

# CLIFTONDALE COMMUNITY CLUB, INC.

November 12, 2007

## Draft Minutes

The Cliftondale Community Club, Inc. met November 12, 2007 at the Cliftondale Community House. About 39 members and guests were present.

President Ben Dye opened the meeting, and Frank Brown provided the opening prayer.

Acting Secretary Julie Wachsler read the October minutes, which were accepted as read. Mr. Dye announced that the Board of Directors has voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes in the future, because the minutes are posted on the Club's website. Copies will be available at the meeting for those without access to the internet.

Treasurer Greg Wachsler reported a beginning balance of \$3,436.10; payouts of \$49.17 (including renewing the Club's incorporation with the Secretary of State); deposits of \$79.46; and an ending balance of \$3,466.39.

In an update on zoning news, Mr. Dye said the County acknowledged it made a clerical error in the Land Use Plan as regards the corner of Aldredge and Butner Roads. The 2025 South Fulton Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Policies has been amended to limit commercial development at the intersection to the grandfathered commercial corner.

The proposed rezoning at 4055 Demooney Road has been withdrawn because the developer realized the cost of running sewer to the site would be uneconomical.

Mr. Dye asked residents to report any blue rezoning signs to the Club. Blue signs signify a request for a modification in an existing rezoning, and unfortunately such requests are not well publicized. The Club has to rely on alert residents to report such proposals.

Corporal Troydred Blackmon was not present, but he emailed the Cliftondale crime report for October:

Burglary, 23.

Open door, 8.

Motor vehicle thefts, 3.

Armed robbery, 1.  
Aggravated assault, 1.  
Recovered stolen vehicles, 4.

He also noted that several arrests for burglaries had been made, and there are pending warrants for additional people.

Mr. Dye introduced guest speaker Tony Phillips, Code Enforcement Administrator in the County's Code Enforcement department.

Mr. Phillips gave an overview of the department and the most common code enforcement violations. Code Enforcement enforces the laws that govern *property*; laws governing people are enforced by the police. The department has 10 full-time code enforcement inspectors – a relatively large number compared to many jurisdictions of similar population. However, for a geographical area as large as unincorporated South Fulton the inspectors need the cooperation of residents to help identify violations. Nuisances and violations can be reported to the TELL line, 404-612-8355 (note: the second three digits changed recently). Such reports can be made anonymously. The line is manned from 9 am to 4 pm each workday; it records reports phoned in after hours and on weekends. Every report receives a case number, which enables the caller to check on the disposition of the report.

The most frequent violations deal with high grass and weeds, junk vehicles (defined as no current tag and registration, not operable), outside storage (visible from the street or the neighbors' property), parking on grass, and commercial vehicles (for example, semi trucks, buses) parked in residential areas. However, school bus drivers get a special dispensation to park the buses overnight at their residences.

The code enforcement process begins with an inspection to verify a violation and the issuance of a notice of violation, with a specific time period to correct the problem (usually 72 hours or more). If the violation is not corrected, a citation (similar to a traffic ticket) is issued to report to court, usually within 30 days, where the Code Enforcement Board has the power to sentence the offender to fines of \$1,000 a day until the violation is corrected. The Board consists of 7 citizens, with each Commissioner naming one appointee. The hearings are televised.

Mr. Phillips explained that violations involving vacant and abandoned property have a more complicated process. Such violations typically involve failure to secure the structure (no open doors, windows, or garages) or to maintain the grounds. The law can be enforced only against the legal owner, and such properties often change hands several times, which can make it hard to identify the current legal owner. The new owners, especially if they are a bank or a developer, might not be responsive to the threat of a fine.

However, property that is not secure can pose a danger to other people (attracting vagrants, youths, rodents, etc), so the law permits heavier fines to insure compliance. After a certain period the County can get a court order authorizing it to cut the grass, board up openings, etc., and to place a lien on the property to cover such costs.

Mr. Phillips said that the current difficulties in the real estate market increase the number of vacant dwellings and abandoned half-built houses. While developers are required to post bonds to insure the completion of certain construction, such bonds cover detention ponds, streets, and common areas, not individual houses. The County is seeking a way to shorten this legal process to deal with the growing number of vacant and abandoned properties.

Mr. Phillips then turned to some individual cases in response to questions submitted on-line and by the audience.

He reported that a house at 1395 Old Fairburn Road has finally been cleared for demolition and the County is accepting bids for the job. It is estimated that the demolition will cost from \$50,000-60,000, compared to \$8,000-10,000 for the typical house demolition. The cost will be placed against the lot. This particular job will be so expensive because of the need for asbestos removal, rodent abatement, removal of interior contents, and clearing the yard of extensive debris.

Cascading Creek subdivision has seven detention ponds without fences. While most detention ponds are required to be fenced because of their steep slopes, if the slope is a 4:1 grade (a gentle slope) no fence is required. An erosion inspector will be sent to measure the slopes, and if they do not meet the criteria, the County will start the process to see that the developer installs fences. The work would be covered by the developer's bond.

To avoid cases of developer neglect to finish legal commitments, a 12-point check list was developed. The check list must be satisfactorily completed before the developer is allowed to turn the subdivision's management over to the HOA.

Regarding enforcement of the current water ban, Code Enforcement fills out forms detailing violations and forwards them to City of Atlanta Watershed Management, which provides water services to South Fulton. Atlanta is required by law to follow up the violation report, and it (rather than Code Enforcement) has the authority to write citations.

Code Enforcement deals with violations involving cars that are parked on private property. Possible violations involving cars parked on the *streets* (illegal parking, blocking traffic, abandoned, etc.) are handled by the police.

The Board of Commissioners issued a new sign ordinance on October 3, which is a little less restrictive than the old ordinance. Advertising signs (signs on a stick) along the curb must be located 20 feet back of the edge of the pavement. Code Enforcement will usually pull up such signs when they are too close to the pavement. Signs in the median are illegal. During the legal political campaign season the 20 foot requirement is reduced to 10 feet, for all signs. Mr. Phillips emphasized that Code Enforcement personnel were told not to pull up the "Vote Yes" signs for the recent referendum on cityhood; any "Vote Yes" signs that disappeared were pulled up by someone else.

Yard sale permits are not required for a yard sale held at a private residence. However, a multifamily sale not held at a private residence does require a permit. Yard sale signs are generally not disturbed if they are not within 20 feet of the edge of the pavement and are picked up right after the sale ends.

Night construction and noisy outdoor construction must conform to County regulations. Such activities can be reported to Code Enforcement to inspect for violations. While inspectors do not regularly work nights and weekends, with advance notice they can generally get out to check at those times.

Mr. Dye thanked Mr. Phillips for a very informative presentation.

Mr. Dye announced that the Club's December 10 meeting would be a casual seasonal celebration. Members are invited to bring a neighbor to acquaint them with the Club and to meet the community at large.

The meeting was adjourned.

Gayle Lesser, Secretary