

Special Meeting
Minutes Neighborhood Council District 3 (NC3)
Thursday, June 19, 2014
Corpus Christi Church Basement
(410 22nd Ave NE)
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order: Kathleen Gessaman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Those present were: Council members Cyndi Baker, Richard Calsetta, Kathleen (Kathy) Gessaman, and Terry Thompson - a quorum (Steve Malicott had a prior commitment); Jenn Reichelt, Deputy City Manager; Craig Raymond, Director of Community Development; Sheila Rice, Executive Director for NeighborWorks; Tammy Lacey, Superintendent of GFPS; Cheryl Patton, Planning and Zoning Board member; and, while only 86 members of the public signed in, over a hundred citizens were present at the meeting.

Unfinished Business:

• **Minutes: Terry T. moved to accept the minutes for the June 5, 2014 NC3 meeting. Rich C. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.** The NC3 minutes are posted at: <http://www.greatfallsmt.net/neighborhoodcouncils>

• **NeighborWorks Project:** Sheila Rice, Executive Director for NeighborWorks, passed out an updated concept map of the proposed new residential development near Valley View – the map showed houses in the proposed park area instead of in the existing Valley View Park. Sheila said the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program is a terrific program that allows homeowners to put in 65% of the labor (1400-1500 hours) to build the houses. The USDA sponsors the Mutual Self-Help Housing Program, and one of the requirements is that the houses be built on land in the County. Sheila said the City would annex the houses as they are completed. Sheila said she came to hear what the people had to say about the proposed development.

Jenn Reichelt, Deputy City Manager, spoke next and said the project has not come before City staff yet. Cyndi Baker, NC3 Board, noted that Sheila has said she hoped the proposed project would get underway in 90 days and asked if that was possible. Craig Raymond, Director of City Community Development, said a project usually takes three to four months to go through the system – first getting a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board, then the project must be approved for a public hearing by the City Commission, and finally it would go before the City Commission at a public hearing. Cyndi asked Craig if NeighborWorks had submitted anything to the City; Craig said no. Rich Calsetta, NC3 Board, asked Sheila who drew up the concept layout of the development; Sheila said she drew the map herself.

People who had questions for Sheila were asked to line up and use the “lectern” at the front of the room. There was no sound system at the lectern making it difficult to hear intermittently. The KFBB television reporter did have a pickup microphone at the lectern.

Some of the questions, comments, and concerns raised by public speakers:

- Almost all the people in the room raised their hand to retain Valley View Park as it is,
- Residents planted many of the trees in the Park and some of the trees are over 35 years old,
- Businesses on the NW Bypass do not want residential property next to their property because residents would soon object to the businesses,
- People bought property across from the Park because the Park was there,
- The Park has sprinkler system throughout the whole park area and the city mows the grass,
- The Park has a lot of value to homeowners in all of Valley View,
- Value of homes could decrease if the Park was used for housing,
- The proposed new park area is a half mile from current Park, which is used every day by local residents,
- The current Park is on swamp land – everyone in the area has one or two sump pumps in their houses,

- No one believed a new park would ever be built – at least, not in their lifetime,
- The current Park has swings and playground equipment; residents bought benches for the Park,
- <https://www.facebook.com/savevalleyviewpark> - Tim Austin started a Facebook page for the Park,
- Part of the Park is in the County – has the County been contacted?
- Valley View area has very low water pressure and additional homes could reduce the pressure even more,
- Day care businesses near the Park would be at a disadvantage if the current Park was swapped for a new one,
- Many Castle Ridge homes have foundation problems, and the Valley View area has many water and foundation problems as well,
- Would people living in the Fox Farm area allow this development to be built next to them?
- Monsanto has a test site nearby and their chemicals could have a harmful effect on nearby residents,
- How long would it take to build a new park when the present one is in use every day?
- Increased traffic could be hazardous to residents as drivers currently speed 40+ mph by Valley View School,
- Valley View School is overloaded now with many of the classes having 30 or more students,
- How will Valley View School handle an extra 120 children?
- There are many new young families moving into the area as older residents move to other locations,
- Have the Chippewa or the Little Shell tribes been notified of development in the area?
- Gumbo soil is predominately in the Valley View area; it is hard to grow anything in gumbo soil,
- The proposed subdivision site has many things buried on the property,
- A new park SID on the proposed development lots would mean any new park would belong to the new proposed development,
- There are no parks in the Castle Ridge or Black Eagle developments by NeighborWorks,
- The average lot size in the proposed development is 5500 square feet vs. 7500 square feet for the average home in Valley View now,
- Land on both sides of Stuckey Road has been zoned industrial, and some is in the City and some in the County,
- NeighborWorks should focus on rehabilitating old homes, like they did so well in the past, and on in-fill projects and not on developing new houses on the edge of town – this would spread out the children,
- Schools, parks, low traffic, and low crime rates are very important to Valley View residents,
- One resident showed a map of the Valley View area with the area of the proposed development and much of lower Valley View labeled not suitable for building. See: <http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov>
- Over 150 people signed a petition not to build the proposed development in Valley View area.

When the number of public speakers thinned, Cyndi B. said she had written down some of the concerns speakers brought up during the meeting and asked Sheila to answer them specifically; Sheila agreed to try. Some of the answers: Sheila agreed that she would not want to live 25 ft from a dog kennel business. Sheila appreciated learning about the bad soil survey report and Monsanto having a facility nearby on Stuckey Road. Sheila didn't think the property value/equity of homes near the existing park would be reduced if houses were built on the existing Park. Sheila asked for proof that crime would increase if additional homes were built in the area. Sheila deferred to Tammy Lacey on overcrowding of schools. Tammy L., Superintendent of GFPS, thanked everyone for attending and Sheila for listening. Tammy said she would look at the numbers and facts about overloading at Valley View School (where Tammy started her teaching career) and report back to NC3. When asked about traffic, Sheila reiterated there would be two new exits from Valley View - 15th St NW would connect to the NW Bypass as shown on the map and 10th Ave NW would connect to Stuckey Rd. Sheila noted a traffic study would determine if this is sufficient. Sheila said infrastructure development (roads, water, sewer) is very expensive, must be shared by all the lots, and at least 84 lots are needed to keep the lots affordable. Sheila said it would be possible to start building along 15th St NW. Sheila said she would work with the City Engineering department to try to increase the water pressure in the area. Sheila said NeighborWorks would take all the time they need to get the development designed so that the houses meet all the City standards; they will have geo-tech, engineered foundations, helical piers if necessary, French drains, and sump pumps – they won't build until they are sure they can address all the problems in the area.

In her closing remarks, Jenn Reichelt said, “We heard you. The Park is sacred.” Jenn also said the City wanted the park swap issue to come out before the proposed development was even discussed and noted NeighborWorks was trying to be transparent by bringing the park swap issue early to NC3. Craig R. said foundation problems were not unique to Valley View but were found throughout the City; geo-tech studies weren’t done in the City until after 2007. Craig said the developer pays for any extra construction costs, not the taxpayers.

Kathy G. thanked Sheila for answering so many questions and noted Sheila would need to discuss the new information with her staff before any decisions could be made on the park swap. Other Council members were asked if they had any more questions or concerns. Terry T. said she was overwhelmed with the turnout. Terry said she heard that Valley View Park was sacred and she was amazed people spent their own money on trees for the Park. Terry said the proposed houses were not low-income housing but work-force housing. Terry said she thought Public Works should work on the low water pressure in Valley View and hoped the people would join her in trying to fund Valley View Park improvements.

Rich C. said the Council was available for another special meeting if necessary. Rich encouraged people to wait until the City and the developer get information on all the issues that were brought up at this meeting. Rich advised people to check the NC3 Facebook page as well as the Save Valley View Park Facebook page for further developments and contact either a council member or Patty Cadwell about another special meeting.

The Council did not take a position on the proposed subdivision at this meeting but agreed to facilitate additional meetings with Valley View residents as more information becomes available.

The next regular NC3 meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 4, 2014.

Petitions and Communications: There were no additional comments because time ran out.

Terry T. moved to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Rich C. seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen Gessaman, NC3 Acting Secretary. Please note these minutes are not an exact record of what was said.

NC3 would like to thank Corpus Christi Church for providing a meeting spot for this NC3 Special Meeting.