in and around Hollins Market. There were questions raised about whether an LLC that purchased a tax sale certificate of a home around Hollins Market which the homeowner has now left. Jamie had heard that the LLC which purchased the certificate was connected with Warhorse but other Committee members have not been able to verify that information.

Jea emphasized the importance of keeping an eye on LLC's as they have different names and addresses. Who owns a property is public information on SDAT, although who owns the LLC can be harder to find.

Hollins Roundhouse Access and Equity Committee (ACE) is organizing a town hall event for residents and Warhorse to discuss what is happening. Roshelle: ACE Committee decided that the purchase of properties was a topic that would be more appropriate for a town hall forum to address the community as a whole as well as residential and commercial tenants. The planning process began when the purchases were a rumor, and there are things now being purchased. Are still waiting to hear back from Warhorse about their commitment. Dan has a meeting with a representative on Monday evening and the ACE Committee will meet after that. They have decided that they would still have the forum whether or not Warhorse would commit to attending. Would have a model where a Warhorse representative would be present for the first half of the meeting and then asked to leave so the community can discuss.

Dan M. will meet with Tiesha Edwards, who leads the Scott Plank family foundation, along with JR Lee (President of the SOWEBO Merchants Association) and Michael Seipp. He is concerned that people he has spoken to are unwilling to speak to the plan or the vision even though in his view there must be one.

Jea asked if this was a chance to change the zoning. It was reported that the City isn't dealing with zoning changes because of Transform Baltimore.

Charlene wanted to know other places in the community where there were large landlords. W. Baltimore St, the area around Hollins Market, and Washington Blvd have all historically had the bulk of commercial and some residential properties held by one owner.

Roshelle thinks this a good point to decide what the differences are in the role in situations like this where it appears the SWP has more access than the neighborhood association.

Nancy L. thinks that all the surrounding areas would be greatly affected by this and similar projects, developments, and purchases and thinks that the conversations should be shared among all of the neighborhoods.

Roshelle said that the SWP bylaws limit the ability of neighborhoods to impact things not in their boundaries the the ability of the SWP to have an impact on activity that was within the boundaries of one neighborhood.

Jea wanted to know whether it was possible get as much information as possible for the neighborhoods about Warhorse before their next meetings.

Bif said in his view all the SWP neighborhoods should have input on things like commercial development, schools, and green spaces area as they impact community members across neighborhoods, while decisions related to residential properties should rest with the individual neighborhoods, and that in his understanding this has historically been the SWP’s Board’s view. He also suggested inviting Cecil Clarke to the Hollins Roundhouse town hall meeting so that both major property owners in the neighborhood would be represented and have an opportunity to share their plans.

Jamie's disagreed on Bif’s interpretation of the bylaws, and asked the Committee members to review the SWP bylaws under the reservation of rights clause.

Dan M: he has some idea about what Warhorse wants to do in the neighborhood he was present during a meeting about the Plank Family Foundation funding projects in the area which turned to a discussion of possible development activities. The vision was described to him as wanting to invest in Hollins Market and wanting to do a 15 year lease on the Market with the City—don't know what the goals are in terms of changing the type of merchants. For Markets to survive they need supporting commercial buildings around them—which is how they selected the 31 buildings purchased. Their target is one block in every direction around the market. Were initially not considering anything that was 100% residential. Dan asked if they would do one development (commercial spaces and Market) without the other and they initially thought that it was unlikely that they would be able to purchase the commercial spaces which they have been able to purchase. Dan requested when he initially heard about the plan that the second they moved forward they needed to come to the community, which they didn't do, which has not yet happened.

Jamie said he first heard about the possibility of Warhorse coming to the area from a Baltimore Business Journal Article where they said they were pulling out of Cross St Market to look at another Market and Mike Seipp had found Hollins Market LLC as a subsidiary of Warhorse properties. He attempted to attend a Baltimore Public Market Corporation Meeting but it was closed at the request of the Mayor.

Sonia: in her view, it sounds like the Hollins Roundhouse Association is in the same process as Poppleton now is with La Cite—was a lot of things that the developer had plans to do where the neighborhood was not informed. Poppleton had issues meeting with the developer but had no input into the final design. If the developer isn't interested in working with the community then it's out of the communities hand. Wants to find out what rights a community has so they can force their hands.

Dan asked for specific questions about Warhorse to be sent to him as the meeting is Monday morning.

Nancy L.: to sum up what she understands about what Warhorse is interested in doing, Scott Plank is from Baltimore and wants to invest in the community. He has made impact in areas of the city . and donated a rec center to the Western Police District and many of the properties around the Market have been neglected for a long time. She hopes to have the market functioning and vibrant again. She’s talked to people who know him, and hasn't talked to Scott himself. In her view he is doing what many long time residents have wanted to see done for a long time.

Sonia thought that the collective of communities wanted to see Baltimore St restored to the district that it once was. She thinks the plan should have presented to the community for approval and also so that the community could have collective brainstorming and agreement. Wants to know where the community's voice is.

Jamie recommended that people look online at the Vision Plan as it exists today--it is meant to change according to the desires of the community. The scope of what the SWP does is determined by the community members who are part of the project. He said that there had been a llot of speculation about the development plans and a range of emotions and opinions. Encourages community members to meet with board members and other representatives to find out what their needs are.

**Enterprise Homes/Unit Properties Scattered Site Project in Franklin Square and Mount Clare**

Enterprise and the SWP will talk to the neighborhoods to talk about any changes that need to be made. Project is moving forward.

Enterprise Homes is about to do a grand opening of the Cardinal Gibbons Apartments on Tuesday September 13th from 5:30-7:30 PM. [The link to the Grand Opening Invitation is here.](http://info.enterprisecommunity.com/index.php/email/emailWebview?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTlRRM1l6VXdZVFl3TlRZNCIsInQiOiJTVmFXOTVGTnJSOUVPMUVUK1lNQkZQZEl1clhMSDNjM0lzM1pkTmt3TVZ0WEQvcSs4cFl1WkJ3MHBiK29HQnloS3pNanhQcWU1ZFZ0NVlUQ0JNcEZuMFhvb0lXQzJCRU52V0Q5YXNFUEFrVT0ifQ%3D%3D)

**Updates and Announcements**

Hollins Market is on the list for an EPA grant to clean up the second floor of the Market if the Agency is funded.

Jamie thanked everyone for coming—wants to recommend Water Wars by Vandana Shiva and acknowledge Nancy Littlepage whose family has owned Littlepages on W Baltimore St for more than 100 years.

Jamie reported that the Old Envelope Factory contents have been purchased by a recycling company out of New Jersey and the building is under contract for sale to Walter Skahan. In his view, the building would make great artist living and studio spaces.