

Meeting: Monday, July 26th, 2021 7:00 PM

– Virtual Meeting > Join <https://meet.google.com/yvj-eggr-zdf> (US) +1 409-698-0145 PIN: 387292368# - 10 Attending

Agenda:

1. Call to Order and Introductions – 7:08 PM

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting by Bryon, seconded by Adrian. Motion carried by members present (abstention from Jonathan L., as he was not present at past meeting)

3. Treasurer's Report –

- a. The beginning balance for the month of July was \$2,786.65. There were two deposits during the month of July – one deposit from Neighborhood Solar for the amount of \$500.00 and second deposit was the second half of the Bread and Roses grant the the amount of \$10,000. This leaves an ending balance of \$13,286.65.
- b. We were told that we did win a grant related to the DCA/NRTC as reimbursement for updating our neighborhood plan. We were awarded approximately \$22,000. \$15,000 of that money is for reimbursement to CGNA for the cost paid to update the plan last year, then we owe \$5,000 to Cooper's Ferry Partnership, and the remaining funds will be distributed to those who spent a lot of time helping update the plan and apply for the funding (Bryon Yoder, Ben Saracco).
- c. We updated the accountant in the city about doing the annual compilation but we have not heard back. Jonathan emailed him and will follow up with a phone call tomorrow.
- d. Motion to accept treasurer's report by Sonia, seconded by Jonathan L. Motion carries by members present.
- e. We are seeking any individuals interested in the CGNA Treasurer's position and Vice President position. We would love for Mr. Yoder to stay as treasurer but he does have other commitments. If there is anyone interested in the Treasurer's position, please contact Jonathan L., since the treasurer's position does require some training.

4. Neighborhood Safety and Security

- a. Any recent issues? You must call 911 and get a report number for an incident be officially reported. Jonathan L. did reach out to Sgt. Levy.
 - a. Main concerns recently were about Johnson Park. About a week or so ago, either through displacement or exacerbation of resources across the city, there seemed to be an influx of drug users in Johnson park – several neighbors called Rutgers PD and Camden County PD. It became a health and safety issue for the park and the community. Rutgers has since drained the reflecting pool, possibly to discourage people from congregating in that area in this hot weather. On some level, it makes sense to discourage addicts from hanging around the park and washing their clothes in the pool, but draining this reflecting pool is also a loss of an asset to the community. Jonathan did reach out to Rutgers but they said this would not be a long term position to keep the pond empty.
 - i. Resident is frustrated with Rutgers response to Johnson Park issues recently. He mentioned that this seems to be a pattern of poor reactions (citing how Rutgers responded to homeless people using the solar/charging benches last summer – Rutgers noticed homeless people using these benches to charge their phones and possibly use drugs so they locked up the charging ports. Then they put cones around them and eventually moved them). Resident believes there's no reason that RUPD can't interact with people and get them help (connect them with Joseph's House for laundry services, speak to them about other resources, etc.) It's concerning that Rutgers response is always shutting things down so people go away instead of taking the time to address the issue and speak with people. There's an understanding that there's addition problems and mental health issues associated but it's still not safe for people to be walking around and using drugs freely without any police interaction to discourage this drug use.
 - b. At the beginning of July, there were multiple issues at the waterfront. Apparently there were so many problems that they began shutting down the streets with police officers blocking the roads to waterfront with vehicles and barricades on a nightly basis and it seems like they're still doing so. They've mainly been in the area of

American Water and the hotel. The issues seem to be destruction of property and a few other things. These are public roads but now our access is limited to these public parks.

- c Neighbor mentioned that there are large cargo trucks parking on Delaware, but now it seems like some of those trucks are migrating to Front Street in front of EMR. There are trucks idling on Front Street. Wondering if the trucks are parking there due to the construction on Delaware? Stacey (EMR) stated that they're doing construction on the parking lot – these tractor trailer trucks are not associated with the EMR building. Residents are concerned about idling trucks in the neighborhood, especially since it's idling overnight as the driver is sleeping. Idling in vehicles in residential areas, especially overnight, is prohibited. The box truck that's been seen in the area is most likely a resident of the Victor Building. Ben recommended calling DEP to report the issue – 1-877-WARNDEP (1-877-927-6337).
 - d It was mentioned that there seems to be an influx of IV drug users at the park at 7th/Clinton over by the hospital in Cooper Lanning. Another resident mentioned that he had to put up a fence on his property to prevent people from sleeping on his porch. Neighbors can't use the Shelia Roberts park on 6th Street in the neighborhood due to loitering uses and needles in the area, which is a huge safety and health issue with children. When the current Mayor was campaigning in the neighborhood, these issues were brought up. That neighborhood has been requesting additional police resources in the area to assist with the drug users and loitering. People are urinating on private property, which is also a health issue. Resident states in uncomfortable and concerning to continuously have to deal with these issues. Resident is also concerned about vigilantes in the neighborhood confronting those who are loitering and causing more issues.
 - e We've been begging for bike patrols and foot patrols in the residential neighborhoods. Jonathan L. had a meeting with Lt. Watkins and others three weeks ago and brought up a lot of these challenges. Lt. Watkins mentioned that they have two police classes in the academy for special officers (such as Class II officers). They are hoping to have 100 more officers in the next six months.
 - f A big frustration is that there are at least nine officers on the waterfront within a couple block radius protecting private property and county property on the waterfront while a resident observed several IV drug users, including a person with needle in his arm, near Johnson Park and while there were officers two blocks away, there wasn't an officer in sight in our neighborhood. That resident had to call 911 instead of being able to rely on an officer being present in the neighborhood to discourage this type of behavior. It's a huge safety issue and its extremely frustrating when we hear that there's limited resources with police officers to help patrol our neighborhood and yet there's nine officers and multiple vehicles guarding property on the waterfront every night.
 - g Someone saw a person sleeping on the porch of 210 Cooper Street. Doesn't seem like there's any enforcement for quality of life issues.
 - h CGNA is encouraging neighbors to call 911 when there is any issue because that ensures a response for any issue in the neighborhood. Officers are trained in de-escalation techniques so they can help with those individuals loitering in Johnson Park as well.
- b. Emergency Call 911 or 24hr Tipline: 856-757-7042 or STOPit Online Application (Code: CAMDENNJ)

5. Old Business

- a. **Infrastructure/Roadway Projects (Port Roads/Market/Federal/7th St)** – Jonathan received a quick update from Kathy Cullen.
 - i There is a Ports Road Project meeting on Wednesday night at 6:00PM. The port roads include 2nd Street from Clinton to Ferry Avenue as well as Kaighn and Atlantic Avenue. They have infrastructure money to update these roads, including possible plans to put in bike paths, etc. Anyone interested in attending and adding input, you can e-mail Kathy Cullen at kcullen@coopersferry.com
 - ii Market/Federal will seek approval from NJ Transit and then a consultant will be finalizing the plans this summer and then they will proceed immediately into the design phase. Jonathan L.'s major concern is their recommendation to continue to have Market Street be a two-lane highway. It's currently four lanes westbound (with two parking lanes). They are planning to have a bike lane but there's other opportunities to have parking and building parking lots so he still is hoping to have a business corridor on Market Street for small businesses. Over a million visitors come into the waterfront, spend all their money on the waterfront and leave. They don't put any money into the small businesses and the community. We want the people coming into the city for concerts, the aquarium, etc. to spend money on the community. Their reasoning for keeping Market Street a highway is that apparently 2045 projections indicate that Market Street will be a major traffic issue. Also they gave a reasoning that is design was based off the responses from the survey, including numerous people working at City Hall who apparently accounted for 200 of the 300 people who filled out the survey. The people working at City Hall voted for a two-lane highway so they could get in and out of the city quicker. It seems like there is no concern about building up a business corridor and building up the community in the city. Its

frustrating that people who work for the city and the county dictate what our down corridor should look like when they don't live in the city. We don't want a highway that discourages pedestrian traffic and discourages small business growth. Jonathan L. recommends residents attend the additional design meetings and he also recommended writing to the Mayor, since he believes that he will have the final say on the design. Resident should also write to their local councilperson Felisha Reyes-Morton, write the Mayor, write local Assemblyman Bill Moen, etc. about how you feel about this proposed redesign – just write e-mails and letters to local politicians as well as Kathy Cullen and Joe Myers of Cooper's Ferry to share your input. This project seems to benefit the county instead of the city.

- iii It's interesting that the port roads project doesn't mention anything about addressing the concert traffic issues but that's a common problem within the city as concertgoers are cutting down residential street to get to the concert and then leave the city afterwards. Residents would like the city and the county to focus more on using public transit, encouraging bike commutes, pedestrian commutes, etc. instead of making it easier for people to get to the waterfront.
 - iv With 7th/Linden Street, the bids are due in mid-August and they'll start construction this fall. This project is very delayed and will be starting in August.
 - v As far as the promenade connection along the waterfront (connecting the walkway to Cooper's Poynt Park) – the county is seeking approval from the PPA (not sure if she meant DRPA)? The county's applying for design funding.
 - vi Cooper Street is a priority and trying to repave the roads but they need to see what the underground utility condition is like before paving.
- b. **Community Solar** – Discounted PSEG Electric Billing www.neighborhoodsun.solar/cgna - still available. Some residents have signed up the program and have been seeing credits on their bill and then being billed by Community Solar at a discounted rate.
- c. **Campbell's/Rutgers Field Progress** – Supposed to open sometime in September. Jonathan will get an update from Dana Redd on the project. We're asking to see what the MOU looks like, such as the crosswalk issue and the public access agreement.
- d. **Stacey from EMR** – They have been canvassing Cooper Grant and speaking with residents. They are encouraged by residents' willingness to participate in the survey. This survey is a quick five question survey about their feelings on EMR and industry in their backyard. They are really excited about the responses. They just started canvassing for the surveys. The paving and brickwork for the EMR parking lot should be done by the end of September. The rain and the drainage issue should also be taken care of by the end of September.
- i When it comes to the IDEA Center – Cynthia Primas submitted a proposal for a summer program, which EMR will be supporting. Stacey hopes that they will extend this program, since it's the second half of summer already.
 - ii Cynthia asked Stacey about access to EMR's restrooms for the September Arts Festival. In lieu of that, Stacey is putting together a request for portable toilets for the event, as there is not adequate restroom access for the Arts Festival in September since they do not have restrooms on the first floor. She will be working with Cynthia to work on that as well as discuss how other ways EMR can participate and contribute. Jonathan L. mentioned there are GreenAcres funded, handicap-accessible restrooms on the ground floor of the Johnson Library (Walt Whitman Arts Center) that Rutgers should provide access to if the park is being used for the festival.
 - iii EMR has committed to two Eye in the Sky cameras for the Waterfront South area as part of neighborhood safety and security initiative. Stacey is still working on the document between EMR and the city regarding community relations. They are still drafting what they want that community benefits agreement to look like. Most likely the main focus initially will be Waterfront South, but will also include Bergen Square, Lanning Square, then Cooper Grant. They will most likely not be able to satisfy everyone's wishes. Stacey stated that they probably will not share that draft until they are at the point of sitting down with the city. Stacey is now Director of Civic Engagement (formerly community liaison). She is continuing to work and push on all the issues we've brought up. If there's something that we want EMR to be a part of something (and it doesn't have to be financial), to just reach out to her and she will try to assist or address it.
 - iv They are also looking to launch a first-time homebuyer program and financial literacy program. They are also doing a pop-up vaccination site (with the Pfizer vaccine) in front of their location on Front Street on July 30th. The second dose would be scheduled at CamCare. They will have light refreshments at the vaccination clinic. The town hall meeting for EMR has been move to September due to summer scheduling conflicts, etc.
 - v Jonathan asked for clarification on the potential community benefits agreement – regarding the things that were on the community's list for the EMR headquarters building, which were discussed with the planning board and the city historical commission during the planning stage of this headquarters building – are some of those things being knocked off the list, like the mural, the crosswalks, etc.? Stacey stated that they're not being knocked off the list, they just won't all be listed specifically in the community benefits agreement since its more of an MOU.

So the crosswalks wouldn't necessarily be added to the agreement but it doesn't mean it won't be address. She doesn't want to muddy the document and make it too long (it'll be a three page proposal). She says other ideas can be addressed afterwards. As long as the ideas and requests are reasonable and feasible, they will try to accommodate them all.

- vi Resident asked about the initial plans of putting a public café on the first floor of the building. Stacy says that was one of the ideas when she started with the company and mentioned that might be feasible in 3-5 years? There is not set timeline on that portion of the project. It seems to be up in the air and it was brought up as a possible "start-up" space for a chef. She said nothing is written in stone for that space but that would be something that residents can bring up at the town hall meeting in September as a priority discussion. Cooper Grant residents mentioned that there's not enough places to eat around the neighborhood so an eatery/café would be welcome.

6. New Business

- a. **Cooper-Grant Website redesign** – A neighbor does website design and approached Jonathan about redoing the CGNA website. Jonathan will meet with him within the next few weeks. We do need someone to help maintain the website. He can present to our next meeting in August.
- b. **CGNA Block Party/Arts Festival – Sept. 11th** – We're in negotiation with the IDEA center and several others. There is a meeting on Wednesday for the Festival planning. We were going to have our block party as we normally do but the IDEA center wants to have an Arts Festival so we're looking to combine the events in Johnson Park. Hoping to have EMR sponsor the project. This kind of ties into our Bread and Roses Grant, with access to public spaces. The tentative date is Saturday, September 11th. Jonathan will be attending a meeting about this on Wednesday and will report back.
- c. **Arts Committee Report (Vacant Chair Position)**
 - i Community Art and Film Festival/Porch Party/Block Party Potential Dates – We may commit some funds (about \$2,500) to this but we'll discuss that and vote on it in the August meeting. This ties into the Bread and Roses grant as we have research about access to public spaces and how community access has been limited or blocked to certain spaces, including Johnson Park, Walt Whitman Art Center, the community fields, etc.
- d. **Planning Committee (Grants: NRTC, Cooper Foundation)**
 - i **Bread & Roses Update / Phase 2 of Grant** – We were awarded another \$10,000 dollars. Jonathan is talking to Superior Arts, which has been doing public live art expressions in front of challenged spaces (like one in front of town hall about environmental justice issues) so we're thinking of doing a campaign using these live art expressions to bring attention to these public spaces that have limited access. As an example with issues about access to public spaces, Jonathan L. wanted to use the park and practice baseball with his son the other night and he called the number a little after 6PM but nobody answered. He called the RUPD and they denied access stating that it's Rutgers property and they claimed that we are never allowed access, etc. Jonathan called Nyeema and she basically said because it's after 6PM, we cant use the park when all other public parks are dusk to dawn access.
 - ii **NRTC Updates** – Waiting to hear back from the state if we get accepted. There will be some deadlines coming up in September for funding along the lines of \$985,000. We need to start coming up with projects and partners within the next few weeks to move forward. We're going to start meeting in groups and talking to residents, small businesses, etc.
 - iii **Cooper Foundation** – Jonathan mentioned that the initial grant was awarded regarding turning the area behind Friend's Café as a community space but since that's put on hold, Jonathan suggested investing money in small air monitors in Cooper Grant neighborhood and Cooper Lanning neighborhood to help the efforts for clean air in the neighborhood by bringing attention to the poor air quality. Ben put one of these monitors on his house and our neighborhood is already registering poor air quality. Motion by Ben to purchase five air monitors for \$1250.00 using part of the Cooper Foundation grant money, seconded by Sonia. Motioned carried by members present.
- e. **Development Committee Report**
 - i. ABC Barrel Lot – They did the cut the grass over there recently after Jonathan called about the tall grass in the lot.
 - ii. M&M Partnership @ The Pierre building (<https://hestaliving.com/thepierre/>) – They still have unit available. They asked us to sign for some tax credits but Jonathan L. asked for a meeting in return to get an update about what's happening. As per our contract with them, we're due a minimal of \$6,000 a year with a max of \$12,000 – however, we're two years in and we've only seen \$3,000. So we don't feel comfortable signing tax credits for them and we haven't gotten the money that was in the contract.
- f. **OTHER:**
 - i **CSSD** – They are in the process of hiring an executive director. Hope to have an announcement within the month. They are also hiring for a placemaking position. Caren Fishman will be retiring soon and just acting as a consultant. They are also hiring CSSD yellowjacket employees. They raised the hourly wage and they have a recruiting

program. They hope to have a second shift by the end of the month. Our understanding is that we should start seeing significant changes and improvements in the central business district starting in September throughout the next year.

- ii Resident asked about the trash can at the corner of Friends and Penn Street that hasn't been picked up in several days. Jonathan did already make them aware of this.
- ii. Jonathan L. was selected to be on the Cannabis Reform Commission (CRC). IF anyone has any opinions in cannabis in the city, please forward them to Jonathan L. He is currently on the ABC so he has some experience with rules and regulations. It's a large committee and discusses everything from redistribution of funds from taxes across the state of sales, in addition to licensing and everything in the city. The city has opted out so we don't fall until state regulations at this point and we would regulate ourselves, therefore they need rules and recommendations for regulations.
- iii. Resident brought up issues with customers/food delivery drivers parking in the middle of the road on Friends Street in front of the business utilizing Friend's Café. It's becoming more and more of a problem, with people double parking on the street, parking in the middle of the street, and parking on both sides of the street. It's a one-way residential road and the customers/drivers have no concern at all for the neighborhood and neighborhood traffic. We realize that the business may not be able to do anything about it but it'd be nice if they speak with the customers and ask them to not park illegally. Rutgers PD has never done anything about it so maybe we can bring it up with CCMPD? Jonathan L. has to speak to Friend's Café anyway, so he'll bring this up.
- iv. Ben mentioned that Camden for Clean Air got a small grant for collecting data on small particle matter and so they got small air quality monitors. He put the first one on his house today and if you look on the website Purple Air (purpleair.com), you can see where these sensors are and what the air quality is registered at. The disturbing thing is that the one Ben just put up is one of the worst air quality in the state. You can also get live temperature, etc. He mentioned that are putting them up in Waterfront South and other neighborhoods within the next few weeks. They need a power source and connection to the internet.

7. Announcements

- a. Trash returns to twice a week – Wednesday (recycling also) and Saturday AM. Trash management is shorthanded.
- b. Rutgers-Camden Community Fields Access: 856-225-2470 Monday through Friday from 10 AM – 6 PM.
- c. 2021 Zone 1 Parking Passes are available / Enforcement happening www.camdenparking.net They are enforcing parking.
- d. Street Sweeping first full week of the month (Wed. 8/4 and Fri. 8/6) – please move your vehicles or be ticketed!
- e. Next CGNA Meeting will be held **Monday, August 23rd, 2021** at 7:00 PM (online)

8. Adjournment – 8:24 PM. Motion to adjourn the meeting by Bryon, seconded by Sonia. 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 39th year as an organization*** Cannot attend the CGNA Meeting?**

Want updates, meeting minutes and agendas? Email: secretary@coopergrant.org & like our Facebook page: [@coopergrantneighbors](https://www.facebook.com/coopergrantneighbors) www.coopergrant.org