



Citywide Neighborhood Committee

Tuesday, March 10, 2009
7:00 pm

LOCATION: Conference Room A, Portsmouth City Hall

Meeting Agenda

For The Record...

Minutes of the January 13th 2009 City-Wide Neighborhood Committee Meeting.

In Attendance: Sharon Morrison (Chair) Jim Melfi (Vice-Chair) Mayor Tom Ferrini, Bert Cohen, Former Chair Paula Glynn, Cristy Cardoso, Jennifer Will, Tom Kaufhold, Mary Maurer, Sharon Rogers, Merle Harmon, Peter Britz, and and Raymond A.G.Will (Secretary.)

Introductions: The Chair introduced herself and gave a brief report of the Steering Committee. She then introduced the Mayor to say a few words. Bert Cohen from the Sustainability Fair, and Mayor Tom Ferrini. The Mayor stated that neighborhood involvement has its ebbs and flows. He thought a great way to involve new people would be to involve the Committee in the Sustainability Fair in the Spring. This would bring new people to the Committee as well as complete a year-round series of events for the Committee. Without further ado he introduced Bert Cohen of the Sustainability Committee.

Bert Cohen introduced himself and outlined his agenda for the evening beginning with a go around the room asking each attendee what sustainability means to them. Next he stretched out a length of string about 12 feet long with another participant and invited everyone to grasp a point on that string as a description of how optimistic people were about the future of sustainability. Very optimistic on one end and very pessimistic on the other. While the Committee members grasping the string was widely distributed, the consensus was toward cautious optimism. This was reflected in the fact that while in 2006, Portsmouth pumped 680,000 tons of Co2 on the atmosphere but at the 2008 Sustainability Fair 1,400 people generated only 1 1/2 bags of waste. So there is cause for optimism. As well the City Council made the recent decision to have future development based on the four criteria of the Natural Step. Other recent ideas have been the Piscataqua Sustainability Initiative, and the encouragement of gardens over grass lawns.

Next Bert set the Committee on the path to understanding the four system conditions of the Natural Step: Crust, Substances, Nature, and Fairness.

Crust: concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.

Substances: concentrations of substances produced by society.

Nature: proper degradation by physical means.

Fairness: people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs

We cannot continue to take things from the Crust faster than they can be created or renewed. At this rate we do not live in a sustainable society, but through sustainable practices like the Natural Step we can create a societal "soft landing". Instead of being overwhelmed by all that needs to be done, look at the problem as a tree, and that your job is to take care of one leaf at a time in your section of the tree.

We have to take this as a series of personal choices evaluating the sustainable things we do versus the unsustainable and change those things we can. Bert Cohen paraphrased one advocate of sustainable practices stating, a million different experiments need to be done and sorted through as to which ones work and which ones don't.

Then Bert passed out some brochures on how to do a sustainability study circle, as well as recommending the book "The Natural Step" and other books. Finally, Bert broke up the group into teams and had each brainstorm different sustainability "experiment"s in their own communities. As well a brief Q&A about sustainable practices.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

MISSION STATEMENT: The Citywide Neighborhood Committee shall take the role of advocate for the Neighborhoods within the City of Portsmouth to assure that all aspects of City Government work through two basic principles: protection and preservation of the quality of our neighborhoods."

Citywide Neighborhood Committee -- Proposed Dates for 2009
(All are subject to confirmation)

Meetings

Full Committee Meetings (7:00 pm)

Steering Committee (8:30 pm)

January 13
March 10
May 12
July 13
September 8
November 10

Events

Sustainability Fair Saturday, May 9th 10am-2pm

National Night Out: Tuesday, August 4th

Holiday House Decorating Contest

TBD: Neighborhood Judging Results due to
Citywide Judging Committee
TBD: Citywide Judging Event
TBD: Announcement of Winners