

Neighborhood Improvement Team Meeting

General Meeting, Pittsburg Historical Society

May 25, 2016, 6:30pm

City Staff Present: Joe Sbranti, Garrett Evans, Fritz McKinley, Lt. Phil Galer, Kolette Simonton, Laura Wright, Maria Aliotti, Lisa Vela, Jordan Davis, Richard Abono, Ron Nevels, Paul Reinders, Bobby Joaquin, Rosalyn "Lollie" Gutierrez, Myla Rivers

Mayor Ben Johnson

City Treasurer: Nancy Parent

CAC Members: Edward Borjon

Pittsburg Historical Society: Denise Lawrie(President), Vince Ferranti (Historian), Rosemary Randazzo (Curator), Louie Esposito

WELCOME – Joe Sbranti, City Manager

- Welcome
- 13 year having these/first time at this location
- Denise Loori – Happy we could host, everyone is welcome to browse the museum

INTRODUCTION – Garret Evans, Asst. City Manager

- I've been with the City for 19 years
- I love this place(museum), it's great to look at all of the great stuff
- Kolette Simonton – Economic Development/Waterfront
- Laura Wright – Environmental Affairs
- Maria Aliotti – Successor Agency and Community Development Block Grant
- Lisa Vela – Housing
- We love for you to ask questions. We like to have great communication. You can ask questions now at this meeting, or later

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR/CITY ENGINEER – Fritz McKinley

- Oversees the different parts of Community Development ie: Engineering, Building, Planning
- Jordan Davis – Planning
- 3 Senior Civil Engineers
 - Richard Abono & Ron Nevels - Capital Improvement Projects
 - John Buckley Square will be getting Bocce Ball Courts soon

- Ray Giacomelli Park will begin construction in San Marco area
 - Pool rehabilitation in Ambrose Park
 - Paul Reinders – Traffic
 - In charge of metering/coordination of signals on Railroad Avenue
- Bobby Joaquin – Public Works Superintendent
 - In charge of water/sewer/street signs/roadways

PARKS & RECREATION – Lollie Gutierrez

- Lots of summer programs going on
- I have business cards to hand out – you can email me, call me, write me a letter. I’m happy to have a discussion with you. Call me for information on programming, activities, and events
- Our recreation guide goes out in the mail and we have some to hand out
 - Car Show – every other Thursday
 - Culinary Crawl – every other Thursday
 - Movies in the park
 - Shakespeare in the park
 - Small World Park open on weekends now – June 9th Green Footprint Festival

POLICE DEPARTMENT – Lieutenant Phil Galer

- Been with department for 15 years – currently Patrol Watch Commander
- 80 Sworn Officers – City Council mad Public Safety a priority
 - Special Services Division
 - MHET Officer – Countywide mental health Team that serves all cities in East Contra Costa County, case load comes from referrals from ours and other police departments, many resources to help deal with mental health subjects
 - Traffic Division
 - School Resource Officers
 - Code Enforcement
 - Investigation Division
 - Detective Teams
 - NPT – Neighborhood Policing Team (est. 2008)
 - Gang enforcement
 - Narcotics enforcement
 - Human trafficking
 - Street Crimes Unit
 - High visibility - proactive

- We have about 68,000 folks in this city and 260 staff total, to include officers – we need you to be the eyes and ears for this city, keep calling us
- We've been in the news lately regarding our crime stats. Our department reached out to the DA & Sheriff's Office for a voluntary audit of our reported cases for crime stats
- Because of the string of shootings on Hwy 4 we have plans to add cameras to the freeway to help solve crimes and use a crime deterrent. This has gone before City Council already and has been approved to move forward on this. There is now money carved out for these freeway cameras. Now questions have been asked on how the state can do this instead of each City footing the bill.

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

- Did they catch the shooter on Hwy 4?

**4 suspects were arrested in one of the incidents. These are all gang related and folks are now finding that the freeway is an easy getaway. That's why we are taking actions. For us, this came out as an outside assist to CHP for traffic collisions, initially, as opposed to freeway shootings. Victims were found after the fact. We have 105 citywide cameras in our control with more available through businesses.

- On Railroad Avenue by the new BART station – is the jog in the lane temporary or permanent?

**Temporary, it will be gone in about 18 months and the road will be back to normal. The station will be open for business by then, to include the Hillcrest Station. We are also looking at a parking study which will provide 400 spaces and we are working with Tri Delta Transit to help get people to/from the Railroad Station. Handouts are on back table.

- Will there be reserved parking at the new BART station on Railroad Avenue and if so, when can we get applications.

**Hillcrest Station will have a lot of parking and will absorb riders and parking to alleviate space at the Pittsburg and Bay Point Stations. Tri Delta Transit will also be getting riders to/from the Railroad Station, so those riders will not be taking space up.

- Why don't you just build a parking garage?

**A parking garage runs about \$50,000 per space. There is no money for this type of structure.

**Per Nancy Parent – Tri Delta Transit just implemented a new system to take effect when the new stations open up, this just happened at 5:45pm this evening.

- I took the bus coming back in this afternoon. The schedule is terrible because there are not enough busses, they only come every hour.

**These are the types of concerns that should be expressed at this meeting. We will be able to pass along the information to Tri Delta Transit. We actually have a Tri Delta board member here.

**They evaluated the bus systems to make sure each bus has a time frame to work succinctly along East County. There will be 66 busses. Ms. Parent was there as an alternate for the Supervisor. They have come up with a better solution for Far East County with a number of changes on busses and re-routing with a computer system to know where every bus is at any time. They will also implement a new phone application to track busses.

- What are the projections on what is being built at the old Naval Weapons Station in Concord and how will BART be affected?

**10-15,000 homes will be built. We've contacted the Concord City Manager who has assured in documents that they will work together with surrounding districts regarding traffic congestion. We are watching carefully.

- Everything seems to be "a waiting funding". Congestion in San Marco is terrible and the Leland Road project over Santa Theresa is "a waiting funding".

**The developer will complete the project, and we would like the developer to do it now too, but we have no back up from Fire District so we have to rely on traffic studies for nexus to allow the connection.

- The developers don't seem to be doing what is promised.

** Traffic fees are paid per unit to fund roadways, parks, etc. Traffic studies are what we rely on to get things done. \$2.2 million has been invested for the park at San Marco and we are working with the developer to get playground equipment and items for the bathrooms. The roadway is not a fund issue for the City it's for the developer to do when the traffic study warrants the construction.

- When something happens on the freeway in the city to the East of us all of the traffic gets rerouted onto Buchanan Road. When will the James Donlon Extension be completed?

**This project has been on the books for 20 years. The extension will go from James Donlon to the Kirker Creek Apartments. This is a \$55 million project. 68% of that is funded by homes built in East County although 90% of the cars originate in cities to the east of us. 32% of the money still needs to be found. This will be the next priority project.

- Will a right turn lane from California Avenue onto Railroad Avenue be completed before the station opens?

**yes.

- Thanks for the safe exchange spots in front of the Police Department.
- What is the status on WesPac?

**This was an oil storage proposal and the developer pulled the project and cancelled. The project is gone completely for now. NRG is the property owner and this is private property, it will be up to them to repurpose the storage units. They will be putting solar panels on 7-10 acres of the property to generate electricity for the City to offset electrical costs by \$100,000 per year.

- Have they done traffic studies for the 82 homes going in on School Street? They need to do one for the traffic on Harbor St./School St. Traffic going thru there in the afternoon is a nightmare.

**In 2009 a Railroad Avenue specific plan was done and that intersection was included.

- It takes me 30 minutes to get from California Avenue to downtown. I work for the School District and with the homes coming in it will only get worse. I won't be going down there in the morning or afternoon.

**All schools have challenges at pickup and drop off times. We look at all schools to optimize traffic patterns. At last look traffic was acceptable. We will work on trying to make it work more smoothly.

- What is the Safe Exchange Zone?

**If you've purchased or sold something to/from someone you don't know there are 2 parking spots in front of the Police Department to do the exchange. There are City cameras facing those spots.

- What is the biggest challenge to get retail in the West Pittsburg area?

**It's not West Pittsburg, it's just Pittsburg. Anything south of Hwy 4 is Pittsburg. There are lots of reasons – demographics come into play. There are certain requirements that certain businesses want. If not all of them are met we try to work with the developers/property owners/and business owners to work something out. We encourage you to bring more people to these areas.

**Sometimes they won't come because they are too close to other similar businesses. Most retailers have certain mileage requirements between them. We are trying as hard as we can to get developers to come to us. We even try reaching out to different developers to make a marriage with a business owner.

- Why Food Source to replace the old Raley's? Why not a Trader Joe's?

**We tried Safeway, but we had no control over the lease, Raley's did and they put one of their sister stores in.

- I go over the hill to shop because I don't like the choices here.

**There are challenges to getting businesses because not all owners are on board. Education is a big part of demographics as are passports. Businesses want to see people that travel.

- I get tired of bringing my money to Antioch and Concord.

**If you like a store, ask when they are coming to Pittsburg. The median income for downtown area is \$69,000. Alves Ranch is \$90,000. We get hit with Bachelor Degree percentage – Trader Joe's wants 55% and up. There are a lot of metrics that tip the scale but they want us to meet ALL metrics. We need to convince them we have good money to spend.

- Is there potential opportunity in future housing to stock the metrics?

**Homes are selling in San Marco for \$800,000. They'll have larger lots with views. They are touting Mt. Diablo School District and Sun Valley Mall but Mt. Diablo School District is not as a big a deal as they used to be.

- Kirker Creek has \$800,000 homes – will they shop here or in Concord?

**I know of a Council Member from over the hill that shops here at Winco.

- I saw a student mural project that stated “smoking kills” but I don’t think it’s appropriate.

**This is a temporary project and we will make the school district aware of your concerns.

- Pittsburg is still known as a “rough town”.

**That reputation is not completely gone but people do see the changes when brought here. We are asking you to bring someone here. Show them the changes. Take them to the Culinary Crawl. We need your help bringing new people to town to shop and eat.

- In Highlands Ranch on Meadows Avenue people are always speeding. Can we put speed humps in?

**There is a process that needs to be followed to get speed humps but we do have good news for Rangewood Drive – by November 3rd speed humps will be added.

- Our cluster mailbox has been vandalized multiple times. It costs us \$1200 to replace each time.

**Did anyone report it? We have to know to be able to address it. We have a USPS agent assigned to our department 3 days a week so when it happens please let us know. We track how these boxes are being broken into for patterns. The PD is working with neighborhoods and taking actions with some success. We are working with them on a regular basis.

- I was a victim of a weird crime. I had leaves cut from my tree. Is it typical to expect follow up?

**business card given by Lt. Galer

- When will the potholes on Loveridge by PA Hwy be repaired?

**Trucks can cause a lot of damage to a roadway so this makes it difficult to maintain. There is a pavement project on the books and emergency repairs were done a year ago. (Bobby Joaquin handed business card). Contact him directly to address these issues. You can also call graffiti team to call to remove graffiti quickly. The new BART station was tagged and the graffiti was removed immediately. Cameras will sometime catch folks vandalizing property but it’s hard to identify them. We do cover it up right away.

- I’m finding that older homes are being purchased by investors, remodeled and turned into Section 8. The tenants don’t take care of them and the landlords don’t either.

**If a Section 8 home is not being cared for call our office and let us know. We have great tenants and great landlords. Not all Section 8 tenants destroy properties.

**Call Joe Sbranti if a home is not being maintained. We will address it. We also have a Rental Inspection Program to maintain rental properties that are not Section 8.

- People always leave their trash cans in front of their properties. How come we don't address that? I thought they had to be in the back yards?

**You need to call us. Trash bins need to go on the side or rear yard of properties, not the front.

- BART will have a kiss-n-ride lot, but where will 400 spaces go and will there be bike storage?

**The parking plan under development. There is a park-n-ride on Bliss Avenue to accommodate 300 vehicles. We will be adding additional spaces around town. It will be walking distance from many places and there will be a new shuttle route in place. It will have bike lockers/racks. We will be encouraging bike riders, shuttles, and taxis. Delta De Anza Trail will connect to BART on the west side of Railroad. We are trying to secure funds to connect the trail to Hwy 4 on the north side.

- We were told Code Enforcement is short staffed. Do they have a regular staff yet? My friend was asked why they were emailing so much and that they don't have time or staffing to address certain issues.

**business cards handed out – give us the addresses and we will send Code Enforcement out to address the issues.

- Off of Glen Canyon and Kingsly there is a pedestrian path. Kids are using it to doorbell ditch. Why is there a path there and how can we alleviate this?

**In the Glen Canyon plan, there was a policy included for path requirements to connect the neighborhoods. We will keep an eye on this but need to know when it is happening – after dark, on weekends or week days. Maybe get a doorbell camera. They have ones that take high definition pictures or video that is recorded online and you can share with Police Department.

- Is there an ordinance on banners/posters/advertisement (political or otherwise)?

**There is a timeframe political banners can be up before and after an election (45 days before and 10 days after). Business advertisements get removed right away if they have no permits (City Corporation Yard removed them) but they can be in front of the businesses. The businesses get the signs back. City events are different though. Call Bobby Joaquin with questions regarding the signs or their removal.

- There is a major homeless issue on Bailey Road across from BART.

**Homelessness is everywhere and is not a crime but we do need to keep them out of the roadway. There are 15 or so agencies that have assistance programs. We can identify some homeless people as mentally ill with the assistance of our MHET team. The County has a 211 program with many different services/resources.

- There is a stretch of Railroad Avenue between Buchanan and Atlantic that is an eyesore. Specifically the building that the truck went into. Is there a Hookah Lounge coming into the building next door?

**In March of 2015 a big rig lost control and crashed into a building on Railroad Avenue. The property owner submitted an application for design review and will be in the process of reconstruction. A hookah lounge was previously permitted. We developed a moratorium but the application came in and was approved prior to it being implemented.

- What marketing strategies does the city use for patronizing downtown?

**We are asking you all to become ambassadors to invite friends to the car shows, Culinary Crawl, Farmers Market, and to the waterfront. We will be having an Art & Wine on the Waterfront and festivals with music to hang out and enjoy the scenery. We will have kite boarding events as well. We have movie nights in the park and California Theatre events.

- I commend the City for what they did to downtown and I try to be an ambassador but there really aren't any shops to walk around and browse. There really is nothing else to do besides those events and eat.

**We have ads in ClayCord. We utilize advertising around Pittsburg and have expanded out beyond our area to other communities and even pass out flyers. We all want downtown to be the best that it can be and are trying to bring businesses in that cause people to come here. We have 100 events scheduled this year alone. Help us by bringing someone new in. Don't let them give you excuses not to come. We will have Bocce Ball in the park and will even get leagues going.

- This museum is incredible and even attracts people from out of town. They stop in during the Culinary Crawl and car shows. Please let people know this museum is here and we are always looking for volunteers.

**We do want to grow our downtown businesses. We get comments for not doing more in other areas of this City but this is the heart of the City.

- Is there an art gallery going in soon?

**690 Railroad Avenue will have a temporary art gallery. One of our staff is judging a clothing contest made from recyclable materials by the high school students. The clothes will be displayed in the art gallery. The contest prizes were \$600/\$500/\$400 and an honorable mention will be made for clubs/classes

- Does the disposal company weigh our recycling for a kickback program?

**Years ago a huge investment was made just for that. This recycling facility at the transfer station is one of the largest in California. There are programs in schools to help with money to invest back into schools. We will continue to re-evaluate that program.

- It amazes me that so many flyers get sent out for these meetings and only a few people show up.

**We have four meetings a year scattered throughout the City, two in the spring and two in the fall. We have more people coming now than in the past to get their specific issues out. We advertise in the water bills, e-news blast, on the electronic reader billboard, and posters & flyers are put up throughout the city. If you leave a meeting with one contact from the City that is key to you and your issue then that's good. We get prior emails with questions and the questions and answers are included in the minutes. We go thru them as a team and post them on the website.

- What's going on with the building on Railroad Ave/4th Street?

**This is to be decided, stay tuned. They need to go through Planning and it could possibly become residential and there are 4 property owners on this corner.

- What are you doing to make people want to open businesses downtown?

**We are trying to help where we can, by having different events, helping with tenant improvements and helping sometimes with rent offsets. Private property owners do their own marketing and Kolette acts as a free realtor for the city and acts as a matchmaker between businesses and property owners. The City has a vacancy rate of 3.5% with the properties that are controlled by us. Of the properties that are privately owned, 73% are leased and 27% are not. We are trying to work with them to fill the spaces. Kolette is the marketing person and in charge of www.ThinkPittsburg.com Brokers, site selectors and property owners can all go on and look at demographic info. This is a free service and information is pulled from other sites into this website. To attract more folks into this city we call different entities.