



Karen Breen-Bondie, President
Carol Frederick, Vice President
Lisa Canada, Second Vice President
Darcey McLaughlin, Secretary
Phil Kauffmann, Treasurer

Minutes

Tuesday, March 25, 2003

The WPIA annual meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. in the Media Center of Roosevelt Elementary School. Officers present included President Karen Breen-Bondie, Treasurer Phil Kauffmann, and Secretary Darcey McLaughlin. Block Directors present were Nicole Cotter, Upper West Drayton, Carol Kauffman, Lower Woodland, and Alan Liggett, Lower Maplehurst.

President Breen-Bondie did introductions, including introduction of Shaun Slocum, Parks Manager, from the City of Ferndale. A brief introduction of who the WPIA was and what we provide ensued.

Shaun Slocum presented a brief description of DPW current activities and discussed the recent tree-trimming in our area. He went on to explain that they had extra funds to do trimming this year. He and other DPW workers feel the trees that line the streets need to be tall with canopies over the streets, that many of our trees were receiving truck damage to the lower branches. The last time the trees were trimmed was five years ago. Davey Tree is the contractor that the city uses to provide this service. In our area, trees were trimmed from 9 Mile to Oakridge, West of Woodward.

A few of the residents expressed their happiness to see new trees were planted back on the Livernois medians. Mr. Slocum explained that the 34 trees planted were Bradford Pears, with 40 ft spacing between. They have white flower blooms in the spring, a maroon leaf in the fall, and a glossy bright green leaf all summer. Questions were asked about what happened to the small plots of land also on the medians where flowers were planted annually. Mr. Slocum explained that the planting was suspended in 2001 when Livernois was being repaved, and then due to budget cuts since then – the service has been eliminated. The Ferndale Garden Club has been asked if they are interested in taking over those former plots.

A resident, Mr. John Clark of W. Maplehurst, explained that he was very impressed with the Gerry Kulick Community Center. He mentioned that the computer center there is wonderful, and there is always plenty of room. The senior citizens can also get a nice hot lunch there. Mr. Slocum explained that the Community Center is funded from the city's general fund. Mr. Photiades mentioned that the old community center on Nine Mile (present site of Credit Union One) was sold for \$225,000 there was quite a bit of interest that had been earned and that money was recently donated back to the city earmarked for Community Center use. Mr. Photiades believed that a portion of that money was also going to be used to replace windows at the Community Center.

Byron Photiades of the City of Ferndale DPW was introduced and he made a brief presentation. Mr. Photiades joined the DPR in 1972; he answered an ad for an ice skating guard @ \$2.00 per hour. He was asked about the Curling Club. Mr. Photiades mentioned that the Curling Club currently has 300 members with a few from Ferndale. His belief was that the Curling Club got caught up in the politics of the last election. That area historically housed an outdoor ice rink in the 70's, then became a maintenance facility, which was not suitable to that neighborhood or the park. The new appearance and Curling Club is a much nicer setting.

He passed out a Detroit News article on city infrastructures that highlighted what Ferndale has been able to do, really a culmination of work that was performed on the streets and sewers from 1995-2001. That work has more than doubled the home valuations in the city. He believes that if we had not fixed up the downtown, paving, etc. that the curb appeal would not be there. When folks are looking for homes, they should be aware that we have good, solid services in the City of Ferndale for an older community. From the late 70's to the late 80's it was getting ragged but

long-time residents stuck it out. There was also a lot of renting in Ferndale, and many houses were not maintained. When I-696 went through, property values went up in Oakland County and Ferndale was able to leverage \$3.5M from the state and federal government and able to pave Hilton & Pinecrest, in addition to the \$22M of paving all through the City, so that was a bonus. We were able to do more than other cities which have large infrastructure problems – we were getting good bids, Royal Oak gets a lot of publicity due to their downtown, but their streets have problems that most are not aware of.

Ferndale's higher than typical tax rates are now balanced with higher home values. However, this year does look to be a tougher year than most. Ferndale is typically a conservative decision making community, but with a younger City Council, there may be plans to do a little more. He mentioned that the new city/school tennis courts located on Pinecrest at the high school are scheduled to be completed in May, which was made possible through a state grant. The school district's portion was \$62K.

Ferndale DPW is especially proud of its services to the residents like snow removal. The policy is to have the streets cleared within 24 hours. Snow removal has been very timely. There is volunteer overtime. We started contracting in the early 80's, and we saved money and built surpluses. We aren't in the situation that cities like Hazel Park, Berkley and Clawson are with cutting their services. We are also lucky to have many of the DPW workers living in the City of Ferndale and able to respond quickly with five minutes travel to work. Many of our city workers are second generation employees, who have a great deal of pride in the city and have long tenures.

Leaf collection, which by the way many cities don't have, is performed seven or eight times a year. The City of Royal Oak averages only two collections per season. Many residents aren't aware that you can rent a truck for \$150 – flat fee that the City will drop off and pick up. This is a service they are proud to offer since it encourages and makes it easier for residents to do maintenance work on their homes. The city will drop off and pick up the trucks. For more information, call the City DPW offices.

Garbage Collection. While other cities are cutting back, Ferndale has continued to pick up almost everything you put out there. Ferndale also did not cut their chipping service with large branches. In many communities you must make an appointment to bring them in and pay \$25 for this service.

Street Sweeping – City still owns and maintains three street sweepers and they attempt to get out once every two weeks.

Parks Program – approved \$1.5M for Parks several years ago. Mr. Photiades reports that all planned improvements were completed with the exception of the parking lot planned for Geary Park and a walking path at Wilson – they simply ran out of money. Ferndale was the second city in the state to install the roller rinks. They also installed new bathrooms.

Ferndale DPW is more or less in the "maintenance mode" right now – greatly taking care of all that we currently have. Ferndale takes a great deal of pride in providing basic, solid services to their residents. Ferndale has good working equipment at this time.

A discussion about the Hazel Park Ice Arena was ensued. Byron mentioned that the residents of Hazel Park were told that the arena would not raise their taxes. What they were not told was that was true IF the arena remained profitable. Right now they are in trouble, just breaking even, so it will be interesting to see what happens with that area and the Hazel Park taxes in that regard.

The Police Department has six cars on the road in the city at any given time: One car on Nine Mile, one car on Woodward, and a car in each of the four quadrants of the city. Ferndale has a very good police department.

The DPW is working on a plan to try to improve the water pressure in the NW quadrant of Ferndale. The pumping station is on the east side and pumps 300 million gallons of water into its tank. The tank is replenished at night in the off-peak hours and Ferndale receives a cheaper rate for doing so. Out of approximately 120 customers that the City of Detroit Water Dept. serves, Ferndale receives the fourth or fifth cheapest rate. The pumping station was built in 1955 and needs to be renovated. So plans are to try and replace the water main and add an underground booster south of Nine Mile on Livernois to boost pressure in the NW quad. The cost is \$1.5M, and sewer rates must be increased. One of the things that affect resident's water rates is the declining

commercial base in Ferndale. Losing companies such as Reichold Chemical and LTV Steel account for approximately 12% reduction of total water consumption, and when the commercial consumption goes down – the rates go up for residents. Alan Liggett addressed Mr. Photiades regarding the water rates going up twice in one year. Mr. Photiades responded that one-third of the water budget has been capital and mentioned that water rates have gone up 20%. A good portion of that rate hike was to support the main replacement at \$1M, which needed to be done quickly while Pinecrest was being repaved. The total budget for that was \$4.5M. He explained that when the economy recovers and companies come back to Ferndale, the revenues from that will offset the resident burden. He mentioned that Ferndale hires a professional administrator to run its city, the mayor is part-time, so it is a city manager form of government with input from the city council. The council is sensitive to raising rates this year, and will probably keep the rate increase to 5% or below. Mr. Photiades has recommended a 5% increase to them which will allow us to fund the pump station improvements. All city departments were asked to cut 5% of their budgets.

Bottom line – the budget this year is tight, and the DPW dept. now has half as many employees as there were when he started; there were 76 people, now there are 34. Part of this is due to contracting services, but keep in mind that less people respond in emergencies, but they are still doing a great job, the staff is experienced and they have long tenures which is an advantage to Ferndale.

Question regarding the Light Rail System – not to happen any time soon.

Mr. Photiades and Mr. Slocum were thanked graciously for giving their time and their informative presentation.

Minutes: Secretary Darcey McLaughlin was not present at last meeting. Katrina Collins, who volunteered to take minutes, was not present at this meeting. She moved that the previous meetings minutes, along with the March meeting minutes be read at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Phil Kauffmann stated that the accounts for the WPIA have been moved from Comerica Bank to Credit Union One. The current checking balance is \$944.01. Overall, 79% of the Association have paid their dues. Dues collection can still continue in the spring/summer months.

Officer Elections – unfortunately there was not a quorum at this meeting, so no elections could be held. Resident John Clark suggested that current officers should stay in their positions until the next annual meeting. All present agreed.

Compliments were presented with the snow removal this year. There were no issues and no resident complaints. It was a great year. Secretary McLaughlin offered to write a letter to that effect to Jack Aldred, who provides our snow removal service.

Anne Williamson was not present to give a Beautification Report, but President Breen-Bondie verified that the plaque for the winning home last year is being ordered and will be delivered as soon as it is received.

Annual Block Party Committee Report: Aimee Fretwell has named people on most committees, but we will need to fill her open position as Committee chair due to the fact that she is moving. Nicole Cotter may take chairperson or look for a co-chair with someone. Alan Liggett to pass on information from last year. Alan also mentioned two or three people to help from last year that he will also pass on.

New Business – President Breen-Bondie asked for volunteers to help write an article to spotlight another home in our area for the next newsletter. John Clark volunteered to write a short article on his home on the corner of West Maplehurst and Pinecrest, which is a unique Spanish-style home, built in 1920.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.