

Crozet Community Advisory Council – Minutes
Thursday, August 21, 2014 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
The Meadows, Crozet

CCAC members present: Meg Holden (Chair), Jennie More (Vice Chair), George Barlow, Mary Gallo, Beth Bassett, Leslie Burns, Kim Connolly, Kim Guenther, John Savage, Tom Loach (Planning Commission), Ann Mallek (Board of Supervisors)

CCAC members absent: Dave Stoner, Brenda Plantz, Phil Best

Public attendees: Frank Stoner, Tim Tolson, Bill Schrader, Mike Marshall, Jim Crosby, Tim Dodson, June Andrews, Paul Grady, Kishor Chavda,

Chair Meg Holden called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Agenda Review (Meg Holden – CCAC chair): Meg Holden welcomed our visitors, distributed the agenda and reviewed it with the Council, and welcomed any additions.

2. Approval of Minutes from the June 26, 2014 meeting: Because the minutes of the June 26, 2014 were distributed shortly before tonight’s meeting, John Savage suggested that approval be deferred to the September meeting, and the CCAC agreed to do so.

3. Project Updates/Information:

- **Update on Library (Bill Schrader):** Bill reported that the library’s numbers continue to improve, with 1,900 new library cards issued and this number should increase to 2,200 new ones for the year. The library has had 126,800 visitors (a 78% increase), and 21,000 items checked out. The collection is up to 52,000 books of a planned 75,000, but acquisition will likely slow down because the staff does not want to buy them all at once. Bill reported that they had received a check for \$50,000, and now have \$83,000 in the bank for books. Eight hundred forty-seven children participated in the summer reading program and 700 people use the computers each month. Several events and speakers are planned for September, plus the library will be part of the Festival of the Book in March. Donations continue and eight proposals are still outstanding, some for funding in 2015. The fundraising team will have its last meeting in a month. Bill thanked in particular Tim Tolson for his efforts and Leslie Burns for her design work on the fundraising brochures and other materials.

- **Meeting date and location change:** Next month, the CCAC plans to begin meeting on the third Wednesday of the month at the Crozet Library. Accordingly the next meeting will be September 17. Two new librarians have been hired from within and so no training will be needed. The library closes at 9:00 p.m. and so meetings have to end on time, although if a meeting has a longer agenda, we may be able to begin at 6:30 p.m. The room will be set up for the meeting, and has been reserved for September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17, January 21 and February 18. The CCAC then voted, unanimously, to move the meeting to the Library.

- Streetscape updates/issues: Paul Grady said that the sidewalk has not been connected in front of Dr. Dagner's. Ann said that this is supposed to occur at the end of the project, but there are other connections that yet need to be made, such as to the cemetery, and asked the community, including the Trails Crew, for ideas to make this tricky connection work. Ann said that Dan Mahon is working on this with Greg Harper, and potentially the route would run from the wetland area to cemetery. It is hoped that the streetscape project might be complete in October, but that might be a bit optimistic. Ann said that there will be a finish coat of asphalt on the road so that it will not be so rough. Paul asked whether the retaining walls in front of the library have been stained, if so, whether the others will be stained too. Ann said she would look into that. The streetlights are now complete. There has already been a complaint about how a driver can get out of the way for a rescue squad at the four-way stop, however, other than removing the "point" near the stoplight, the road will stay configured as it is. The CCAC discussed the possibility of having hanging baskets and double flagpole holders on each of the light posts along Crozet Avenue. Leslie made a motion that the CCAC endorse this idea to the County and VDOT, and the motion was seconded by Kim Connolly. The motion passed by unanimous vote of the CCAC. The resolution is attached.

- Crozet Safety Corps update – Tom Loach: Tom reported that since the end of July, four burglaries have occurred in Crozet, including two in Old Trail and one on Railroad Avenue. These have been primarily in the daytime, at homes with unlocked doors, and in one instance the owner was out only for an hour. These are crimes of opportunity; keep your doors and cars locked! There has also been an uptick in vandalism, with incidents in Old Trail, the theft of a Crozet entrance (train) sign, several sign tops ripped off, and other signs knocked down in the Highlands. Much of this happened last Saturday night and there is no word yet on who is responsible. Perhaps with school starting up, this activity will stop. Tom said he wished he had better news. Jennie said that many car break-ins are not reported and people really should report them, and Ann agreed; the Police Department needs to know. Tom said that we can visit CrozetSafetyCorps.org and look for the link on reporting crimes, and get recent updates. Right now, there are forty-seven contacts to whom the Safety Corps can send alerts. Tom said that the Safety Corps would like to have a contact in each community in the area, and they are close to meeting that goal. Email Tom or Jim Crosby and they will put you on the alert list. Responding to a question about neighborhood watch, Tom said that the Safety Corps is setting up a procedure to get watch signs out to the community. A neighborhood does need someone responsible for installing the sign and VDOT has to approve it. It is simple to replace existing signs, but new signs must be coordinated with VDOT. Tom said that the website has information about how to apply for a sign, and they can help coordinate the police procedures to set these up. They can also coordinate the filing with VDOT through the Police Department and save the \$35 filing fee.

- Harris Teeter Crossing and Crozet School Crossing: Little has changed with this project, although Ann reported that it is funded for a crossing and striping. There are three or four design elements being argued over, such possible improvements including a stoplight at Radford Lane or a small roundabout. There are a number of options. When there are personnel changes at VDOT, the process slows down a bit. There is no definitive start date yet, but one is expected soon, and some changes may be funded next year. Ann said that designated turning areas are needed in the "suicide lane," but the engineers say there is not enough room. If CCAC members or the public will send emails to Ann advocating for this project, she will send them on

to VDOT. Paul Grady said that the left turn lane is needed at both intersections because people do not understand the suicide lane and turn from the right lane. Plus there are frequent near misses in the suicide lane with vehicles traveling in each direction. Ann said that because these issues compete with the Route 29 designs, it is difficult to get VDOT's attention right now, but we must keep up the interest. On the Crozet Elementary School crossing, they are working on the final design, and the project should be completed soon. Beth said that she asked Trevor Henry about it and he said that the County is awaiting final approval from VDOT. Beth will follow up with him next month. In the meantime be careful on Crozet Avenue because there are a lot of kids and bikes. Crozet Elementary was also one of eleven schools to get funding for a safer entrance, which includes a reconfigured entry way with a stop-and-sign-in area.

There will also be a ribboncutting for the new tennis courts at Crozet Elementary, on August 29 at 10:00 a.m. Friday. Quick Start Tennis was very helpful with this project and Ann expressed appreciation for their gift.

- Brief update of Barnes Lumber Property: Milestone was granted an indefinite deferral by a Planning Commission vote of 5 – 0. Mr. Stoner was in attendance and Meg asked him for an update. Mr. Stoner thanked the CCAC for its work in July by holding the two meetings to review and comment on the plan. These comments were helpful to them, but when they reviewed them it became apparent that they would not be able to come up with feasible plan in time to get to Planning Commission. So, they decided to step back and defer. Mr. Stoner has talked with the bank that owns the property about how best to proceed, but he is not sure how much delay they will allow. Since then, Milestone has had conversations with several prospective users or sub-developers, and some of these have been encouraging.

Susan Stimart has been working with a wind energy startup that would like to be there as well. It would require little electricity or water, and could use the rail access for materials in and out. It is also a clean manufacturer and would use infrequent truck access. There has also been some interest in a hotel on the site, but this is being examined carefully in light of the decision that a hotel would not work in Old Trail. Mr. Stoner has also talked with two apartment developers, both of whom are looking to build downtown. There is another by-right apartment project in the works that will be submitted this fall, and Mr. Stoner is talking with this developer about moving the project to the Barnes property. These are more urban-scale apartments, with more green space and surface parking, with a larger overall footprint.

Mr. Stoner said that the estimate from Nelson Byrd Woltz for the park and plaza work was approximately \$2.4 million, and the road would cost approximately \$2 million. Both of these figures exclude the cost of the land itself. No private developer is going to be able to do that, and so what else can be done? How can this be done over a period of time, in a realistic and market sensitive way? Mr. Stoner says that it may be possible to establish a community development corporation (CDC), which is used for development of a specific area. There would be specific objectives, including building affordable housing and attracting employment. Each of these would support the non-profit purpose of the CDC, which could access grant and federal funding for these initiatives. A CDC could develop a market sensitive master plan, but this will take time and consultants, but it would provide the community a road map to do this. Mr. Stoner said that he did not know all the steps, but would be glad to participate and help the CCAC evaluate what

would be involved. He said that the VDOT and parking questions are still unsolved, and both are long term issues. There could also be modified strategies on the rezoning, but he would hold off on that to see what it will take for all this to happen. This process could provide a strategy for how to get people to invest in downtown. He observed that single family development is the least profitable type of development, but it is what banks understand. The challenge is that downtown has not seen any private investment in the last ten years, and so there is little data out there to guide commercial lenders. We need more businesses interested in coming here. Developers can bring some private capital and expertise, but there needs to be a community effort to get this done. The current zoning of the Barnes property (Heavy Industry with restrictions) does not allow any residential development or a hotel, but it would allow the wind manufacturer. The CSX tract is C1 commercial and the wind company could locate there too. It is possible to rezone the Barnes tract piecemeal as users come to the property, but the rezoning process takes three years to do and so a master rezoning of the whole tract at once is more practical. However, he will need to see what the bank will do, and if they refuse to sell the land, and the CSX property gets split again, it will be a problem. If Milestone is unable to work things out with the bank, Milestone can walk away. It was asked whether Milestone's investment partner would allow acquisition of the land and working on the zoning later. Mr. Stoner did not know, but said that it is a private investor who will want a return. Building the infrastructure reduces the return on the investment in the land. It was noted that the brewery that expressed interest in our area subsequently agreed to move to the City of Richmond, where the community agreed to buy the land on the brewery's behalf, the cost of which would be recouped through taxes. Mr. Stoner said that those are the two options at this point and he hoped to know more at end of this month or next.

What can the CCAC do? Regardless of who the developer ultimately is, the CCAC expressed interest in looking at the CDC idea. It may be possible to get a group together to do this, and have people donate to the non-profit CDC, which will steward the property. Typically CDCs are used for blighted areas, around affordable housing and economic activity projects. Because a CDC is a non-profit, it can focus on mission related goals, develop a plan, and advocate on behalf of the locality. In order to come up with such a plan, it would be necessary to hire experts. A CDC would have a stake in the plan and shepherd it along. A CDC can also raise money in places where the County cannot, including private and public investment, grants, etc. A CDC can partner with private developers to make project happen and fill the economic gap. While many communities use CDCs, they are typically used in urban, rather than rural, places. Mr. Stoner said that Liberty Development Corporation, located outside of Pittsburgh, has done this, and he has a former employee who works there who might be able to visit the CCAC and the County to talk about this possibility. Kim C. noted that a CDC would need private (as opposed to County) funding because it will need to have one or two paid staff members. Kim proposes that we devote ourselves to learning about how this can be done. It was mentioned that the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development might be able to help, and in addition there is a national trade association for CDCs that may be able to provide us with some information. This project would likely take a year or more and the County would need to be involved. It is also possible that the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission could help by advising the CCAC on the level of business demand for the County and the kinds of companies that seek to come here, and specifically to Crozet. We also need to know about the costs to establish a CDC. The key for Crozet is that people want to live here for our quality of

life and geography. We would also need to have the community's input for what is wanted here. Mr. Stoner said that CDCs have a measure of flexibility as to what they can do and the CCAC then discussed potential experts to approach for help.

4. Items not listed on the Agenda: Tom reported that he had seen a request from Restor'n Station to have a bar on the second floor, and Ann said that she had seen it too. Ann said that she would look into it further. It was reported that it seemed to be a response to the ABC permit board from a neighbor objecting to an on-premises license. The neighbor alleged that the space was originally shown on plans to be a family office. Tom also wants to revisit the northern border of Crozet along Route 240. There are several large tracts here, held by limited liability companies, and Tom is concerned that a comprehensive plan amendment could be proposed to expand growth area, and that the County might see such expansion desirable. He would like ask the County staff to estimate the development potential of the property, which is zoned RA now. Tom had previously mentioned the possibility of providing lands near Route 240 sewer and water to facilitate development there, but require that the remainder of each tract be placed under conservation easement. These tracts are located across Route 240 from Western Ridge and stretch to the east. Tom is concerned about damage to Beaver Creek's water quality. Determining development rights is a complicated task for County staff, normally done at the landowner's request, but it would be useful to get this due diligence done.

5. Announcements: Kim G. said that the Lodge at Old Trail is holding the third annual culinary competition on Thursday, September 18. Contact Kim for tickets, and the proceeds go to Claudius Crozet Park. Approximately 100 tickets will be sold at the door, and so there are about 200 to sell in advance. There will be a raffle to select one of the judges again this year. Kim also reported on the new dog park, which was benefited by a successful Pints for Pups fundraiser held at Starr Hill, raising almost \$1,000 in \$1/pint and outright donations. There will likely be another fundraiser in October.

6. Future Agenda Items: The CCAC would like to continue the discussion about establishing a CDC and perhaps bring in an expert to talk with us.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m. on Meg's motion.

George Barlow
Secretary