

Meeting: **Monday, September 28th, 2020**
7:00 PM – 19 Attending virtually via Google Hangouts

Agenda:

1. Call to Order and Introductions – 7:05 PM

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – *Motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting by Bryon, seconded by Montrell. Motion approved by members present.*

3. Treasurer's Report

- a. The beginning balance for the month of September was \$21,635.04. There was a deposit of \$500.00 from a check that cleared from the Community Solar incentive. We did receive a \$3,000 check for 50% of the interest in the Pierre Building, which is a pending transaction. This check is part one of the minimum annual fee we receive (guarantee of \$6,000 as part of the agreement). The Pierre Building still has units available and haven't leased all their units yet. This leaves an ending balance of \$22,135.04.
- b. Bryon recently sent a check to Interface Studio for the cost to update to the neighborhood plan (in reference to NRTC grant). We also have funds in our COD, which is approximately \$15,000.
- c. *Motion by Marcelle to approve the treasurer's report as presented by Bryon, seconded by Montrell. Motion carried by members present.*

4. Neighborhood Safety and Security

- a. Recent car break-ins / Park Smart – Park Smart flyers have been distributed in the neighborhood by officers. Residents and visitors are reminded to lock their vehicles, keep items out of sight, and bring valuables with them instead of leaving them in the car.
- b. Any recent issues? – Sgt. Levy of Camden County Metro Police Department (CCMPD) is present at the meeting. CCMPD had has zero COVID-19 cases in the department for the past twenty days, as they have had a more of a hands-off approach during the pandemic. CCMPD recently acquired new officers that are assisting with flyer distribution in the neighborhood for several community policing programs, including Park Smart and Senior Watch program. Senior Watch is a community policing program that senior citizens and their relatives can participate in to help vulnerable residents. This program allows CCMPD to gather names, addresses, and phone numbers of vulnerable citizens in the area (voluntarily) so police can conduct well-being checks on elderly/disabled individuals. CCMPD will perform checks and visits on senior citizens during times of crisis, which can include periods of public health crisis, extreme weather emergencies, or to prevent fraud or exploitation of elderly residents. Police plan to reach out to the senior citizens on this "Senior Watch" program list during "Code Blue" days to make sure they have heat as well as really hot days. Any interested community members can find out more information on the CCMPD webpage - <https://camdencountypd.org/senior-watch/> Hoping to spread the word about this program and have participation from community members who are interested.
- c. In the past month or so, Jonathan mentioned that there has been a noticeably increase in crime, which was acknowledged by Sgt. Levy. Sgt. Levy related that Chief Wysocki has made a decision to implement a 30-day surge in police presence, calling in officers for additional operations/patrols in specific areas throughout the city where there have been problems, including weapons-related and narcotic-related offenses. This surge in police presence is their first step to address this spike in crime.
- d. Jonathan brought up the displacement of the homeless/transient population and residents have noticed more individuals lingering in the neighborhood. We realize that some have been displaced due to limited services during the pandemic. There was an incident around 1:00 PM yesterday, when an individual approached several neighbors looking for some money. That individual then threw a rock through a resident's vehicle window for unknown reasons. Additionally, one of the houses on Linden Street had a rock thrown through a window on two separate occasions (over the span of two weeks). Another incident was that a resident was notified by an officer that someone had gone through her car.
 - i. In reference to the two incidents with the house in Linden Street, the homeowner asked about the cameras in the neighborhood since there is a police Eye in the Sky camera nearby the house. Homeowner is concerned because the window breaking has occurred twice in approximately two weeks and she is concerned that her children, who live there, are being targeted due to the repeated incident. Sgt. Levy mentioned that they do check the Eye in the Sky cameras if there is a reported incident (which both incidents were reported) as well as private cameras that residences and businesses may have. Homeowner will follow up with Sgt. Levy after the meeting about these two incidents at her house. Jonathan did speak with CCMPD and asked that there be a more

regular patrol in the neighborhood so neighbors can get to know the officer and vice versa. If officers become more familiar with the neighborhood, it would help with community policing and may assist with crime prevention. We also asked the same of Rutgers PD, since they frequently drive through the neighborhood while they patrol parts of campus. Rutgers Camden also has several students living off campus in Cooper Grant neighborhood and student athletes that use the fields in the community.

- e. There has been a surge in overdoses in the county this year. The number of overdoses in the county this year is on track to surpass the number of overdoses last year unfortunately. Camden County Library is still having free online Narcan training for those that are interested. There are telehealth programs for any public employees with substance abuse issues as well.
- f. Residents and visitors should continue to call 911 if something happens, especially if it's a crime in progress. Residents should also call if the crime has already occurred (ex: vehicle break-in overnight). Residents need to file a report if something happens and that will help get additional police resources in the community. Additionally, these reports allow the police department to recognize any patterns of incidents in the neighborhood and hopefully address them.
- g. Emergency Call 911 or 24hr Tipline: 856-757-7042 or STOPit Online Application (Code: CAMDENNJ)

5. Old Business

- a. **CGCW Neighborhood Plan/NRTC Grant Funding** – We have not heard back from the state on the planning grant funding piece. Jonathan did hear that it was reviewed and submitted to the DCA board. We submitted the planning grant application a while ago in the hopes of getting reimbursement for the funds spent on updating the neighborhood plan. Bryon attended a meeting and learned that there are still funds available, which is encouraging. They gave out instructions about what to expect this year. Bryon is working with Joe Myers of Cooper's Ferry Partnership on this project, including the updated neighborhood plan. We were approved for our NJ Charities application – which is now in place and one of the things we needed to do in this process. It's a rolling application process but Bryon is hoping to have things submitted by the end of October in order to be eligible to receive money from the next round of funding in 2021. These are significant funds for the neighborhoods in the city.
- b. **Covanta/County Microgrid Project** – Update from Ben – Microgrid is a proposed project to have a secondary electrical grid that will allow the sewer plant to be up and running during power outages and emergencies. Unfortunately, under the proposed project plan, this microgrid would be powered by a 29-year old trash incinerator which is causing a lot of air pollution in the area. A much better option would be attaching the microgrid to a cleaner energy source, such as solar energy. Communities are looking for a community benefits agreement with this project since the trash incinerator directly impacts this community. If the wind is blowing north, there is a smell of burnt plastic in the neighborhood air and it impacts our air quality. These are two projects that are tied together (microgrid is one project and trash incinerator is another). It's an environment injustice that this trash incinerator was placed in the city and has not been updated over the years, leaving city residents with poor air quality. The city council will be continuing with feasibility studies with this project. As of right now, this project is going in front of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities for approval to move forward.
 - i. Jonathan mentioned that the city does have a sustainability ordinance in the books (established around 2016 maybe?). We understand that people are trying to balance the business needs and environmental needs of the city. Trying to research some examples of when this ordinance was used in the past in order to apply it to this project.
 - ii. In the state of NJ, state law was recently passed called the Cumulative Impacts Law (environmental justice bill), which is one of the strongest environmental bills in the country. This law allows the state to deny permits for projects that would have an environmental impact on already overburdened communities. These overburdened communities are defined as those predominately inhabited by low-income or minority people. Camden is one of those communities. Any time of the business wants to renew their air permit with the DEP or a new business wants to apply for a air permit, the bill allows the DEP to consider the community's health conditions in the application process. This allow allows the communities to speak up about the air quality, since the DEP can consider this impact during the application process. A resident knows someone that worked on this bill and offered to put Jonathan and Ben in contact with her as she would be a valuable resource for these conversations about the Covanta/microgrid project.
 - iii. NJ is looking to ban plastic and paper bags within the year or two, which is another indication that the state is trying to be more environmentally conscious.
- c. **Infrastructure/Roadway Projects** – Fencing should go up in October, waiting for conduit work to be completed by PSE&G. They are paving the streets on Cooper Street. Market/Federal project was supposed to have a meeting this month. They are working on an alternative model for this project. Parking Authority is looking to increase their parking meter rates, which they haven't done since 2008. Prior to COVID, we were trying to split the parking zones. The Parking Authority is trying to make variable rates at the parking meters so when concerts/events do occur again, they can increase the meter rates in the area to be similar to the parking lot rates and get more revenue. Previously, people could park at the local parking meters for \$1.00/hour while parking lots were charging \$40.00. This causes issues with residents who need street parking in the community.

- d. **Community Solar Project** <https://neighborhoodsun.solar/cgna> - This website is where residents can sign up to get solar energy from a solar panel field in Delanco, NJ. As of right now, this program is only available to Burlington, Camden, and Mercer county residents. They look at your energy usage last year and allocate solar energy towards your utilities bill. So the utility provider gives you a credit from to the solar energy credit and then you would pay the solar company for use of the solar energy (at a 10% discount). This program is great for residents, especially renters and students. You don't have to own your property to access solar energy. This solar program will start in January 2021. First 100 residents to sign up with get a \$50 gift card to Target. Low/moderate income residents will get a 20% discount credit (for example, get \$100 solar energy credit on utilities bill and pay \$80 for the solar energy). CGNA also gets an incentive for each residence that signs up (\$50 per residence). We already received some money from Community Solar for those that have signed up. It's a pretty simple process and it's free to sign up. If someone is already purchasing their power from a renewable source, you can still use this program. You can cancel this program anytime, which is also great. In general, this is a great source of alternative energy.
- e. **Campbell's/Rutgers Field Update – Soccer Stadium Seating** – No new news for the Campbell's Field project. Mike Sepanic of Rutgers Camden is present at the meeting and related that it does not seem like the Rutgers Field Soccer Stadium Seating project will be going forward. It was not feasible at this time. Mike related that they did speak with the donor and are trying to direct him towards donating the money for some other type of athletic-related project that would benefit the student athletes as well as the community.
- f. CSSD did spent about 12 hours total doing landscape work in the community. They've been weed-whacking tree pits, etc. They tried to help clean some of the streets, especially Point Street, in coordination with the street-sweeping days but unfortunately a lot of cars weren't moved to make this clean-up efficient. They will try again next month. Parking Authority did ticket cars that were parked on the street during street sweeping days. Additionally, CSSD is hiring; applicants must be a Camden resident.

6. New Business

- a. **Community Social/Health Needs/General Resources Available** – On Tuesdays from 12-1:30PM there is a pop-up farmer's market in Roosevelt Plaza in front of City Hall. This market is a great way to get fresh fruits and vegetables for a reasonable price. Rutgers-Camden did put a dashboard on its website that aggregated all the COVID cases reported to Rutgers-Camden (either employees or students). Mike Sepanic pointed out that this initial data spread was too general and not really informative to the campus/community so now they've given a bit more specific information as the data is broken down more.
 - i. Ben asked Mike Sepanic what parts of campus are open? Moving forward, Rutgers is trying to plan what the spring semester will look like since registration for spring classes will be occurring soon. The Rutgers president is looking to have 50% occupancy at all campuses in the spring, however; Mike is not sure that is going to happen. Some of the Rutgers-Camden faculty and students are concerned about coming back for in-person classes. As far as public use of Rutgers-Camden spaces, Rutgers is still closed to external audiences through the end of 2020. Public can walk through campus but none of the buildings are open. Students/faculty/employees are able to access the buildings through their ID swipe cards – which can help with contact tracing for COVID. They are trying to find a way to open the Robeson Library to the students/public since the students are only able to use the library for the computer lab right now. The Steadman gallery and the theatre will be closed through the end of 2020. More than 95% of the courses are being conducted remotely. Studio art courses, science labs, and nursing clinicals are the only classes being held in person. There are approximately 200 students living in 330 Cooper Street currently. Rutgers is asking anyone walking through campus to wear masks, even walking outside between buildings. As far as food, the dining services are functioning through GrubHub Campus for students to pick up food through their student meal plans. Starbucks is part of the GrubHub Campus process but not open to the public for people to walk-up and order a cup of coffee.
 - ii. Ben asked about testing off-campus students (as Rowan is doing in Glassboro). Prior to the start of the semester, Rutgers tried to identify students that were living off-campus in the community to inform them about COVID testing in the Rutgers campus wellness center. They've repeatedly pushed this testing option (completely voluntary).
 - iii. Rutgers-Camden campus will be a polling site in November. The University is making an exception statewide for polling places.
- b. **Block Party/Alternatives** – Movie Night in October – Possibility of doing a movie night? If anyone is interested in organizing something, we do have a projector and screen to set up. We're unable to do a full blown block party this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and concerns.
 - i. The Delaware River Festival is going on until October 4th; some of which is virtual. For a schedule of events, visit <https://www.delawareriverfest.org/schedule>
 - ii. Next Saturday, October 3rd, 2020 at 7:30PM, the county will be doing a drive-in movie theatre at the Delaware River Waterfront and showing *The Lorax* movie outside. See <https://www.camdencounty.com/event/drive-in-movie-the-lorax/> for more information.

- c. **Arts Committee Report** – Christopher Maier has departed for his next adventure so we are looking for a new Arts Committee chair person. The current artist in the Pierre Building gallery is coming to collect their artwork soon. If anyone is interested in displaying their artwork in the gallery, let us know. The IDEA center opened up on Market Street. They have two storefronts on the 200 block of Market Street. They plan on having various events starting in October, including jazz performances, film showings, and poetry.
 - i. “Jazz on Market Street” will occur every 1st Sunday of the month from 2-4PM starting October 4th. Ticket price is \$10.00, not including food and drinks. For table bookings and ticket packages, please contact the IDEA center 856-577-8337.
 - ii. “IDEA Reel 2 Real Film Series” – featuring some of the best independent films produced by local directors. Will occur every 4th Sunday starting October 25th from 3-6PM. Tickets are \$10.00. For film schedules, visit www.ideacfta.org
 - iii. “A Poetry Series” – Every Friday from 7-9PM starting Friday, October 16th, 2020, located at 217 Market Street. Tickets are \$10.00.
- d. **Planning Committee**
 - i. **Grants: Bread & Roses, NRTC, Cooper Foundation**
 - (1) Bread and Roses – Montrell is present, who is our grant coordinator for this grant that we were awarded to help improve public access to community spaces. He’s doing research currently to look at currently public access to community spaces in Camden and the history of access to these spaces. Right now, he’s specifically looking at Johnson Park, the Rutgers Community Fields, etc. Currently it is a research project that looks into gentrification and welcomeness to these public spaces. He will be doing interviews with community members and others to help with this research. This information will help this project move forward and continue conversations about community benefits agreements with different entities. He will also be looking at Frank Fulbrook’s records for this project. Also sent out an OPRA request for the MOU for the Walt Whitman theatre.
 - (2) NRTC – See above under Old Business
 - (3) Cooper Foundation – We still have the \$5,000. We did notify them that our project was put on hold due to COVID-19.
 - ii. **320 N. 2nd Street** – There is a new tenant in the Friend’s Café space and there has been a good amount of activity in the space. Jonathan is still in touch with Kelly, who own’s Friend’s Café.
- e. **Development Committee Report**
 - i. ABC Barrel & DePetro Update – Not sure if DePetro is still attached to this project. Jonathan’s had indirect conversations with Mayor Moran and the county about this project. We still want a residential project in this space because we need housing in the neighborhood. We don’t want an empty lot for the next twenty years. Jonathan asked for alternative ideas for that space in the short run? Maybe ask to make that space a temporary farm? Hoping to have access to that space in the short term until a formal project is able to move forward.
 - ii. M&M Partnership @ The Pierre building – We receive one of our first payments. Limited access to the space due to COVID.
 - iii. Waterfront Development – Hotel is moving along, may be a soft opening at the end of the year. Wiggins Park does seem to be developing a market on Sundays, which is robust and worth checking out.
 - (1) Jonathan was invited to a meeting with American Water about the community investment/interaction with American Water. Hoping to find out about the 50k worth of incentives for employees to live in the community.
 - iv. EMR – 201 N. Front Street update – Had conversations with their attorney. They seem to be moving forward with their parking lot project. There were several things negotiated between the city and EMR at the planning board meeting that don’t seem to be moving forward (the flagpole, signage, the murals, enclosing the trash cans, etc.) Not sure if these small projects are going to move forward since they have occupied the building for approximately a year and a half. Resident is concerned because their properties in south Camden aren’t maintained (issues with sidewalks, etc.) and is wondering if COVID is really holding them up on their development.
 - (1) However, they did help decrease the amount of truck traffic on Ferry Street once it was brought to their attention.

7. Announcements (See the CGNA calendar for more updates)

- a. Virtua Farmer’s Market on Wednesday - 11AM-12PM at Osborn Family Health Center (Walk-Up) and 1PM-2PM at Virtua Health and Wellness Center (Drive-Thru)
- b. Pizza and Poetry will be Wednesday, September 30th at 6:00PM at Johnson Park.
- c. Street sweeping on the first full week of the month.
- d. There are two days left to fill out the 2020 Census.
- e. Trash collection will resume to once a week starting October 1st

- f. The annual CGNA Board Elections will be coming up at the end of the year. We currently need a Vice President if anyone is interested. Seeking volunteers for the Arts, Development, Events Planning Committees & other projects. Contact Secretary if interested.
- g. Next CGNA Meeting will be held **Monday, October 26th, 2020** at 7:00 PM (location TBA)

8. **Adjournment – 8:41 PM.** *Motion by Bryon to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Adrian. Motion carried by members present.*

The area served by CGNA: “Cooper-Grant” is defined as the area contained within the following boundaries: Northern Boundary – the Ben Franklin Bridge; East - Friends Avenue (extended) south to Cooper Street, extending east to the West side of Fourth Street; South - the south side of Market Street; Western Boundary: the Delaware River.

For more information, e-mail CGNA Board at info@coopergrant.org

*****This is our 38th year as an organization*** Cannot attend the CGNA Meeting? Want updates, meeting minutes and agendas?
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