

VILLAGE OF GROSSE POINTE SHORES, A MICHIGAN CITY
MINUTES OF THE AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING
August 14, 2012

A meeting of the Ambassador Committee of the Village of Grosse Pointe Shores, A Michigan City, was held on Tuesday, August 14, 2012 in the Council Chambers of the Grosse Pointe Shores Municipal Building. The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM.

Present:

DJ Boehm, Chair
Gloria Anton, Member
Alex Lucido, Member
Madeleine Phillips, Member and Recording Secretary
Kay Felt, Council Liaison

Absent:

Chace Wakefield, Member

Invited Attendees:

Ted Kedzierski, Mayor
Mark Wollenweber, Acting City Manager

Audience Member:

Jan Pemberton

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 14 Ambassador Committee Meeting were approved.

ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Realtor Conversations

As follow up to the realtor conversations, the following action items were discussed.

1. One-Day Park Pass Implementation Feedback

Chief Schulte will evaluate the implemented park pass for potential residents in 30 days. Alex Lucido reported that a couple people thought it was a phenomenal idea, whether potential residents spend ten minutes or two hours having a look at the park. The Park Pass implementation has generated good press among realtors.

2. Certificate of Occupancy

There is already a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) in place for rentals. The rental agreements must be for one year or more. There is no objection to having a C of O for a

rental property

In support of considering a C of O for purchases, Alex Lucido reported the story of a home for sale on Colonial Road that had mold, but was slated to be sold without an inspection. A friend of the now-deceased home owner was said that the gentleman died of a lung ailment and that mold was present in his lungs. The committee consensus was that a **reasonable** ordinance for a Certificate of Occupancy for purchases should be on the books.

Homes that are designated as “newer” do not need inspections. However, homes are aging so we expect it to become more common to request inspections.

The Mayor explained that code violations occur when it is a matter of life, health and safety. For example, if the furnace has a cracked heat exchanger, the water heater is faulty, if there is rodent infestation, electrical (amperage levels) issues or gas issues. A secondary issue would be something connected with the home foundation. Tom Krolczyk performs the building inspections for Grosse Pointe Shores.

There are currently 19 rentals in Grosse Pointe Shores. Per Alex Lucido, there are some rentals that wouldn't pass a C of O. Gloria Anton noted that it is a burden on the homeowner to get a C of O.

The Mayor explained that a second ordinance that may come into play if the property is a “public nuisance.” An example of this would be 51 Woodland Shores (nicknamed “The Scary House”). House payments ceased in 2008. The house was finally sold, and it is being brought back to an up-to-date residence by the new owner.

Mayor Ted Kedzierski mentioned that the “Russian House” (a.k.a. “Babcock House”) pool was condemned and the pool was demolished with the resulting opening filled in. There was also a damaging water leak in the building. The home is owned by Wells Fargo bank. He informed the committee that there was no evidence of anyone currently living there. In the past, Hurricane Katrina expatriates lived there. They filed bankruptcies at a time appropriate to their not having to pay any bills. This gave them an automatic stay and allowed them to reside there for an extended time. Wells Fargo is exempt from completing a disclosure form. It was noted that the inspection is not up to the owner.

Kay Felt noted that it is not an invasion to have the inspection. Gloria Anton had an unsatisfactory experience when she went through a home inspection. Grosse Pointe Shores is the only Pointe that doesn't require an inspection for change of ownership..

The Committee consensus is that the rental C of O should be left as is. The C of O issue for ownership changes is the responsibility of City Council..

Action Item: *City Council (through Kay and the Mayor) will consider whether or not to pursue the C of O issue for home purchases.*

3. Vacant Homes Update

Per Alex Lucido, there are currently no vacant homes Grosse Pointe Shores at this time.

Action Item: Alex Lucido will continue to be vigilant for vacant homes and let Chief Schulte know if there are any.

4. Local Marina Pricing

Mark Wollenweber reported that Grosse Pointe Shores charges approximately what other park marinas charge. We are competitive. There is no pricing advantage.

5. Passport Concept

The passport concept was discussed with support from some committee members. Elected officials from all of the Pointes would need to decide whether to implement this. Discussion centered on swim teams from public and parochial schools that could take advantage of the Passport concept, because students hail from the five Grosse Pointe communities. The Mayor will “float” the idea with the mayors of the other Pointes and ask whether there is a legal question to consider.

The idea of making Thursdays “Teen Night” at the Park was also mentioned with generally positive reaction.

As an aside, regarding collaboration among the Pointes, pressure is being applied to examine this topic. The outcome should be in the best interests of the citizens. Increased utilization of the “passport” idea may be perceived as a negative. Mark Wollenweber mentioned a recent vote to merge two cities, Saugatuck and Douglas. The proposal was voted down.

The committee agreed to table the passport concept for now pending discussions among the Pointes’ Mayors.

6. Sign Ordinance

Audience member Jan Pemberton said that virtual tours are now replacing open houses in some communities in the United States and that this may eliminate the need to have “for sale” signs on properties or even to have people looking at open homes. Alex Lucido firmly objected eliminating open houses and signs, stating that his firm sold millions of dollars in properties last year that could be traced directly to open-house events.

Action Item: Kay Felt will continue to follow the Sign Ordinance issue and let the committee know if the ordinance is changed to allow Open House signs on Sundays.

7. School Questions Follow Up

Rebecca Fannon, communications director for the Grosse Pointe Public Schools responded to DJ Boehm regarding the remaining questions raised by the realtors:

1. **Press Releases.** Via email, Rebecca Fannon shared that all press releases are listed on the website www.gpschools.org under the headlines section. DJ Boehm signed up for school press releases so that we can share appropriate news with both the committee and realtors as needed..

DJ Boehm shared a press release previously sent to the committee regarding residency. Of interest to this committee is the fact that across all of the Pointes, there are 700 rentals (20% of homes). Encouraging sales vs., rentals, could significantly lessen the residency issues for the schools. Alex Lucido noted examples of the schools strictly enforcing residency diligence. If residents are moving from one house to another in the same city, they are told to change their drivers license before they can register their children for school.

DJ Boehm also shared a press release from Rebecca Fannon that arrived the morning of the meeting. A recommendation for the interim principal, Mr. Tom Tobe, for Grosse Pointe North High School was announced.

2. **Public vs. private school enrollment.** In her email, Rebecca Fannon shared some partial enrollment information. She will let us know if/when she has additional information. She noted that some private school enrollment has dropped over the past decade due to economic issues.

3. **School tutoring opportunities.** At an earlier meeting, Alex Lucido noted that some residents may want to volunteer to tutor students. Rebecca's email included three options 1) the Student Services Offices maintains a list of certified teachers who may serve as tutors. Parents are responsible for contacting tutors, 2) Senior citizens may want to contact Alicia Carlisle, coordinator of the district wide SERVE student volunteer program, and 3) Patricia McClary at the Woods branch of the Grosse Pointe Public Library may also be a good contact. Mark Wollenweber will consider posting the school volunteer tutor information on the website.

Action Item. DJ Boehm will continue to monitor school press releases for any information relevant to the Ambassador Committee.

B. Current Real Estate Market Perspective

There are currently 25 properties for sale, 20 homes and 5 vacant lots. The prices of the homes range from a low of \$249,000 for a 1,700 square foot, two-bedroom ranch to \$4.8M for 1010 Lake Shore Road. There are two foreclosures. Alex reported that the market has turned in a positive direction. Now is a good time to sell a home.

C. Park Enhancement Update

1. Tennis Courts

Mark Wollenweber reported that the tennis court refinishing is completed with a two year guarantee on the work. There was disappointment that the GPS Improvement Foundation voted 6-5 against supplementing the court refinishing costs. On the positive side, the tennis team has asked for time on the courts, something that wouldn't have happened without the resurfacing. More work must be done to promote the refinished tennis courts use. Tom Krolczyk is taking photos of the updated tennis courts.

2. Splash Pad

Adding a Splash Pad to the Park would benefit many and would add a selling point for the community. Mark Wollenweber and his team will put together information on this addition including the total cost for all aspects of the project.

D. Review of the Ambassador Committee Mission and Goals

Kay was asked to present the committee's Mission at the next City Council meeting. DJ Boehm offered the following:

Ambassador Committee Mission

To do a better job of marketing Grosse Pointe Shores "to encourage people to consider Grosse Pointe Shores as a great place to live" through:

- *Research to identify any current barriers to real estate sales and/or city enhancements to make Grosse Pointe Shores more marketable to new residents.*
- *Develop a basic marketing plan and materials to promote Grosse Pointe Shores (especially at existing events with significant draw potential).*
- *Promote Grosse Pointe Shores to executives and professionals at growing businesses in Detroit and Macomb County.*

DJ Boehm gave credit to the realtors who have been so important for the committee's work.

Action Item: Kay will provide copies of the mission statement at the August City Council Meeting.

E. Advertising and Promotion Discussion

1. Ford House, DSO Bookmark Promotion Debrief

The 2012 GPS Events bookmarks have been positively received. The Committee distributed 4,200 bookmarks at the Ford House DSO concerts in July. Special thanks to

Kay Felt, Gloria Anton and Ford House volunteers who quickly stuffed programs in 90 degree plus heat. Working collaboratively is the key to success for our committee. The bookmarks are also available at the City Offices, Ford House reception area, Grosse Pointe Yacht Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and through the Board of Realtors.

2. Grosse Pointe Shores Book Update

The Grosse Pointes Shores Book idea came originally from the Mayor. In progress to date, Mark Wollenweber, Kay Felt, the Mayor, and DJ Boehm met with author Art Woodford regarding the project. Mark Wollenweber will give the photos to which he has access to the project. Mark Wollenweber will also get Ford House on board. The Grosse Pointe Yacht Club is on board with the project. They will look at their photo archives. The Grosse Pointe Improvement Foundation has a cache of photos that may be valuable for the project.

The Committee agreed that this is an overwhelmingly excellent concept. If the book is part of the Arcadia published history series, the book must follow a format of no more than ten chapters, 128 pages total. Out of pocket expenses are expected to approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000. Arcadia charges \$13 per book. The City may consider self-publishing for \$6 or \$7 apiece. Self publishing may would relieve some of the formatting constraints, however self publishing would mean that we don't have access to Arcadia's marketing channels.

Action Item. The progress of the book will remain an ongoing action item.

F. Other Agenda Items

Due to lack of meeting time, the remaining agenda items were postponed and will be moved to the September agenda.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Ambassador Committee is Tuesday, September 11, 2012 at 10 AM in the Council Chambers.

Respectfully submitted,

Madeleine Phillips, Member and Recording Secretary