

Section 3-24.6. Neighborhood Forum(Amend. 12/13/94)

(a) Preamble. As Carrboro grows in population and its boundaries expand, its citizens seek opportunities to enlarge their circle of acquaintances as well as to feel a part of the entire community. Expanding acquaintances and feeling a part of the Carrboro community engenders cooperation, respect, and a sense of tradition and history that is needed amidst the diverse, mobile and rapidly changing world challenging the citizens of Carrboro.

Neighborhoods are the home to which citizens return each day. They also serve as the natural arena where individuals begin to engage in public discourse, identify common needs and capacities and work for change. Neighborhoods and their health are essential to the health of Carrboro. All of Carrboro's neighborhoods are bound together in a mutual call to make them safe to return home to.

Civic renewal and neighborhood vitality are mutually dependent. By working together with town government, citizens can enlarge their sense of identity beyond their individual neighborhoods, learn about and contribute to the overall well being of the community, increase the effectiveness of programs that need citizen cooperation, and nurture relationships between citizens and their civic institutions so that citizens can begin to believe that Carrboro's government is listening to its citizens. People working together for the common good and being actively involved in local democracy can have a direct and tangible effect on the community.

(b) Principles. The Neighborhood Forum will allow Carrboro citizens to work together for the common good and community self determination. It will be guided in its coming together, deliberations and consensus-building by the following ten ingredients for building community and community problem solving, as described by John Gardner in his essay, "Building Community."

- (1) Wholeness Incorporating Diversity. Diversity in Carrboro represents a breadth of tolerance and sympathy which allows for adaptation and renewal in a changing world. Wholeness of community means pluralism that achieves coherence among diverse groups which are given the right to pursue their proposes within the law, retain their identity and share in the setting of larger goals while working and caring for the common good of all citizens.
- (2) A Reasonable Base of Shared Values. A community teaches core values about what affects the common good and the future. The lessons that the community can impart through its traditions, history and collective memory can form a reasonable framework of shared values that heal and strengthen its members.
- (3) Caring, Trust and Teamwork. A climate of caring, trust and teamwork, where citizens deal with each other humanely and with respect for differences and the value of the individual, fosters cooperation, connectedness and community. Ways for resolving disputes and conflict should be developed not to abolish conflict but to achieve constructive outcomes when conflicts arise.

- (4) Effective Internal Communications. Fostering communication between all citizens from different neighborhoods in a tradition of civility and common language can reduce misunderstanding and increase effective communications within the community.
- (5) Participation. Participation allows all citizens from leaders and volunteers, children and adults to have a role to play in the civic health of Carrboro.
- (6) Affirmation. A healthy community reaffirms itself and its shared purpose by nourishing its own morale, facing up to its flaws and criticism, and having confidence in itself.
- (7) Links Beyond Community. Each community nests within a bigger one. Neighborhoods nest within larger communities which nest within the town. Each one needs to recognize its responsibility to the larger whole.
- (8) Development of Young People. A community should prepare its young people for leadership, instill shared values and foster commitment to shared purposes and a common heritage.
- (9) A Forward View. A community needs to examine where it should go and what it may become.
- (10) Institutional Arrangement for Community Maintenance. Government and members of the community who share leadership tasks must provide community maintenance and think of the fate of the community as a whole.

(c) Charge. In addition to using John Gardner's ten ingredients for community building and problem solving as the framework and context for its deliberations, the Neighborhood Forum shall:

- (1) Work together with their town government to improve the quality of life in all neighborhoods by removing barriers between neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and town government.
- (2) Serve as a means of gathering opinions through open discussion by its membership concerning issues that affect the quality of life in neighborhoods and to communicate those various points of view to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen. These discussions should also develop a deeper understanding of these issues among the neighborhoods.
- (3) Assist the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in their deliberations as they may request (e.g. providing information, opinions, and feedback on service quality, efficiency and effectiveness of town government).

- (4) Foster the need to preserve and renew the citizens' common heritage and community stemming from residency in Carrboro.
- (5) Foster the cooperation, connectedness and collaboration that sustains community.
- (6) Identify morale building activities, such as block parties, dances and celebrations, and other positive ways to which the citizens of Carrboro can celebrate their life and community together.
- (7) Let citizens get to know each other better.
- (8) Foster a web of personal acquaintances that transcend neighborhoods, churches, non-profit organizations and other subgroups in the town.

(d) Membership. Each neighborhood shall be asked to send a representative and to have an alternate to serve when the representative is unavailable. The geographical boundaries of each "neighborhood" shall be determined by the Board of Aldermen. Generally, when a neighborhood or homeowners' association exists, the neighborhood designated by the Board shall be co-extensive with the membership in that association, and the representative from that neighborhood should be selected by the association. If such an association does not exist, the Board of Aldermen shall solicit nominations and select a representative and alternate.

- (1) To the extent possible, neighborhoods may be grouped so as to provide equity in representation.
- (2) New neighborhoods will be assigned to an existing neighborhood until such time as their size indicates a need for individual representation.
- (3) Members will serve for one year with the right to be re-appointed for a second term and the right to be re-appointed thereafter after an absence from the Forum for a minimum of one year.

(e) Meeting Process; Principles. In general, meetings of the Neighborhood Forum will be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- (1) Allowance will be made for ambivalence, for questions, for ideas to be tested, and for connections to be made.
- (2) Members are encouraged to draw on their own life experience and imagination and to use their own sense of what seems right.
- (3) Emotion is a vital part of public discussion.
- (4) Every member plays a meaningful role.

- (5) No neighborhood carries more weight than any other.
- (6) A safe environment will be created for members to express beliefs, opinions and feelings, to change their minds, and to share responsibilities and control.

(f) Meeting process; ground rules. A chairperson will direct the meetings and discussions. The chairperson will receive meeting facilitation training in accordance with the following ground rules:

- (1) Test assumptions and inferences
- (2) Share all relevant information
- (3) Focus on interests not positions
- (4) Be specific - give examples
- (5) Agree on what important words mean
- (6) Explain the reasons behind one's statements, questions and actions
- (7) Disagree openly when in disagreement
- (8) Make statements, then invite questions and comments
- (9) Jointly design ways to test disagreements and solutions
- (10) Avoid taking cheap shots or otherwise distracting the council members
- (11) Make decisions by consensus where possible. With respect to deliberations conducted under paragraphs 2 and 3 of the "Charge" as set forth above, the principal objectives of such discussions are stated therein; therefore, where consensus does not exist, it is not intended that the forum shall attempt to state a "collective position" on such issues, by a majority vote or otherwise.

(g) Meeting Schedule. A chairperson and a vice-chairperson will be elected on an annual basis for purposes of running the meetings. The Neighborhood Forum will meet quarterly or as otherwise directed or needed.