

# MINUTES: OSW COMMUNITY Meeting

February 15, 2024 (6-8:00)

6-6:30 Social

Facilitator/President: Simon Wolf

Secretary: Mary Anne Mather

Board attendees: Simon Mitchell-Wolf (president), Mary Anne Mather (secretary), Richard Normand, Annmarie Drake, Shirley Poss, Bill Dandridge, Cara Becker

Absent: Terry McGuire (V-P), David Jeavons (treasurer)

Guest: Dave Jennings –code enforcement, West Team Coordinator (includes OSW)

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Thank You:** Lorri Powers (Star City Getaway, 803 Patterson Ave.) tonight's host!

Asked for May volunteers – no volunteers.

- **Next OSW Community Meeting 5/16**

6PM Social, Meeting 6:30-8PM

Tentative Program: OSW FREE Little Art Gallery (FLAG) with Caroline Block & All about Art Space Roanoke with Amy McGinnis (tabled until fall/October)

- **OSW Needs YOU!**

What's important to you? Historic preservation, social activities, safety, environmental protection, Gish House? GET INVOLVED: <http://oldsouthwest.org>

- **Mark Your Calendars**

4/20 - Evans Spring Public Hearing, City Council, 7PM

4/27 - Gish House Spring Clean-up. Contact Stephen Bendele  
stephenbendele1@gmail.com

4/29 - Joint PLAWK with Mountain View, 5:15-6:00 @ AFOG

5/18 - Star City Garden Club & Friends Work Party: Day Ave Pocket Park, 9-noon  
Mountainview Neighborhood Wickets & Wine Event 11-3. Play Roanoke.

6/22 - Summer Solstice Block Party – Evie's Bakery & Bistro (Pending)

Evie from Evie's Bakery and Bistro is undergoing treatment for Leukemia, if people would like to send notes. Her daughter Amelia is running the restaurant. Plans for an OSW Block Party are underway. Save the date 6/22.

- **REMINDER: OSW Community Meeting Schedule Changes**

**NO Meetings in JULY, SEPTEMBER, or DECEMBER**

July off for vacation and other summer activities

September 19th meeting replaced by a casual social gathering to welcome the Autumn with music by Roanoke Baroque!

December off for Parlor Tour and winter holidays (as normal)

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Tonight's Meeting Presenters Moved to Focus Agenda Item #2

**Roanoke City Code Compliance**

**Solutions to Address Non-Performing Properties for**

**City & Neighborhood Improvement**

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## **OSW BUSINESS** (6:45-8PM)

**Approval of minutes from 3/21/2024** (approved)

*Interested in what OSW has been doing on behalf of our neighborhood?*

All Community Meeting minutes are available at: <https://oldsouthwest.org/osw-minutes>

### **1. Alexander-Gish House Spring Clean-up 4/27, 9-noon**

- OSW Neighbor Volunteer Lead: Stephen Bendele [stephenbendele1@gmail.com](mailto:stephenbendele1@gmail.com)
- Why it's important. (OSW pride, rentals, preservation)
- What to bring: gloves, shovels, rakes, clippers/trimmers
- We could help edging between bricks/lawn – Volunteer? Laurie offered for Stephen to look at her edger to see if it's working.
- DETAILS, TASKS, SIGN-UP were shared

### **2. Roanoke City Code Compliance:**

Solutions to Address Non-Performing Properties for more housing, historic preservation & neighborhood improvement

#### **PRESENTERS:**

**Jeffrey White**, City of Roanoke Codes Compliance Coordinator

**Betsy Nixon**, OSW Neighbor Volunteer

#### **Discussion Order**

–Intro of OSW Interests: Turn around “derelict” houses to improve OSW safety, appearance, value, historic preservation, plus increase housing inventory, city revenues (Simon Wolf, President)

–Captured existing code issues from the floor (Mary Anne Mather, Secretary)

- Specific Issue at Air BnB at 711 4<sup>th</sup> Street. No longer owner occupied. Not being maintained. Often not mowed. Continuously has short-stay rentals – not allowed by code.
- Abandoned, unlicensed vehicles (code oversees inoperable vehicles on private property, police deal with vehicles on public property/streets).
- Need for more frequent rental inspections

–**Short presentation of how code compliance works** (Jeffrey White)

General Info:

- Wants us to know that our code department is responsive. Constituents have their attention. They commit to get answers to neighborhood questions.
- 11 inspectors (11 zones in city). Inspectors work the neighborhoods and also attend neighborhood events on weekends and weekends, as needed.

- Address "private" property.
- Use VA Maintenance code Part 3 as their enforcement guideline.
- Oversee rental inspection program (inspections every 4 years). 74.5% are considered rental in OSW.
- 50% of code complaints come from canvassing and 50% from call-in complaints.
- After owners are taken to court, that exhausts what code can do. x
- Code/property court: 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month (28-30 per month).

#### Questions from Floor:

- Question: is there higher incentives for frequent offenders?

Answer: Only if same problem at same property. Habitual offenders for mowing – have 7 days to comply before city sends a contractor out to mow.

- Question: Sounds like judge's penalties are completely arbitrary. Can penalties be made public? It was noted from the floor that often the judges levy very lenient fines, which exacerbates code problems/non-compliance. There is "no teeth" in the code.

Answer: (none recorded)

- Question: What is the percentage of repeat code offenders?

Answer: Generally low. Repeat offenders are a small number of the same people. (It was noted from the floor that these small number of offenders are habitual, problematic, and have little incentive to comply. This needs a resolution.)

#### –Proposed solutions & system demo (Betsy Nixon)

- Shared Roanoke GIS to see owners & code violations: <https://gisre.roanokeva.gov/js/>
- Betsy demonstrated how to find code reports, owners, violations, ARB/COAs, etc. for any property.
- Neighbors can write letters and give to code to take with them to court.

#### –Discussion & Questions (open)

- Neighborhood wants to see a change in the City's allowing non-performing houses to exist in-perpetuity.
- City is looking at language to create a vacant houses registry. Proposed for increase in fees for vacant house.
- Jeffrey White will research a problem property on Mountain Ave. owned by Dearing (a habitual offender).
- Judges are appointed by general assembly – **Question: Do we need to approach our representatives to change of influence the judges to do a better/more-effective job? Also approach our representative to address the vacant house registry.**

### 3. Quick Recaps

- **4/8 OSW READS Book Group:** lively discussion of the Vietnam War era, women's rights & today's world.

**If there is interest and a volunteer lead person, we could schedule a future book group with our OSW neighborhood author, E Delumbo. TBA**

- **Gish House Safety:** OSW, Inc. exploring solutions to unhoused people camping near the Gish House. [Updates as available.](#)
- **Free Little Art Gallery (FLAG) in OSW:** Artist Caroline Booth will create & help maintain this neighborhood addition. It is a project from the Arts Connect Neighborhoods catalogue. OSW coordinating with Molly Hunter, Neighborhood Coordinator. More info at May meeting.
- **REMINDER: Wasena Bridge closing** after Blue Ridge Marathon 4/20
- **Check it out!** Native plants are coming up at the Day Avenue Pocket Park. Coming soon: signs & t-shirts. REMINDER: [5/18 - Star City Garden Club & Friends Work Party, 9-noon](#)
- **5/18 Star City Compost** (Stephen Bendele)  
Compost Fest 2024: The Breakdown

**4. OSW Needs Your Help: Standing Committees Review (interest survey?)**

Share your skills. Have a hand in making OSW the best place to live, work, play!

CONTACT: [maryanne.mather@gmail.com](mailto:maryanne.mather@gmail.com) OR Complete form at: [oldsouthwest.org/contact-us](http://oldsouthwest.org/contact-us)

- Communications (social media, OSW list maintenance, OSW email updates, website)
- Events (select & coordinate activities/social events)
- Community Outreach/Membership
- Alexander-Gish House Maintenance & Rentals
- Fundraising
- Neighborhood Safety
- Historical Preservation Committee
- Environmental Preservation, Parks & Greenspace

**4. Other Business?** Any neighborhood safety concerns?

**Adjourn 8PM**

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