



# Flint Neighborhoods United

FNU Meeting December 7 2019, 9:30-11:30AM

Flint Public Library

Facilitator: Carma Lewis

## Election of Officers

Nominees:

- Secretary: Talia Gordon, Central Park Neighborhood (Chris Frye)
- Vice President: Kathy McGowan, Ballenger Highway Neighborhood Association (Jane Richardson); Lucille James, Brownell-Holmes Neighborhood Association (Jeanette Edwards)

## Updates from the City (Mayor Sheldon Neeley)

- Part of the commitment to transparency and the plan to move Flint forward is an operational and financial audit
- The Department of Public Works (DPW) has been reorganized; Utilities and Streets Maintenance has been divided; Rob Bincsik will continue to oversee Utilities, which includes water treatment and waste management, while John Daly will handle Street Maintenance
- New partnership between City of Flint and Michigan State Police (MSP)
  - 44 MSP officers inside the city doing different services
- Phil Hart is Flint's new Police Chief
- Restructuring the way we engage with blight, including code enforcement and issuing citations for dumping and other illegal activities related to blight
  - Both structural blight and debris
- City is currently under emergency statuses from EPA and EGLE; all things are due at the end of this month, including audit reports to State of Michigan and EPA; we're woefully behind in all those operations from previous administration
- Pipe Replacement and Lead Abatement programs still running; need consent from occupants before pipes can be replaced
- EPA and EGLE are required to test at Tier 1 sites; there are a few sites that have still not been tested so difficult to assess exactly where we are in terms of remediation
- City has further incentivized the testing process by partnering with Consumers Energy and they've given us vouchers to give to residents at the tier 1 sites

Questions:

- **Question:** One issue folks have run into previously is that blight officers deal with issues of debris and dumping, but not the structural conditions of occupied property; any way to combine these activities? How can officers do code enforcement for occupied properties?
- **Neeley:** One part is a social mission, one is an enforcement issue; for example, if someone on a fixed income who can barely afford to purchase medication has a roof that's started to leak, there's no money to fix or replace it - where does that person go? What do they do?
  - Community block grant, HUD dollars, etc. can be allocated to those goals, to help address structural issues in occupied properties
  - The way we dispense dollars to address structural blight is changing: people will be able to apply for a grant, or if one of the code enforcers sees it, they can help

- Re-establishment of the City’s Human Relations Commission, which will have a concierge, somewhere the residents can go for help, for resources, to be connected to organizations
- This is mandated by the charter; however, previous administration failed to allocate dollars for this department
- Will be going to our philanthropic partners to ask them for support, to support this department
- **Question:** People own homes outside the state, still pay taxes on them, but don’t take care of them - what can we do?
- **Neeley:** There are two branches: Administrative vs. Legislative
  - Draft ordinances, or state legislates have to draft statutes to address absentee landlords
  - Different ideas: For example, citations...if we give citation and they refuse to pay we can put a lien on the property
  - Genesee County owns just as much property inside the City of Flint as the city itself owns
  - There’s a covenant agreement between Land Bank and the City of Flint that says Genesee County would rehab and restore properties, return them to the City; however, that agreement got morphed and nobody understands it
    - Problem also is that some of these are privately owned LLCs, not land bank properties
  - One governmental unit cannot sue another
- **Question:** As far as absentee landlords, I’m in Central Park, and we have an enormous amount of rental property - someone comes in and decides to make a duplex into a boarding house and there’s no one there to stop that. I worked on the housing inventory for the Land Bank and spoke with renters. We qualified those homes as substandard, but the renters had recourse to go against their landlord to get things fixed. Some of them are being lived in right now. What can we do? Talk to councilpersons? How do we approach it from our end and say “we need this taken care of”?
- **Neeley:** Human Rights Commission was established in 1974 to handle issues related to fair housing and abusive/absentee landlords, but for the last 5 years, we haven’t had that...in the process of re-establishment, but for now, your council person is the best place to go
- **Question:** Is Flint operating in the red or black? How much?
- **Neeley:** Right now we are in the red, part of that is related to pool cash accounts - when money comes in from taxes and revenue streams, its placed into the pool cash account and distributed out
  - Federal, state, and other grants are reimbursable accounts - we spend within the parameters, send them invoices, and they’ll reimburse us...we pay original bills from the pool cash accts
  - City has not been reimbursed since April or March, making our pool cash accounts very small...we’re going to have a cash flow problem very soon
  - “I treat a grant dollar like a tax dollar” - we have to execute upon all grant dollars we receive very carefully so as not to end up with unfunded liabilities
- **Question:** open office hours?
  - Monday through Thursday, 12-3PM - not just ceremonial, will really be an open office: The Mayor, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, or City Administrator will be in

## Speaker Presentations

Jason Wilson, Vice President for Student Success

- Mott Community College Strategic Plan 2019-2021
- MCC’s mission is to provide high quality accessible and affordable education

- Credit students: refers to people pursuing credit bearing certificate or associate's degree, about 10,00 students
  - Second Chance Pell Grant refers to people enrolled at the correctional facility in Lapeer
  - Pell Grant is a source of primary funding or financial aid for students in need
  - In the past 4 years, the government has come up with “second chance” version for people who want to seek an education while incarcerated or after
- MCC has been in top 150 of colleges since 2011, top 10 in 2021
- Within the past year, MCC’s police department was accredited as 1 of 16 across State of Michigan as a law enforcement agency
- 73.5 Million General Fund Operating Budget
- Funding from foundations is typically targeted funding
- Economic impact...for every \$1 of public money spent by MCC, taxpayers receive \$2.90 CRI in return (“Community Return on Investment”)
- Lenore Croudy Family Life Center: provides wraparound services for students
- Flint Promise Program
  - If someone graduates from a local school, their fees are covered by local funding sources —> As long as the school is in Flint, can be charter, private, public
  - Student applies, gets financial aid, gets a grant, and the Flint Promise Dollars take care of whatever is left in the balance
  - A lot of students covered their tuition with their grants; however, there were restrictions for what Flint Promise Grant could cover, so the first year not as much usage
  - However, Chamber supported making change to expand what the criteria is for the dollars to cover, this year we are seeing a much better robust usage of the dollars
- Gold Card Program for Senior Citizens... we offer a discounted rate for seniors who come back to school, or come to school for the first time, to pursue various programs
  - Not a clear pattern of interest...are people seeking courses for leisure? For job retraining? We’re looking at that program to see if there’s an opportunity to tie more support to those seniors
  - Unfortunately, cost of books and other fees not covered

Questions:

- **Question:** Can you give an example of economic impact? Are you producing graduates or other individuals who have the skills to obtain jobs, work in the community, get a salary, then contribute to the community?
- **Answer:** We have a broad impact across the entire area
  - Oftentimes you’ll see that colleges impact certain sectors across the community, e.g. healthcare, we produce x number of graduates in healthcare to contribute to that part of the economy
  - We graduate 60-70 nurses; all of them get jobs in this area, they then are employed, raising families, their kids will hopefully attend in schools in the area,
- **Question:** how many students are local?
- **Answer:** Less than 20% of students who attend MCC are from Flint; decline in the number of Flint addresses that attend the college,
  - We have strategic plans where we really want to begin to penetrate Flint and make sure that Flint is not getting left behind as the county and region and area begins to surge
- **Question:** What is the college’s relationship with the city’s high schools?
- **Answer:** 19% of 10,000 are actually high school students
  - Mott Middle College concept: by the time you’re finishing a high school diploma you’ll have a robust number of college credits or an associate’s degree; we also a longstanding program with high schools, such as Hamady High School

- Pipeline to Promise Program; started under the same guise of reaching out to schools to create some college-going behaviors and summer programs that we had with Bentley, Beecher, etc. had about 40 kids combined from those areas
  - Future plans with the program is to get into elementary, get with the babies, because that's where the pipeline starts

John Cohoon, Horticulture Technical Assistant (Ruth Mott Foundation) and Genesee County Conservation District

- Partnership between Ruth Mott Foundation and Genesee Conservation District
- Looking to gauge interest in private or community reforestation projects in local neighborhoods
- Trying to plant trees in your neighborhoods on a larger scale
- Regreen space, provide intentionality, reduce mowing maintenance, plan for future income for your community, stabilize land tracts
- Plan that is infinitely adaptable to your neighborhoods, your sites
- **Question:** what about vacant lots that belong to the Land Bank?
- **Answer:** There is going to be a certain level of accommodation that would need to happen; so, if you're looking to implement trees on the site, this is going to be a medium to long-term project, which would typically outrun a lease that a resident would get from the landbank
- **Question:** who does the planting?
  - Neighbors would be responsible.
  - Conservation district would help facilitate procurement; resources are available to make that happen

### **Resident/Community Partner Updates, Comments, Concerns & Announcements**

Amanda Emery, Crime Stoppers of Flint and Genesee County

- Please like us on social media! That's how we spread news now - by pushing out information on crimes through social channels
- Thursday, January 23, 2020 12-2PM
  - Genesee County Human Trafficking Task Force Luncheon
  - Genesee Valley church, 6020 Corunna road in Flint
- If block clubs, etc. want to have a presentation from Crime Stoppers, please contact Amanda Emery
- Direct Cell: 810-875-2208

Joyce Wilson, Attorney General's office

- Part of the Victim Advocacy program for residents harmed by the Flint Water crisis
- Open house December 19th at the AG's office in the State Office Building
- Tip Line Number: 810-MI-FLINT
- Call the line, it's a recording
- You never know what you've observed or heard, as you're thinking about it, you may know something that could help us, we'd appreciate you sharing that information
- We respect your confidentiality, but if you want us to call you back you need to leave your information

Flint Public Library

- Vote of success toward renovating the library
- Our last day of operation will be Saturday, February 29, 2020
- FNU will be able to meet in January and February but the leadership is looking for other quarters for the following months
- We're going to have a party on that last day, February 29, 12-4PM
  - Saying goodbye to the building as it is!

- More information soon
- 15M dollar donor: it was C.S. Mott Foundation, was contingent upon support from the voters; that grant has been triggered
- We still needed to raise 3M on top of the budget; Rutt Mott gave us a million, and community foundation gave us 50,000, so we have slightly less than 2M to raise, and lots of interested donors

Lieutenant Duane Zook, Michigan State Police

- Last meeting there were concerns about trooper's policing activity; please call with questions of concerns
- 517-643-0816

Raynetta Speed, Land Bank

- Land Bank's 15th anniversary!
- By the end of this month, Land Bank will have demolished 5000 residential properties within the City of Flint
- Land Bank currently doesn't have funds to demolish commercial and industrial eyesores, but is working with City of Flint to find ways to do so
- In last 2-3 months, close to 600-800 demos completed
  - Where the structures have been demolished you'll just see winter grade dirt, because after mid-November we don't put grass seeds down, that'll happen in the springtime
- Costs a little over 80 dollars for a side lot: fill out application, purchase the lot, depending on the situation, even if it's not a side lot you might be able to purchase
  - if you're not interested in purchase but you'd like to lease the lot, there's a 2-5 year lease that you commit to maintaining that lot
- What happens is that the treasury forecloses on a property; homes are sold at auction; whatever isn't sold, the state, county, municipality have first right of refusal, and then they come to Land Bank
  - Land Bank is using Flint Master Plan and blight framework to identify what properties are available at auction
  - We try to prevent speculators and out of state buyers from purchasing properties
- As conditions of properties change, you can go to the Flint Property Portal and update the condition and that helps us
- **Question:** Any projected increase in funding for Clean and Green program?
  - We depend on Rutt Mott Foundation to fund that program; will have more information in January

Jane Richardson (King Avenue Plus)

- King Avenue Plus is working for ways to put together the removal of four buildings
- Please sign petition!

Elena Sobrino, MIT

- Fundraising to cancel and forgive medical debt
- We're raised 50,000 to cancel medical debt in city of flint
- Use data to cancel more debt
- Nonprofit called "RIPMedical Debt"
- <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/prisonculture/>