

Garrett Park Land Use Task Force

Minutes

October 8, 2009

Present: Lizzie Glidden-Boyle, Suzanne Grefsheim (minutes), Ken Ingham, Barbara Jackson, Pat Keating, John King, Cindy Kratz, Peter Kratz, Pam Morgan, Bob Reinhardt, Nancy Schwartz, Natalie Shelton. Ex-officio: Beth Irons, Council Liaison, Chris Keller, Mayor.

Absent: James Barrett, Harry Gordon, Kay Hager, Todd Harris, Kevin Pope, and Thomas Twedt.

Update Since Last Meeting

Chairman pro-tem Bob Reinhardt opened the meeting at 8:10pm. He noted that Gene Brantley had resigned due to increased obligations at home and work and that he, Bob, was chair for this meeting only. He said that aside from Gene, three other members of the original task force also officially resigned: Cal Baldwin, Laura Retherford, and Phil Schulp, who resigned when he was elected to the Council. He noted that several others have been inactive. He also reported that the task force has a budget of \$2500, \$828 of which has been spent so far for having a temp in the Town Office enter property permit data into a database that Ted Pratt developed. Finally, Bob stated in the interest of finishing by 10:00pm, he was not going to follow the order of the published agenda.

The motions passed at the last meeting have been forwarded to the Town Council for consideration and they will be taken up at the Council's October 12 meeting. He and Pat Keating will make presentations to the Council.

New Chair

Bob reported that Suzanne Grefsheim was the only task force member who expressed interest in assuming the position of chair. He noted that a number of task force members who were unable to attend asked that the selection be delayed. After speaking to them, Bob reported that they withdrew their request. A voice vote was taken and, with no objections, it was agreed that Suzanne's name would be presented to the Town Council for approval at its October 12 meeting.

Suzanne asked task force members what their expectations were from the chair. Most expressed a desire for an impartial facilitator who made sure the task force's time was spent effectively. Timely agendas and minutes also were desired.

Approval of July 23 Minutes

Bob reported that Harry Gordon wrote him objecting to some statements about the Setback Committee in the draft minutes. Barbara Jackson reminded Bob that she, too, sent comments to the task force objecting to the same section and to the omission of some topics she felt should have been included. After discussion amendments responding to comments by Harry Gordon and Barbara Jackson to the July minutes were adopted. It was agreed that the omissions noted in Barbara Jackson's message should be appended to the July 23 minutes. The amended minutes were adopted by a vote of 7 to 5.

Communication Sub-Committee Report – Cindy Kratz

Cindy reminded the task force that a presentation about our work to date is scheduled for the October 28 Garrett Park Citizen's Association Meeting. She thought two or three people from the LUTF should make presentations. She mentioned Pat Keating and John King. John would present his analysis of lot sizes.

Nancy Schwartz thought the task force needed to get citizen input and suggested we use the nominal group technique to help determine what issues really are important to people. She said this technique had worked well during the early stages of the Penn Place renovation. It is a way for everyone's voice to be heard yet it results in a focused list of the key issues. Everyone has the opportunity to place an issue on the table, but only those issues that attract the most support will move forward. Ken Ingham suggested a survey might do the same thing and would not require people to attend a meeting. Bob Reinhardt suggested we might need two meetings with citizen's; first to give them time to introduce the idea and get them to think about the issues before asking for their input, then to have another meeting where we capture it.

Since time is short, it was agreed that a small group (Ken Ingham, Pam Morgan and possibly Natalie Shelton) should help Cindy draft a survey before the next task force meeting on October 22. The purpose of the survey will be to get a sense of the community and what the people who live here feel is important in order to maintain the character of Garrett Park now and in the future. The survey will be distributed at the Citizen's Association Meeting on the 28th and possibly other venues.

Walking Tour

Bob Reinhardt reported that now that permit data is in the Town database, we should be able to generate a list of homes for the tour. He and Nancy Schwartz are developing a set of guidelines – what to be looking for in the new construction and renovations. No value judgments will be attached. This will be presented at the October 22 meeting. Bob thought such a tour should help citizens respond to the proposed survey. Barbara Jackson and Lizzie Glidden-Boyle volunteered to help with the tour.

Research Sub-Committee Report – Suzanne Grefsheim and John King

Printed copies of the chart comparing the land use ordinances for Garrett Park, Montgomery County and several other municipalities in the area were available. Suzanne Grefsheim sent the document to all task force members earlier and Ken Ingham also posted it to a web site he created to share information about land use in Garrett Park. Suzanne explained what the chart contained for those who had been unable to view it coherently as an electronic document. Technical Specifications Sub-Committee members noted the information will be helpful in their work.

John King then presented a spreadsheet analyzing lot size for various shaped lots. This was based on work done earlier by the Research Sub-Committee under the direction of Natalie Shelton. He identified the limitations of his analysis. For example, he worked strictly from County assessment data to determine lot size and lot coverage. It was not possible to calculate accurate Floor Area Coverage from these records. One anomaly he noted was the dramatic difference in percentage of lot area coverage sometimes allowed between homes on lots smaller than 8600 square feet and those on lots over 8600 square feet. (At 8599 sf, you are deemed to have a hardship and can apply for a variance, and thus build 1720 sf, but at 8601 sf, you aren't so eligible, and can build only about 1550sf.) John thought it illustrated the penalty people with houses on lots just over 8600 square feet face. Some discussion of whether lots built on two lots were counted as one or two lots ensued. Natalie responded that if a house straddles the lot line of the two lots, it was counted as one. If the second lot is buildable, it was counted as two lots. Bob Reinhardt asked if John could color code a large map of Town properties to make the data even more understandable. John responded that this would take more time than he could give. Again members of the Technical Specifications Sub-Committee said the information he provided will be very helpful to them even without the color-coded map.

Technical Specifications Sub-Committee - Bob Reinhardt

The Sub-Committee met on September 10 to review and affirm its goals which include

- Develop incentives to retain housing stock
- Reduce the height and mass of new construction

The Sub-Committee also discussed the possibility of exempting porches and other protuberances within limits from the setback and a sliding scale for lot coverage similar to that in the Berliner Amendment. No action was taken on either of these subjects.

Bob noted that the Sub-Committee also discussed the possibility of working with Montgomery County to revise the Garrett Park Overlay zone in accord with the LUTF recommendation. This might include repeal of the Garrett Park Setback Ordinance. One motivation for this was the thought that the County could do a better job of enforcement. Ken Ingham responded that the simpler and more understandable the rules are the easier they will be to enforce.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05pm

Agenda Item for October 22 Meeting:

Report on Town Council's deliberations

Communication Committee

Draft survey

Final plans for October 28 Citizen's Association Meeting

Walking Tour list of homes and guidelines

Respectfully submitted by

Suzanne Grefsheim