

Neighborhood Improvement Team Meeting

General Meeting, Pittsburg Library Community Room

October 7, 2014, 10:00am

City Staff Present: Joe Sbranti, Garrett Evans, Kolette Simonton, Dana Ayers, Kristen Pollot, Keith Halvorson, Don Buchanan, Laura Wright, Sharon Jackson, Jill Hecht, Sergeant James Terry, Myla Rivers

Vice Mayor: Pete Longmire

City Council Member: Nancy Parent

CAC Member: Larry Wirick

Planning Commission Members: Bruce Ohlson, Patrice Belleci-Shipe

Approximately 45 residents attended.

INTRODUCTION – Garrett Evans, Asst. City Manager

- Welcome
- Have been a part of Team Pittsburg about 18 years
- Have had these meetings about a dozen years now
- 67,000 citizens, about 240 employees – we need your help with telling us what is working well or not, we look to you for help

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Kolette Simonton

- Four parts to Economic Development
 - Business Creation – how can they bring new businesses into the City that fit
 - Business Attraction
 - Business Retention – how do we keep the businesses that we have
 - Job Creation
- Hall of Fame Sports Bar and Grill took the place of Momo's downtown
- Nicole Barton Photography
- Worked with Target as their lease expired, to keep them here in the City
- Worked with Ford dealership as Pittsburg Ford closed, now reopened on Century and is bigger
- Create events to bring people into different areas of the city
 - Culinary Crawl – to attract people to the downtown area
- \$200 million of infrastructure in downtown area – businesses need you to come check them out and come back

PLANNING – Kristin Pollot

- Aid in maintaining and enforcing zoning regulations within the City which dictates rules for property development
- First stop for new businesses, work alongside Engineering and Building Department
- Recently reviewed and approved plans
 - Multi-tenant commercial buildings
 - Rehab of Ambrose Pool
 - Gas Station in San Marco area
 - Solar Panel Facility at north side of Pittsburg-Antioch Highway
- Assist in implementing state/regional regulations
- List of projects online as well as copies here tonight

ENGINEERING – Keith Halvorson

- Work closely with Planning Department
- Assist in building of sidewalks, storm drains, etc. to make sure they meet minimum standards
- Traffic division sees to the proper operation/installation of traffic signals/street signs/school traffic flow
- Projects currently working on
 - Capital Improvement Project
 - Downtown Park – 6th & Railroad to be completed by Spring 2015
 - Paving in a variety of neighborhoods
 - Pathway between Vista Del Mar/San Marco
 - Water Treatment Plant – the water you drink is actually treated by the city and distributed out
 - BART
 - helped in finding funds for EBART station
 - to be built in median of Highway 4
 - grant funds to build Kiss-n-Ride – underway in not too distant future

Note: BART Board approved eBART station on October 9th.

PARKS AND RECREATIONS DEPARTMENT – Don Buchanan

- You are a great benefit to us
- You are our eyes and ears of the City
- If you have questions or concerns give us a call and we will respond accordingly
- Small World Park and Buchanan Pool are coming to the close of their season. Small World Park has a great Halloween Event at the end of the month, if you've never been there, see me for free passes

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS – Laura Wright

- Gets to work with every department in the City
- Works in City Manager's Office
- Garbage/Recycling
 - Curbside
 - School programs
 - Pittsburg HS green challenge – teaches about recycling/sustainability
- Transfer Station
- Household Hazardous Waste
 - Free facility for you to drop off excess oil, paint, fats, oil, grease, and electronics
 - Open Thursday – Saturday 9:00am-4:00pm
- NPDES, Storm Water Program – we monitor to make sure it's just rain water
- Plastic Bag Ordinance
 - Thank you to the residents of Pittsburg for helping with this ordinance – fields and water streams are cleaner because of it
- Adopt-a-Spot
- Water education program
- Energy efficiency – LED Lights
- LEA – Local Enforcement Agency
 - Work with Code Enforcement for illegal dumping
- Safety Program – environmental compliance
- Cable/Wireless
- EOC – Emergency Operations Center
 - Revising the plan to be better prepared in case of emergency
 - CERT – 6 week course starting this month, next one in the Spring
- Community Access Channel 24 for updates
- E-News Blast
- Pay Water online
- GoGov – smart phone application to report to us
- Facebook Pages: Living Green, and Neighborhood Team
- Nixel – comes straight from police depart – information on what is happening in the community

HOUSING AUTHORITY– Sharon Jackson

- Get the pleasure of serving the citizens of Pittsburg
- Pittsburg Housing is the only high performer in Contra Costa County
- Staff of six
- We hope our residents continue to be good neighbors and encourage you to let us know if they are not

- Provide income assistance to 1108 households in this City
 - Sponsored through a Federal grant for rental assistance
 - Clients include – disabled, working households, full time adult students
- 3 Components
 - Section 8 (Housing Choice Voucher Program)
 - Veterans Affairs
 - Renters to Homeowners (monetary assistance for 15 years, then transition them off)

PITTSBURG ARTS & COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION – Jill Hecht

- Focus on Literacy and Performing Arts
- Art Shack at the Marina – year round classes
- Railroad Book Depot – all profits stay in the community
- Coordinate Car Show and Farmers Market – only 3 more farmers markets left, see me for carrot cash
- California Theater – take time to check it out, it's a beautiful building
 - Pittsburg Pops concert series, October 25th
 - Rocky Horror Picture Show, October 24th
 - Day of the Dead
 - Comedy show series
 - www.PittsburgCaliforniaTheater.com

POLICE DEPARTMENT – Sergeant James Terry

- Night supervisor, up until 7:00am
- 2013 Crime Stats
 - Part 1 crimes – Major FBI crimes from robbery to homicide – down, only one year lower, 2011
 - Street level robbery up 30% because it include cell phone snatches – can track cell phone now to help apprehend individuals
 - Last year 4 homicides at this time, this year only 1
 - Vehicle thefts are up – this is a national problem
 - You can help – if you see a suspicious person, not familiar to the area, call PD, please
 - Citizens are our eyes and ears
- Budgeted for 74 officers
- Street team – plain clothes officers do surveillance to help interdict crimes
- Just hired our 4th School Resource Officer – great in educating the younger crowd
- Traffic Division – motor units, deal with traffic issues, speed trailers
- Code Enforcement – does parking enforcement and addresses blight issues

*QUESTIONS/ANSWERS (answers marked with ** in blue)*

- What can citizens do to help attract businesses, keep businesses around? Some of us may know people that want to open up businesses.

**let us know what kind of businesses you'd like to have in your city – the city then contacts brokers/retailers to find out what demographics they need to bring their business to our city. Kolette attended the International Council of Shopping Centers where you can meet with potential tenants as well as current ones.

**also, invite a friend to eat out or go shopping with you in different parts of our city, not just someone from out of town, but maybe a neighbor or someone who hasn't been downtown in a while

- What kind of plan do we have in place in case of a disaster?

**We've created an Emergency Operation Plan – yes we are challenged with hospitals and short on some resources here, but our EOC is working on meetings w/ County Health Department, LMC nursing school and Medic Corp on how to deploy and train better in case of emergency. There are regional trainings and we are reaching out to citizens to see how we can improve issues. We are trying to learn from Chevron. Get involved with Nixle to get updates from the City.

- Not all people have smart phones, how will you get information to them?

**Public information officers, radio, news.

- Compliment on Pittsburg Mettle Baseball team – nice to have one in our City.

**The team this year had 3 former major leaguers. Tickets are only \$5

- Citizen was involved in CERT in Palo Alto and encouraged people to get involved, said it's like having a neighborhood based protection.
- Why are there no signs off of the freeway for the restaurants downtown

**We have several directional signs throughout the city directing people to Old Town, California Theater, and the Marina although they are not restaurant specific, we have eight signs throughout the city. All restaurants should be doing their own advertising. Old Town also has a website with links to each of the places to eat/shop.

- There are signs for Old Town, but we could use signs for the restaurants, off of the freeway. Why are some of the spaces empty, is the City charging too much rent?

**not all of the empty spaces are owned by the city, we only have control of one more space downtown which we just finished improvements on and are looking for a tenant to fill it.

- Can we implement a law that buildings can't remain vacant?

**there is a balancing act of what can be put in place so that buildings don't sit vacant, and is difficult to implement since the city has no money to help. Downtown there are several buildings that have been marketed since the economy is going up. Planning also has certain ordinances to control what is going on.

- Where is the solar energy station going?

**north of Pittsburg-Antioch Highway, close to Loveridge Road

- What happened to the Bed and Breakfast that was supposed to go downtown?

**it was going to be an \$8-10 million project, the cost was too much

- Can you call KQED to collaborate with them? There have lots of followers in East County and Pittsburg. You can work with them for help with grants and bring in some entertainment, maybe they can put a sub studio/radio station downtown to bring events to this town.

**California Theater is working on installing fiber optics and Delta TV in the walls to be more attractive to different recording-type entities, so video directors, etc. can "pull up and plug in", the infrastructure with already be there for them.

- What can be done about the vehicle break-ins at the shopping centers?

**The PD is being proactive about this, plain clothes officers are doing surveillance and Code Enforcement has been making more of a presence in the shopping centers

- Street lights in San Marco area, specifically Santa Lucia, do not come on until 7:15pm, when it's already almost dark, are the lights on a sensor or are they manually controlled.

**These lights have a photo sensor, so they come on depending on the light outside, they go on when the light gets down to a certain level. We will have our electrician go out there and check them out.

- I saw there is another \$85 million school bond on the ballot. This is the 4th year there's been a school bond on the ballot. What's being done with the money?

**The city does not have control of the money – this would be a question for the school district, but they are not here tonight. Look what has been done in this school district – they have rebuilt the high school, built a new junior high school and have rebuilt many of the elementary schools. Test scores have gone way up by the students year after year, which we believe are because of this. Crime rates are down. They've done a great job of turning this district around and it now has a bigger population. The school district helps to pay for our four School Resource Officers, approx. \$340,000/year. Yes they are asking for a lot of money, but you have to decide if you are getting your monies worth. That's for you to decide on ballot day.

**Heights elementary was rebuilt which provides an environment for kids that is better for learning. In 1999 we re-did City Hall which gave us the ability to attract great folks because it is a nicer building. Nicer schools will attract better teachers which will in-turn be better for the kids. This is not a city measure and each individual will need to make up their own mind about the matter. We are not championing the cause, just giving the facts.

- What is going on with the Central Avenue tree removal project? Can't PG&E just redo the pipeline instead remove the trees?

**PG&E has done a statewide evaluation of all of their high pressure lines and found certain lines need replacing while the other lines are still ok and just the surrounding trees need removal because the roots can corrode the pipeline or breakthrough the pipe. There will be no actual tree removal on Central Avenue or Pine Street. They are currently working on removing some of the trees on E. 14th Street.

- I saw that PG&E is removing the trees on E. 14th Street, now we only have the view of the fence, railroad tracks, and the back yard fences of the neighborhood across the tracks. What will be done to beautify that area since they have now taken away the charm?

**We are looking at ways to beautify that area, but what PG&E stipulates we can go back in with is very limited. We are working on a plan and should have something together in the near future, we just cannot go back in and plant more trees over the ones removed, the vegetation will be low. PG&E is giving the city funding for the replacement of the 94 removed trees and we will be planting about 500 trees into the parks and other areas, we just cannot replace the trees where PG&E has removed them. The goal is to keep these pipelines/neighborhoods safe. PG&E did not come in with the softest touch but we are working with them to serve you as best we can.

- Bruce Ohlson suggested a Heritage Tree Ordinance.

**This comment was received by the Planning Commission and the City Council has adopted it as a goal. There is an existing ordinance that addresses street trees only. An ordinance is in the works to address mature trees on private property.

- What size trees will replace the old ones?

**15 gallon trees which start about 8 feet tall

- Bike pathways/trails throughout the city do not have any trees for shade. Can we plant trees throughout the trails?

**Delta DeAnza Trail is under the control of East Bay MUD, we have no control over planting trees, and there are 3 aqueducts that run under the trails so they would not want anything planted over this.

- What about planting trees along the linear parks?

**many of the linear parks in town have utility lines underneath, so we have to be careful about what is planted.

- What can be done about squatters – stealing water and PG&E and storing garbage? They are sitting on the roof and terrorizing the neighborhood. I don't feel safe.

**Joe Sbranti gave citizen his phone number so they can have a meeting about this.

- What is the off premise sign ordinance in this city? It'd be nice to know what is going on downtown. Signs are a good way to get people downtown.

**Several cities use small digital signs for advertising. We have a few as well. We have to make sure advertising is fair. The city does not allow off sight signage, but there are exceptions with certain billboards. Stay tuned for something in the works.

- Where is it legal for election signs to be placed? Do they need permission to put the signs up?

**There are exceptions in the sign code during election season and they can be placed on any private property without going through the sign review process, but property owners do have the right to refuse or take them down if they don't want them on their property.

- Is it possible to tell developers not to plant palm trees? The volunteers pop up everywhere and the falling palm fronds are a hazard. Can we pull the palm trees out around the city and replace them with different trees?

**We can have an approved plant list that is used for new private development projects and palm trees are not on the list so they should not be incorporated into new development.

**With regards to public areas with existing palm trees, mistakes have been made in the past in regards to planting male/female palm trees. The females are the problematic trees that drop seedlings. There is a way to inject the females with fruit eliminators and we are looking into that.

- Citizen has dealt with squatters as “neighbors” before and Code Enforcement and the Police Department were able to get them out. Urged people to listen to what the PD and Code Enforcement tell you to do and report what you think is a criminal act. Their squatters were forced to leave although it did take some time.
- Can the city come up with a list of what citizens should do to prevent squatters or to help get them out?

- Is there a way to stagger the days of the car shows/culinary crawl so that they are not always on a Thursday? Sometimes one particular day does not work for some people.

**Will consider this when planning next year's events, maybe play with some dates, but there are some downtown events that are on Wednesdays and Fridays. We also take into consideration what surrounding areas have going on for those dates so that there is a good turnout.

- When will the project be completed for the San Marco gas station?

**You should see construction happening soon with completion possible next year some time. There is also a park in design for that area which should be completed by the spring.

- Are there plans for another shopping center in the San Marco area? The Oak Hills shopping center is always crowded and we'd like to see other places to shop.

**The vacant space at the northeast corner of San Marco Blvd and West Leland Road is currently slated for single family homes according to the development agreement for the site; however, the General Plan calls for commercial at this location. The City has been encouraging a retail commercial development at this location; however since both types of development would be allowed, it will be up to the developer to decide what they want to build there.

- The restaurant that is going in across from the Ace Hardware on Leland (old Smitts) is an eye sore. Can we hurry them along? It's taken them so long and it doesn't look good.

**Code Enforcement and Building Department have been keeping an eye on this but they are doing just enough to keep their permits active and Code Enforcement off of them. We share your frustration.

- Now that Staples is out, is there another interested party?

**a new business is going in called D D's Discounts, along the lines of a Ross and Kohl's. It'll have clothing, kitchen gadgets, etc. Economic Development is good about getting a business to replace the ones that leave.

- Is there anything in the works for the old Burger King building?

**the building was purchased by Fast Auto Loans. They've recently pulled permits so you should see remodeling soon. It will be an office-type building that does title loans.

- I love to use the Oak Hills Park Trail, it's beautiful, but lately people have not been cleaning up after their dogs. Is there something that can be done about this? Can we put signage up?

**This is a problem throughout our entire park system. We've even installed a dog station at one of our parks with doggie clean-up bags. Yes, we can and will put signs up along the trail to remind people to clean up after their dogs.

- Can the city put some type of shading along the trails so that people can take breaks during their exercise time? Maybe a park bench with some kind of temporary/permanent shade? Citizens can even buy/donate the shade if the city is willing to install it. People want to have some comfort when walking long distances.

**This is a good idea – let’s talk more about this.

- When will the city update their General Plan?

**The horizon year on the General Plan is 2020. An update process will probably begin in the next 2-3 years; however, the existing General Plan is in pretty good shape so it won’t need a complete overhaul. Cost is the biggest challenge for this. We no longer have redevelopment agency money anymore so we are working on establishing a General Plan maintenance fee for new projects so that it can help to pay for the updates.

- Patrice Belleci-Shipe encouraged everyone to read this General Plan a little at a time. She feels we have a good General Plan in place and an update doesn’t mean there is something wrong with this one. This is a very valuable document to look at.

**A copy of the General Plan is on the city website.

- What’s happening, zoning-wise, with Central Avenue, particularly where the old car wash used to be? Can a supermarket be built there?

** Half of the land is zoned for single family residential and ½ for heavy commercial (anything from retail to auto repair). The property owner is having trouble marketing this so there is an application under review to change the whole site to high density residential. The potential for a supermarket to locate at this site is very slim because supermarkets want to be on primary roads and the ones that have been approached in the past have stated that the site is too far from the main street (Railroad Avenue), making it an undesirable location.

- Why doesn’t the city go after more family owned businesses instead of corporate ones? Why not look for more of a family owned health food type store instead of a big Safeway?

**We explore all gametes and the site has not been desirable to any of them thus far.

- Why not do a traffic count on Harbor Street? Maybe these places need to see there is a lot of traffic in these areas? There are lots of vacant lots downtown that need development.

**We do regular traffic counts throughout the city.

**Thanks for taking time out of your evening to let us know how we can improve what we are doing in the city.

**Don’t forget to see Don Buchanan for Small World Park or Buchanan Swim Facility passes before you leave tonight.

- After meeting – citizen told Myla Rivers the city is doing a great job of keeping graffiti to a minimum. Whenever he calls in to report graffiti, it's usually removed within a day or so.