

Meeting: **Monday, August 23rd, 2021 7:00 PM**

– Virtual Meeting > Join <https://meet.google.com/yvj-egqr-zdf> (US) +1 409-698-0145 PIN: 387292368# - 12 Attending

Agenda:

1. Call to Order and Introductions – 7:03 PM

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - Motion to approve the meeting minutes from the previous meeting by Bryon, seconded by Ben. Motion carried by members present.

3. Treasurer's Report –

- a. The beginning balance for the month of August was \$13,286.65. There were no transactions over the course of the month, leaving an ending balance \$13,286.65.
- b. Bryon is working on finding a non-profit accountant to do our audit /annual compilation.
- c. We updated our VMO insurance in May. Jonathan L. is investigating getting insurance for the 2021 CGNA block party.

4. Neighborhood Safety and Security

- a. Any recent issues? You must call 911 and get a report number for an incident be officially reported. Sgt. Levy, Ofc. Sime, Ofc. Sanchez of the Camden County Metro Police Department (CCMPD) present in the meeting.
 - i. Neighbor asks for an understanding of CCMPD's relationship with code enforcement - when someone reports a code enforcement issue, is there follow up with the property owner by CCMPD? What happens if the owner does not change or fix the issue that was reported? Sgt. Levy referred the neighbor to the actual code enforcement division so he doesn't give out misinformation. Jonathan L. asked for clarification since there was an announcement several months ago about CCMPD overseeing code enforcement? Sgt. Levy stated they helped them organized and mobilize. They are not directly involved in code enforcement. CCMPD oversees it and just makes sure everything internally is done efficiently. Jonathan L. – asked if officers on the street are helping report egregious code violations? Sgt. said they will report if it's a safety issue and notify DPW to assist with the situation. CCMPD is a separate entity than code enforcement. CCMPD asks DPW to address a lot of the issues, if they are able to. Neighbor stated that 519 N. 2nd Street – doors are kicked in and windows are broken – it seems like it's abandoned. Neighbors are concerned about transient traffic moving into this structure and using drugs. Does CCMPD report these structures? They will respond to clear the building/residence and then ask dispatch to have DPW respond in order to board up the property. Does CCMPD follow up on these properties? For example, if an officer rides by later on and notices the door is still kicked in, do they follow up with DPW to make sure they respond. CCMPD typically try to make sure DPW responds before they leave to board up the property. Apparently 519 N. 2nd Street was bought by an investor about a year ago and they claimed they were going to fix it up but they haven't done anything with the property. Sgt. Levy told the neighbor to call DPW for that specific property. Neighbor wants there to be repercussions to the property owner if they're not maintain their property. CCMPD's priority is to make sure the property is boarded up so that the property is safe. Sgt. Levy mentioned that they are more concerned with safety issues instead of fining property owners since the property owner can be fined at a later date. Sgt. Levy offered to take a look into it and coordinate calling DPW to see what can be done with that specific property.
 - ii. Catalytic converter thefts had reportedly been an issue in the city. Sgt. Levy stated they've had that issue in the past and its ongoing. They have caught several teams and investigated these cases – leading to multiple individuals being arrested. Jonathan L. asked if there's certain neighborhoods being targeted? Also there is a concern about neighbors confronting the individuals who are stealing the converters. Some individuals have observed the crime on their home surveillance and went out to confront these individuals before calling the police. Not all of the incidents have been reported to the police since some of the residents are frustrated with being told to go to the police station to make a formal report when they've already been inconvenienced with having their property stolen. These incidents need to be reported to the police in order to get more resources.

- iii. Jonathan L. mentioned that there have been several shootings in North Camden, specifically along State Street. Jonathan acknowledged that Sgt. Levy and some officers have been involved in neighborhood meetings and community outreach but we don't see the day to day officers in the neighborhood as much. There was a promise of having officers walking on State Street. We've had people using drugs in the neighborhood and we haven't seen CCMPD officers through Cooper Grant. What are the chances of these foot and bike patrols returning? With Camden PD advertising themselves as the model for community policing and promising bike patrols and foot patrols, we have not seen those and we're asking for those resources in our neighborhood.
 - 1. Sgt. Levy said that the shootings are being investigated and they have intelligence on some of the shootings which points to certain individual(s). Without breaking confidentiality or giving out too much information, they are working with that intelligence to advance the investigation and resolve this issue. They have been making some changes to be more proactive – including foot and bike patrols on State Street and Vine Street (by 9th Street) as well as N. 7th Street and Erie, and Bailey Street. They will be having more patrols in order to get these individual(s) into custody.
- iv. In reference to the Waterfront area - there are still police units sitting on the Waterfront every night to shut down the entire waterfront area since approximately Fourth of July. Neighbors have an issue with these officers sitting in their cars every night playing on their phones blocking access to the waterfront. Residents want to know what shootings happened on the waterfront to justify having multiple officers sitting on the waterfront every night? Officers are blocking residents from accessing the waterfront while there are people shooting up with illegal drugs in the parks two blocks away and there are shootings occurring in North Camden. When they're someone using drugs in the neighborhood parks, a resident has to beg for a patrol officer to respond to the neighborhood. Instead of having an officer walk through the neighborhood on patrol, the response was to shut down the park and residents have to lose a quality of life asset (having a nice park to play in) because IV drug users are bathing in the public fountain and running around naked. Neighbors in Cooper Grant are extremely frustrated that CCMPD states that there's a lack of resources to have patrols in the neighborhood, including Cooper Grant neighborhood, but there are four to five officers working at the waterfront every night. There's always officers in front of the Post Office, at Broad and Cooper when school's in session, 9th and Linden there's always an officer just sitting there on his phone. We know that they may not be fully sworn officers (they might be Class I or Class II) but residents feel like they're dealing with a two class system here. Cooper Grant residents see the police department protecting the people driving in and out of the waterfront which aren't even coming as much since they're working remote but a few blocks away, the police department ends up being reactionary and waiting for someone to get shot or there are several shootings before more officers are sent over there. It's understood that Sgt. Levy doesn't make the policy and this isn't personally directed at him but at some point, all of this just gets ridiculous. We can't get the resources we need in our community to do the stuff that we want to do and have the quality of life to enjoy with our kids that live here. There doesn't seem to be a point when this is going to change because it feels like it's never going to change. It creates a huge frustration among the neighbors and that's why they don't want to call the cops and they don't want to spend their time going to the police station to file a report. No matter how many times Jonathan L. says this and puts it on record, it feels like it's not changing.
 - 1. Neighbor also mentioned that we were promised surveillance and other technology to help supplement the patrols and resources available in the neighborhood and we have not seen that either. We can't even say that we have cameras to supplement the lack of police resources and presence in the community. This neighborhood wants to work the department and these complaints are targeted at anyone here [in the meeting] but that's the overall challenge. There isn't enough personnel but there isn't enough technology either to help supplement the lack of personnel. We're asking the PD community representatives to communicate with their superiors to express that residents of the Cooper Grant neighborhood are frustrated and we want to see some changes.
 - 2. Sgt. Levy stated that he understands what we are saying and empathizes with us. He said that the messages do go up [the chain of command]. He does make these issues known with the higher ups and they're doing what they can with what they have. He mentioned that the main reason for the patrols at the waterfront is that there was a large flash mob on the waterfront in the middle of the night about five to six weeks ago. They showed up at the waterfront and were in front of the hotel. There was a huge fight, with people throwing objects and destroying property. There were apparently 200-300 people and multiple units had to be called in to clear out the mess. There were a lot of ATVs involved as well as dirt bikes. The police are trying to preserve the waterfront for the residents. The police are trying to keep control of that area to ensure the park and waterfront is used in the right way. The road blocks are set up to prevent large groups of kids from riding in and causing issues. Sgt. Levy believes this was just a temporary thing to fix and show force with the younger community that was coming in and destroying the parks that residents

want to use and enjoy as law-abiding citizens of the community. The individuals went into the parking garages and stole fire extinguishers and were spraying cars and people. They caused a lot of damage.

3. Cooper Grant neighborhood residents are frustrated because yes, we do want to preserve the nice waterfront but at the same time that incident was two months ago. It seems like the knee-jerk reaction from CCMPD and Rutgers PD that they shut down the resources to everyone so nobody can use it instead of dealing with the problem. When there's an issue at the waterfront, they shut down public streets after 5:00PM so nobody can drive down. When there were people bathing in the fountain at Johnson Park, Rutgers decided to drain the pool and close up the fountain, which is a great asset to the neighborhood. At some point, we have to learn to deal with it and if they're going to continue to put the officers there to just sit in a car at Penn and Riverside Drive, can't the officer walk down to Cooper Grant neighborhood and walk back? What's going to happen in that short period of time that they're out patrolling and walking around the neighborhood? Or if they do move those officers away from there, are we going to get those police resources in the community here? If CCMPD is that short-handed, how are they able to stick five officers at the waterfront every night to protect that waterfront. If you put a price on that property damage at the waterfront from that one night, residents feel that number isn't nearly as high as the total amount of property damage, property stolen, etc. in the community, with the catalytic converter thefts, the car breaks-in, the fires started, stuff being broken – it all adds up with the insurance that residents pay and the cost to fix and replace this property and it costs way more money than fixing a bunch of fire hydrants at the waterfront. These guys are not paying taxes yet they're getting a private detail to sit there and take care of the waterfront businesses and that property. And while residents want that property taken care of because they're good assets and we want to protect them, residents are asking at what cost? How much does it cost the neighborhood to protect that waterfront? Who's paying for these costs? The residents end up paying for it because we can't go down to the parks with the kids because we can't control people bathing in public fountains and using drugs. There's the knee-jerk reaction of shutting down. It's extremely frustrating that we're being told that there's no police resources for our community in Cooper Grant but there's five officers sitting at the waterfront along the other ten officers that appear on the waterfront during the day, riding their chariots and whatever else they're driving around every day. Residents are asking why they can't come two blocks off the waterfront and walk through the neighborhood?
4. Neighbors state that it seems like the waterfront businesses getting what seems to be unlimited public safety resources when they already employ private security for their businesses and their events. Residents don't understand how these businesses get away with having their own private police patrols. Large entities such as DRPA and Rutgers have their own police forces while the medical schools contract with the county sheriff's department. BB&T contracts with the sheriff's department. Why are these waterfront corporations where some of the streets are not even public are granted that level of access to Camden Metro officers when they already have their own security force there?
5. Jonathan L. acknowledges that Sgt. Levy may not have the answers but at some point, he wants to talk to the Chief or somebody in charge. While Sgt. Levy may be passing these complains along, it seems like other individuals are absorbing this information and it's not getting to the Chief.
 - a. Sgt Levy stated that from his perspective, it's tough to juggle everything, especially when there are things that happen that not everyone is aware of. A lot of the more serious crimes and incidents are using a lot of the resources and he can see how residents see the individuals that appear to be full time police officers but are actually Class I officers, especially in the downtown area. There is probably one full time police officer in the downtown area, the rest are Class I and Class II officers. The Class I officers do not have guns. Class II officers do have guns. While it appears that there are more full time officers in the downtown area, most of them (Class I officers) are equipped with a baton, a pair of handcuffs, and a radio and are not full time officers. He realizes that it may appear that they could be in other places but Class I officers are limited in what they can do within the city. Sgt. Levy will ask some of the higher ups if they can have some officers come out to some of the areas where we are on Penn Street and connect them with the officers that are at the transportation center. He's trying to see if there are ways to meet in the middle somewhere. He will ask.
 - v. Jonathan L. mentioned that the annual CGNA block party will be September 11th and invited CCMPD officers come to mingle with the neighbors, get some food, and listen to some music if there are some officers available. It'd be great if Mr. Softee could make an appearance for the kids. The rain date is September 12th. Sgt. Levy says they would love to attend.
- b. Emergency Call 911 or 24hr Tipline: 856-757-7042 or STOPit Online Application (Code: CAMDENNJ). Sgt. Levy acknowledges the residents' frustrations but asks that neighbors don't give up, especially when it comes to reporting issues and incidents. He is asking neighbors to continue to report their issues so that they can move forward and try to

get the neighborhood the resources they need. Whoever is a victim of any crime should report it so they can help with quality of life issues, among other things.

- c. Resident brought up that the fence on 5th/Cooper Street obscures the vision of pedestrians crossing across Cooper Street. While the fence was built to discourage pedestrians crossing the middle of the road but it also creates a safety issue at either end of the block, where pedestrians are supposed to cross. Jonathan L. forwarded this information to Cooper's Ferry. The light in front of Rutgers Nursing School also takes forever, which creates issues. He also mentioned that the pedestrian "WALK" sign is on at the intersection of MLK Boulevard when the traffic signal is green.

5. Old Business

- a. Infrastructure/Roadway Projects (Port Roads/Market/Federal/7th St) -
 - i. There is a meeting on Wednesday for the Birch Trail – They are working on the county trail but there is a million-dollar grant to build a bridge to be used a cyclist passageway to connect some pathway so that cyclists don't have to ride along the Admiral Wilson Boulevard. NJDOT, in partnership with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) announced a \$1 million award to the county for the construction of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Cooper River in Camden. This bridge will connect two major portions of the planned County LINK Trail. The purpose of this new route is to divert bicyclists and pedestrians from traveling directly along Admiral Wilson Boulevard and provide easy access to the River Birch Connector Trail
 - ii. Market/Federal Street project conversation is still going on. There was an article out of Atlanta (?) about how there is a misnomer about how everyone want a concentration of housing before developing business corridors and that's what will bring the economic commerce and small business areas. The articles says that area should bring in small businesses and set up the infrastructure there and then people will naturally want to move into the area. They went into popular entertainment districts, with stadiums and entertainment centers, and studied how they developed. So this helps our argument that the Market Street should be a small business corridor and instead of keeping it as a one-way street with two wide lanes to get traffic into the city quickly, especially during concert season, to make it a two-lane road with one way in and one way out as sort of a main street in the city with small businesses. It would encourage the millions of people who visit the waterfront as well as resident to access the small business corridor. Jonathan and a few others talk to some council people about it and we'll see what happens.
 - iii. There is a green space in North Camden (adjacent to Pyne Poynt Park) that will become Sadler's Poynt Waterfront Park. This will go out to bid in the fall. This is a project with a proposed boat launch, a kayak launch, possibly a restroom, floating dock, create a beach, etc. This will also connect to the proposed Camden Water Train and Pyne Poynt Park.
 - iv. Historical project in North Camden – There are also plans to turn the Benjamin Cooper House (on Erie Street) into a public museum with the assistance of the Camden County Historical Society. The proposed plan for the museum is for it to become an American Revolution Museum of South Jersey and highlight wartime events in around the house.
 - v. Electrical substation – Between Market and Admiral Wilson Boulevard – They will rebuild the electrical substation at the end of State Street on the waterfront? The current substation is antiquated and is basically in a flood plain.
- b. Community Solar – Discounted PSEG Electric Billing www.neighborhoodsun.solar/cgna - Still going. There's a 10% discount on their energy bill. Any interested neighbors can sign up through the link above.
- c. Campbell's/Rutgers Field Progress – No specific update but the park is definitely moving along. Jonathan L. has not heard back from his county contacts and we have not seen an MOU yet. We have no idea what access is supposed to look like. We're hearing that the park may not be open access? Which is definitely not what we agreed to. Jonathan L. is supposed to have a call this week with one of the county project managers.
 - i. Resident brought up that if this park opens and there are still police officers parked on the waterfront, this is a huge issue. These are tax dollars funding a project for a major state university and the community still doesn't have access to a park, which was proposed as a public space? This would be a huge public relations issue. We're still having issues with access to the current parks that are supposed to be public spaces since they received Green Acres funding.
 - ii. As a side note, a neighbor mentioned the conversation more about why the waterfront corporations seem to have unlimited access to police resources and he suggested its because some of these individuals who control what goes on in the city don't live in the city and don't have an interest in the city. He proposed reaching out to architectural critics through local media to bring awareness to what some residents believe are poor decisions in the city, including creating a corridor that bypasses the city itself. The city is under state control because its not self-sustainable. Neighbor questions whether people should reach out to the media to shed light on some of the decisions and plans that are happening in the city? Residents try to work within the confines of local politics and

talk to the local politicians but the ones that aren't elected seem to be in charge. It seems to fall on deaf ears. Residents are so frustrated with not being heard at community meetings and council meetings. Nothing seems to change. Local council people don't seem to have any influence over the resources in the city and don't seem to be heard, even if they listen to our issues. We have county parks in our neighborhood being run by state entities that don't have to follow our rules.

6. New Business

- a. CGNA Block Party 100 Block of Penn Street / Johnson Park Arts Festival – Sept. 11th 12-6PM – Jonathan L. did submit a permit to CCMPD to shut down the 100 block of Penn Street. We partnered with DiSC which is the digital research within the Walt Whitman Arts Center as well as the IDEA center. Wins – we were granted public access to the bathrooms within Johnson Park, which has handicap access, and they will be turning on the fountain again. We were hoping for them to unveil the mosaic, but it seems like that it will not be ready for September 11th. We are still looking to host our annual CGNA block party that same day and coordinate resources. Looking for neighbors to spread the word and help with the planning for this event. If anyone wants to come help set up that day or pick up some stuff to share, that would be great. We're going to advertise through flyers and social media. We're going to use some of the funding from Bread and Roses to help with this event. They may get sponsors such as EMR for the Johnson Park Arts Festival as well. Jonathan and the rest of the planning committee are working to get some vendors to come to the event. It will be an outdoor event. Attendees can wear masks and attend if they're comfortable. Neighbors are encouraged to attend and bring their families. The correct address for Johnson Park is 101 Cooper Street, not 303 Cooper Street, as it says on the original flyer.
 - i As a side note, Ben suggested using the ABC Barrel Lot to host the Mask Melanin Market since this market is probably moving to Glassboro because they're having issues with the city keeping their pop-up market on the waterfront and implied that they basically don't feel welcome anymore.
 - ii Jonathan is trying to get porta-potties on site but after the initial inquiry, it seems like these companies will not service Camden city.
- b. Arts Committee Report (Vacant Chair Position) – nothing new in addition to planning the Block Party and Arts Festival as discussed above.
- c. Planning Committee (Grants: NRTC, Cooper Foundation)
 - i Bread & Roses Update / Phase 2 of Grant – Will allocate some of the Bread and Roses money to support the block party and the Arts Festival. Jonathan L. suggested using \$2500 for this purpose, including buying refreshments and resources for the event. The premise of our project with the Bread and Roses grant is community access to public spaces, which ties into having an event at Johnson Park. Sonia mentioned working with North Camden on this since they may be a part of the Bread and Roses grant. The Concerned Citizens of North Camden were involved in this grant but Jonathan L. is unsure of who to contact within that organization right now since they have not appeared to be active lately. Residents suggested either reaching out to Jackie or Samir Nichols. Also suggested Jessica Franzini. Jonathan L. mentioned engaging with Samir's live performance art group, which has live demonstrations to bring attention to issues in front of these public, non-accessible locations with press releases, etc. In regards to the Arts Festival, the idea is to make a push to invite everyone to event so they can access the park. Sonia reiterated reaching out to residents of North Camden to make sure they are invited, especially if we plan to use some of the funding from Bread and Roses grant.
 - 1 Motion to spend up to \$2500 towards the 2021 CGNA Block Party and public access to the park by Jonathan L., seconded Ben. Sonia abstains. Motion carries by remaining members present.
 - a Jonathan L. mentioned using some of this money to purchase event insurance for this.
 - 2 Motion to approve spending of \$25.00 for the application of the permit for the CGNA Block Party by Sonia, second by Ben. Motion carried by members present. Bryon will work with Jonathan to reimburse him for the money order he purchased to file the application with the fee.
 - ii NRTC Updates (Planning grant, application, 2022 submission) – Three things happening right now. We were told we won the grant \$22,000 for the planning process – they are backdating the grant to June 1st, 2020. We have technically already spent the funds - \$15,000 was spent on the consultant to update the neighborhood plan, \$5,000 was paid towards Cooper's Ferry, and remaining funds were distributed to a couple of consultants who participated to updating the neighborhood plan. The next thing is now that the neighborhood plan is updated, there was the application process for NRTC funding through the state DCA. June 30th was the deadline for the application and we got that in with help from some neighbors and now we're waiting to hear back. This is a 2-3 month process. If we are accepted, we can start applying for NRTC funds and fulfill the mission stated in the planning document. Jonathan L. and Bryon were told today that they're invited to a Zoom meeting in early September to answer some questions and follow up. The last thing is moving forward with the submission to apply for NRTC funds. Jonathan L. and Bryon attended a seminar through the DCA which went over how to apply for the funding and they learned that it is a

challenging and extremely thorough process. We are eligible to apply for 2022 funding but the application is due September 27th, 2021.

- 1 There are potentially up to \$900,000 in funding. It is a very involved and deep process. Jonathan L.'s opinion is that this is beyond the capabilities of the Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association and therefore we're looking to partner to act as a fiduciary sponsor and handle the money. We don't have enough infrastructure within CGNA alone. We reached out to CHLI about this. It is an extremely deep process and it would be quite the challenge to get this done with putting all this stuff together within a month. This application is more intense and more challenging than the planning process grant and updating the neighborhood plan, which were intense on their own. Bryon related that he thinks this is too much for us to take on within a short period of time, even if we hired a professional. It's one thing to get a plan approved but it's another when there's a huge project attached with a good amount of funding. We can address a lot of issues in this plan (suggesting changes the policing model in the downtown, redesigning Market Street, housing, food access, small business development, etc.)
- 2 Unless something changes drastically, it is not worth rushing to make this quickly approaching deadline so we will work on it slowly and hope to apply next summer.

d. Development Committee Report

- i. ABC Barrel Lot – They cut the grass and they have an inspection by DRS. No other updates.
- ii. M&M Partnership @ The Pierre building (<https://hestaliving.com/thepierre/>) – We did a report from them but Jonathan L. did not have a chance to review it. They are nearly at full capacity now that school is returning. We are supposed to receive additional payments as part of our partnership and we've only received \$3,000. They said they will be sending another check soon.

7. Announcements

- a. Trash is twice a week – Wednesday (recycling also) and Saturday AM. Not consistent with trash collection. Residents should call and report any trash collection issues (not leaving cans on curb, not picking up on Saturdays, etc.)
- b. Cannabis Committee – there is information on the City Council website about the meetings for this since the city opted out of the state law. If anyone has an interest in developing policy, talking about the business aspect, rules, regulations, social justice, local city ordinances, etc, they should attend the meetings.
- c. Rutgers-Camden Community Fields Access: 856-225-2470 Monday through Friday from 10 AM – 6 PM. Rutgers practices are back so that may limit the access.
- d. 2021 Zone 1 Parking Passes are available / Enforcement happening www.camdenparking.net
- e. Street Sweeping first full week of the month (Wed. 9/15 and Fri. 9/17 due to Labor Day) – please move your vehicles or be ticketed!
- f. Next CGNA Meeting will be held **Monday, September 27th, 2021** at 7:00 PM (online)
- g. We do need to fill our ranks for the CGNA Board. We need a Vice President. We also will need a Treasurer. Jonathan M. did step in as Secretary for the past year but we really need more people involved. We need to get people in training. If anyone wants to be involved, please reach out to Jonathan L. We generally have our elections in the October/November time frame.

8. Adjournment – 8:22 PM Motion to adjourn the meeting by Bryon and 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
www.coopergrant.org