



The Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods

Board Meeting

April 9, 2009

Peachtree Presbyterian Church

6:40 – 8:50 PM

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees:

	Name	Neighborhood/Organization	Email Address
1	Yolanda Adrean	Mt. Paran-Northside	yadrean@earthlink.net
2	Major Robert Browning	APD Zone 2	rbrowning@atlantaGA.gov
3	Gordon Certain	North Buckhead	gcertain@comcast.net
4	Glenn Delk	Brookhaven	glenn.delk@mindspring.com
5	Mary Dodson	Chastain Park	mary_dodson@mindspring.com
6	George Dusenbury	Park Pride	george@parkpride.org
7	Jeremy Ellis	Peachtree Park	jeremyellis@earthlink.net
8	John Haliburton	Peachtree Hills	john@thrashgroup.com
9	Jack Hellriegel	West Paces Northside	jehellriegel@bellsouth.net
10	Michael Hilton	Tuxedo Park	michaelhiltonmd@gmail.com
11	Jay Jameson	Peachtree Hills	jjjameson@gproperties.com
12	Jim King	Chastain Park	jimking@mindspring.com
13	Bill Langley	Ridgedale Park	langleybill@comcast.net
14	Walda Lavroff	North Buckhead	waldalavroff@comcast.net
15	Christine McCauley	Buckhead Heritage Society	mccauleyc@mindspring.com
16	Sally Morgens	Tuxedo Park	smorgens@aol.com
17	Garth Peters	Memorial Park	gpeters@thebuckheadcoalition.org
18	Bob Schneider	Garden Hills Civic	bschneider@gardenhills.net
19	Jim Wright	Ardmore Park	wrightjr@mindspring.com

Representation by Neighborhood:

Neighborhood	Name(s)
1 Ardmore Park	Jim Wright
2 Brookhaven	Glenn Delk
3 Chastain Park	Jim King, Mary Dodson
4 Garden Hills Civic	Bob Schneider
5 Memorial Park	Garth Peters
6 Mt. Paran-Northside	Yolanda Adrean
7 North Buckhead	Gordon Certain, Walda Lavroff
8 Peachtree Hills	John Haliburton, Jay Jameson
9 Peachtree Park	Jeremy Ellis
10 Ridgedale Park	Bill Langley
11 Tuxedo Park	Michael Hilton, Sally Morgens
12 West Paces Northside	Jack Hellriegel

I. Welcome

Jim King called the meeting to order at around 6:40 PM. A quorum was achieved early in the meeting.

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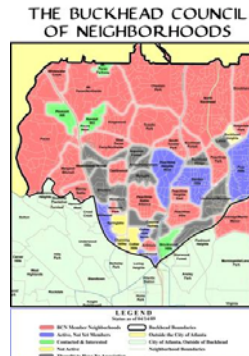
II. Secretary's Report

Minutes for the February and March board meetings were approved by the Board.

III. Treasurer's Report

The BCN has \$2,000 in the bank and \$300 in checks in hand (Paces West needs to remake their check to "BCN"). Brookhaven and Castlewood joined this month.

The map at the right shows the continued expansion of BCN membership (light red).



IV. Speakers

Note on Presentation Reports: For simplicity in reporting, the material reported below is usually reported from the point of view of the speakers. These reports reflect the opinions of the individual presenters and may not necessarily be the position of BCN or its member associations.

a. Major Robert Browning, Commander of APD Zone 2

Zone 2 year-to-date crime is down 16%. (Zone 1 is the leader with a reduction of 24%.) The overall city's rate is down 10%, in spite of the 10% reduction of manpower resulting from the furloughs. Zone 2 leads the city with the least amount of crime.

Major Browning has what he calls the "Impact Team", so called because he moves them around a lot to impact crime. He has 10 uniformed officers assigned along with a sergeant. Their job is to do aggressive patrols anywhere in the zone that he (and the crime stats) deem is needed. Their hours are adjustable: one week they may start work at 8:30 AM but the next, if crime shifts, they might come in at 4 AM in the morning. He also has the FIT Team (Field Investigation Team) of six (mostly) plainclothes officers in unmarked vehicles and a sergeant. Six of these officers are coming in at 6 AM because the zone has had some burglary problems.

The biggest problem is larcenies from vehicles and a lot of shopliftings. The shopliftings show up on their stats, but they can't do much about them because they are not inside the stores Lenox and Phipps. In some cases they place unoccupied patrol cars in front of some locations, which he says reduces crime.

There were a series of questions and reports from the audience. One question was about reported "gunshots". Another was about a rumor that protection in city parks had been reduced – Browning said that that wasn't correct and that they were even working on having their mounted patrol come up to the Pharr Road area to do some patrol work. He was asked about his involvement in the budget process – as a new major he isn't involved. A question was asked about large, loud parties in the Tuxedo Road area – he hasn't had calls. He did say that there had been some movie production in that area. He said if there was a problem with such special events to call 911, not him. There was a question about whether a concealed weapons permit is needed to carry Mace – no permit is required. Problems were reported with "homeless" people approaching customers at Peachtree Battle shopping center stores – Browning said he had not heard of such reports but would check it out. He said that they rarely give out permits for someone to go "door-to-door" – if someone comes to your door soliciting baseball or whatever, ask to see their permit.

In conclusion, he said if we had any problems to e-mail him: rbrowning@atlantaGA.gov.

b. George Dusenbury, Executive Director of Park Pride

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Park Pride is an organization which works for better parks all over Atlanta. In the past, they have prepared a plan for Frankie Allen Park and are currently working on one for Little Nancy Creek Park. They have also made grants: Garden Hills got \$30,000 and Chastain got \$40,000. Every NPU gets a \$1,000 micro-grant, a matching grant to make park improvements (deadline April 15). They also have a park visioning grants (two a year, April 15 deadline).

Park Pride works with “friends of the parks” groups, working to improve individual parks but also trying to advocate for a world class parks system here in the City of Atlanta. They have assessed where city parks are and where they need to be – we need more money to maintain our parks and need to expand our parks system – among the 25 largest cities, Atlanta has the smallest portion of land area dedicated to city parks and greenspace. Up in Buckhead you have the least amount of park land but have nice yards and sometimes it gets hidden that while we may be the city of trees, we are definitely not the city of parks. Public safety is also an issue. So Park Pride came up with a three point plan.

The plan is called the PARC (Parks Atlanta Rescue Coalition) “2009 Act to Save Atlanta’s Parks (ASAP)!” Park Pride encourages neighborhood associations, businesses, NPUs, parks and greenspace organizations to endorse the agenda. Recognizing the current economic situation and current budgetary constraints, they are looking for what the city needs not now but long-term to have this world-class parks system. ASAP asks that one mill of existing property taxes be dedicated to parks operation and maintenance. This would be money to maintain existing parks, not the expanded parks resulting from the Beltline project, to address what the Parks’ Department has determined is needed for our parks. The one mill equates to about \$20 million. They are requesting a reallocation of property tax proceeds which is currently about 41 or 42 mills, of which about 8.7 goes to the City, 10 or 11 to the county, and the rest to the school board. They seek that by 2012 that Parks get one mill of that.

The second point is a dedicated source of funds for land acquisition. The last is public safety.

George provided and discussed a 4-page summary (www.nbca.org/BCN/Minutes/2009-04-09/PARC%20-%202009%20ASAP%203.pdf). Highlights included the fact that Parks staffing has been cut by 50% during the past 10 years, a graph showing Atlanta as dead last among 25 major cities in percent of land dedicated to parks/greenspace, and specific steps needed to address safety in public parks. He requested that the BCN and each of its member neighborhoods consider endorsing their plan. The endorsement form is on-line at www.parkpride.kintera.org/PARCASAP-ORG. Current Buckhead endorsers include the Chastain Park Conservancy and Friends of Wolfe Creek Park.

Q. The mill for parks: what do we take it out of?

A. George responded that the City takes less than Fulton and both take less than the school board – there needs to be a discussion on how we allocate our property taxes. For instance, since 2000, the population of the City has increased by 20%; the school population has decreased by 10% -- if you look at the funding, it doesn’t reflect that.

Q. What percentage of a mill is now spent by the city and county?

A. The county no longer has a parks operation. 5.57 mills or \$11.4 million was budgeted (before the furloughs and cuts were made) for the City’s Office of Parks. There is also money for Park Design.

Q. So you are not talking about an additional whole mill, only \$8 or \$9 million.

A. Yes. Thanks for clarifying. We were at .65 mills before the initial cuts were announced. As we move forward we need a dedicated source of funding so there is continuity as things move forward. “We’re not asking for a ton.”

Q. Please share the recent accreditation of the parks system and what it might mean. What was needed to get there?

A. The Parks Department recently received accreditation from the National Parks and Recreational Association. This is quite an accomplishment. Very few large cities get accredited. Our department was accredited with no conditions, which is also extremely rare. It shows the improvements which have been made in the operation and efficiency of the Parks Department. When George first came to Park Pride, all he heard was how bad the Parks Department was and what a horrible job they did. Our current commissioner, Dianne Harnell Cohen, has just done a very good job in establishing standards and figuring out what was needed to meet those standards. The accreditation is a testament to her doing that. It means that in the future, funders are more likely to invest in our parks system. However, it does not increase our eligibility for national grants; the federal government does not fund local parks.

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Q. Is there any current proposed legislation to achieve the ASAP agenda?

A. No. We are hoping to increase support through the endorsements of neighborhoods and other organizations. Then we are going to take it to the candidates who are running. They are looking at it in the long term – it's something like a two year process.

George gave his e-mail: george@parkpride.org.

Handouts:

- 4-page ASAP summary (www.nbca.org/BCN/Minutes/2009-04-09/PARC%20-%202009%20ASAP%20_3_.pdf)
- ASAP endorsement form at www.parkpride.kintera.org/PARCASAP-ORG

c. Christine McCauley, Executive Director of Buckhead Heritage Society

The Buckhead Heritage Society began in 2006. It started with a project to restore Harmony Grove Cemetery. They have done an excellent job with it over the past two years, though there is still work to be done, but it has been “saved from crisis”.

Last summer they drafted strategic plan and launched a fund raising program to measure community support – response was overwhelming. In four months they signed up 150 members.

Objectives: they will continue their work with the Harmony Grove Cemetery. There are six historic cemeteries in Buckhead; some are in crisis and some are not. They hope to help stabilize those cemeteries and help find neighborhoods and others to maintain them. They would like to implement a Buckhead-wide inventory of historic structures and landscapes, including artifacts, if possible. They want to interview people who remember the Buckhead of the past, through photos, oral histories and video.

In the last several weeks they have started a program working with landowners who are interested in protecting property through conservation easements, façade easements, or listing their structures on the National Register of Historic Places. There are a number of land trusts to work with. She wants residents to identify historic items such as old spring covers and other little-known structures. Please call her if we have such information.

They also plan an education program. They are planning a “Good Design Transcends Time” event in Peachtree Hills including a photographic exhibit of Russian Modernist architecture and Merrill Elam (a designer of the Buckhead Library) will talk about modern architecture. They plan similar educational events. Their next events are the rededication of two cemeteries on May 3; the Harmony Grove and New Hope cemeteries.

She handed out an open letter and membership application.

There were a number of questions and comments about various Buckhead cemeteries.

Handouts:

- [Buckhead Heritage Society Membership Form \(pdf\)](#)
- [Buckhead Heritage Society Open Letter to Buckhead Residents \(pdf\)](#)
- [Buckhead Heritage Society Strategic Plan \(pdf\)](#)
- [New Hope A.M.E. Church - Buckhead Heritage Society Joint Press Release \(pdf\)](#)

V. Community Concerns

a. Atlanta Issues – Glenn Delk

Do we want to take any position about potential tax increases? Today's AJC article quotes the City's CFO as saying that the City projects spend \$523 million this fiscal year with revenues of \$480 million. Eliminating the public safety furloughs will cost another \$17 million. Glenn thinks they are ignoring the continued shortfall in meeting pension obligations. Glenn thinks we are looking at a 15% to 20% property tax increase. Does BCN want to take a position, especially since everyone is running for office?

Q. What would be the position?

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A. That we don't support anyone who supports a property tax increase.

The City assesses \$138 million in property taxes; the school system raises \$470 million. The school system is 78% of the problem. They also have the unfunded pension liability.

Other voice: What about the county? I don't understand why, since the unincorporated part of Fulton has shrunk tremendously, why they haven't lowered our taxes?

Other voice: For the school system, the pension guarantees a 5% return, so in "down" years, we have to make up the shortfall.

Other voice: Budget meeting dates were announced for the city and school board.

Other voice: The school is dying to get out of the Beltline.

Deloitte says we have no finance department; we have four departments that have a negative balance of \$147 million; we have an unfunded pension liability between the school and the city of probably \$2.4 billion. They are probably going to take \$225 million a year from us to not pay for anything except pay pensions. ... At a recent retreat several councilmembers said they would consider raising property tax rates. We are probably looking at a \$120 million increase in property taxes, or about 15%.

Q. Impact per household?

A. It's got to be about \$1 thousand.

Other voice: The general fund balance at the beginning of the year was \$250 million; now it is \$4 million. The accounting system/department didn't know that they were overspending.

Options other than a property tax increase:

- The airport and water department made money last year. They have net assets worth \$6 billion. You could sell those two and solve the problem.
- Vallejo California just went into federal bankruptcy to address this very problem. The court set aside the pension contracts and said they had to start over again. A precedent.

Other voice: You could have gambling. Privatize services.

Other voice: But they don't know how to let contracts for services. That's what happened with the water department.

Other voice: You can still sell the airport and collect fees from it. London is selling Gatwick for \$4 or \$5 billion.

Should the city be in the airport business and should the city be in the water business?

The City has been running huge deficits in the general fund and have been getting around it by borrowing from the water department.

All we have to do to avoid bankruptcy is to go back to the 2001 pension: that saves \$150 million. Or they can voluntarily give it up.

Other voice: You can't abandon a pension fund because of federal law.

Other voice: What you can do is end the current pension plan and start a new one for new employees.

That doesn't solve the existing problem.

So, are we going to take a position? The 40+ neighborhoods need to take a position that you are not getting our vote and you are not getting our money. The school board is a major part of the problem. We spend about 40% more per student than the state average and we're getting lousy results. If we spent the state average we would save \$250 million.

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Other voice: Can we say we'll support the opponents of anyone who votes for a tax increase?

Other voice: Are we political? Is that our purpose? We have to deal with the issue, not the candidates.

The Deloitte's report is on the city web site.

Gordon: Please send the links.

Jim: Glenn, can you draft a position and bring it back for the neighborhoods to consider supporting? If we are going to privatize services, which services? Sell assets: which assets?

Jim: We ought to invite every candidate for city office to come before us and ask their position on this problem.

Other voice: Last year's financials were wrong and the city is still using the same accounting firm – go figure.

Jim: Let's wrap this up. Let's write up a proposed position statement and circulate it.

b. MARTA – Gordon Certain

Last night I sent a proposal to our North Buckhead association's board asking that we ask the governor either find money to keep MARTA running or to call a special session of the Legislature to fix the MARTA funding problem. So far over 60% of our board has voted to approve that. In the interim, I asked Ed Lindsey for his comments on that proposal and he sent back a very detailed analysis. It is very interesting and I haven't gotten all the way through it yet, but among his points are that in 2006 the Legislature provided a fund for emergency MARTA operations and apparently MARTA is not talking about tapping that fund. I think if MARTA has money available and they are not using it, we need to understand why.

Other voice: and it was not in the paper either.

No, none of what Ed said is in the AJC. About the 2006 fund, I asked Ed how big it was. He didn't know and was going to find out.

Ed also said that MARTA is able to collect their 1% sales tax add-on at the airport, and that they have never elected to do it. My question is, why not? And if they did, how much money would that bring in?

Other voice: Here's the deal – there is nothing that the BCN can do about this. This goes into the House leadership, into the Senate leadership and into the Governor's office.

I realize that, but the outcome right now is crappy for Atlanta.

Other voice: You got to pick your battles. We're trying to work with the State on GA400 at I-85.

Since all this went out, I understand the AJC has quoted the ARC saying that they found some Stimulus money and that money might take care of all the problems until June 2010, no maybe there's not a problem. But, someone needs to pursue the points that Ed has discovered.

c. Piedmont Hospital Health Impact Study - Jim Wright

There's a study called the Hospital Health Impact Analysis that's just been completed by Kathryn Ross of Ga. Tech in concert with the CDC. She was looking at the hospital's health impacts, positive and negative, on the surrounding neighborhoods. The hospital makes major positive contributions to the neighborhoods, but has grown a lot in the last 10 years without any regard to the impacts on the surrounding area. The situation is getting rather acute: traffic, transportation, gridlock, congestion, safety issues (one of the highest levels of vehicular/pedestrian accidents in the city) – a lot of real issues. If not dealt with now, they are just going to get worse. She is talking about specific recommendations address these issues and to set up mechanisms for the neighborhoods to work with Piedmont Hospital. The Brookwood Alliance that Jim belongs to has six neighborhoods around the hospital. There has been a Piedmont Hospital Liaison Committee working with a rep

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from the hospital. Jim thinks the hospital affects not just the six neighborhoods, but a much larger area. It seems appropriate that our two organizations should collaborate on this.

Jim King: Jim asked if the BCN could have a rep on this committee. Elizabeth Pritchard and Jay Jamison have both expressed interest in being involved. I think it would be a good thing to be involved with.

VI. Committee Reports

a. Public Safety: No report.

b. Transportation: No report

c. Education:

Mike Hilton: I wasn't here last time but I understand that there was a lot of talk about charter schools. My wife is interested in getting a group of parents together to try to do a charter school in the middle school area. Can we get the word out to the people to see who might be willing to participate?

Jim: Glenn is knowledgeable about charter schools. Kim Kahwach reported to me that she had heard that parents were very happy with Sarah Smith, Jackson and Brandon, but there's always room for improvement. Ridgeview, the sister school to Sutton over in Sandy Springs, has gone charter.

Other voice: By national standards, less than 20% of Atlanta's 8th graders are proficient.

Mike: What I would ask for is that we send out a notice to the neighborhoods.

Gordon: If you send me something, I will get it out.

Jim: Let's figure out if they are talking about setting up a new school or converting Sutton.

Jim: Ridgeview and Riverwood have been converted from good public schools to better charter schools.

Other voice: Can we get someone from those schools to come and talk to us?

Jim: Yes, we could do that. That would be a good event to bring Mike's wife to.

d. Parks: No report.

VII. Updates and Announcements

VIII. Next Meeting : May 14, 2009

IX. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at around 8:40 PM.

Prepared by Gordon Certain
BCN Secretary
May 13, 2009

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BCN Organizational Status as of 04/09/09									
			Represented?						
	Neighborhood	Member?	2008 Oct	Nov	Dec	2009 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
1	Arden								
2	Ardmore Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
3	Brookhaven	Yes			Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Brookwood							Yes	
5	Brookwood Hills								
6	Buckhead Forest	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
7	Castlewood	Yes							
8	Chastain Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Collier Hills North								
10	Garden Hills						Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Grant Estates/South Tuxedo Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
12	Kingswood	Yes	Yes						
13	Lindridge Martin Manor	Yes	Yes				Yes		
14	Margaret Mitchell	Yes					Yes		
15	Memorial Park	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
16	Mount Paran Parkway								
17	Mt. Paran-Northside	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	North Buckhead	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	Paces	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
20	Paces West	Yes				Yes	Yes		
21	P'tree Battle Alliance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
22	Peachtree Heights East	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	
23	Peachtree Heights West				Yes				
24	Peachtree Hills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
25	Peachtree Park	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
26	Pine Hills				Yes				
27	Pleasant Hill								
28	Randall Mill								
29	Ridgedale Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
30	Springlake								
31	Tuxedo Park	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
32	Wesley Battle	Yes				Yes		Yes	
33	West Paces Northside	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
34	Whitewater Creek	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
35	Wildwood		Yes						
	Count	23	17	13	18	14	20	17	12