

Gifford Park Assoc. General Membership Meeting

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Elgin History Museum

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mon., Jan. 22, 7 pm: First meeting for Housewalk 2018, Elgin History Museum

Thurs., Jan. 25, 7 pm: Historic District Projects' meeting, Elgin History Museum

Thurs., Feb. 15, 7 pm: GPA general membership meeting, Elgin History Museum

IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Bednar; Jim Berry; Bill Briska; Becky Charlton; Caryl, Jean & JoAnne Clement; Barbara Evans; Rich Evans; Mike Haskins; Moe & Tom Lee; Dan & Pat Miller; Lisandro Ramirez; Brian & Sarah Schmidt; Chris & Warren Tejes; and Josh Von Dran

R.O.P.E. REPORT (EPD Officer Ramirez 224-760-8480)

To be informed about what service calls have come in for your (or others') neighborhood, go to the website *crimereports.com*. Then put in an address and whatever radius from it you want, and voilà, you'll know. You can even search specific dates.

The third Monday of every month—Jan. 22 this month— is the Chief's monthly meeting at the EPD. Held at the department, all citizens are invited to attend. Coffee with a Cop will be at 6 p.m. on the following dates: Jan. 25 at Gail Borden Library and February 20 at the Art Space Lofts, 51 So. Spring St.

The specific date that the HBO special which includes a spotlight on the EPD's R.O.P.E. program has not yet been announced.

In December, 25% of the calls to EPD in Officer Ramirez' area, which includes more than the Elgin Historic District [EHD], were traffic stops. Only 3 calls involved thefts of packages left on front porches, which led Ramirez to wonder if, for various reasons, some weren't calling them in. He urged everyone to report thefts, regardless of how little their worth, for this alerts officers to focus on an area to reduce the chances of others. He reiterated this about thefts of holiday lights as well.

The recent burglary of an open garage on North Porter led not only to a reminder to keep garage doors closed but also to the admonition not to pursue a thief on foot. (Fortunately, no one was hurt and the stolen item was dropped by the thieves as they fled.)

R.O.P.E. officers will now be doing more community outreach and less crime investigation. This does not mean, however, that if you see something suspicious, you cannot call Officer Ramirez. And as usual, he urges you to call.

SECRETARY'S & TREASURER'S REPORTS

The minutes of the Nov. 17 general membership meeting were unanimously approved as was the treasurer's report from Pat Miller, who noted that GPA now has a total of \$118,194.74. Of this, \$36,689.69 is in checking and the rest in four CDs.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMITTEE REPORT (Paul Bednar *paul@paulbednar.com*)

At several GPA meetings we've talked about possible projects for the neighborhood. On Thursday, Jan. 25th, all are encouraged to attend the 7 p.m. meeting at the Elgin History Museum to take steps to implement them. Paul will also report on the steps he's taken to make our district the focus of a Neighborhood Works project. (If you're unable to attend but have ideas, let Paul know.)

The \$6,700 feasibility study of the former David C. Cook mansion, to which GPA contributed \$2,700, was approved by the GPA board and has begun.

Dan Miller thanked all who joined him in his successful letter writing campaign urging the City to keep the 50-50 grant program. It will be funded for 2018 with a combination of TIF and Community Development Block Grant funds. While the City also approved the continuing offering grants for downsizing, those for replacement of chain link fences and removal of substitute siding have been discontinued.

Dan Miller reported that according to City Engineer Ron Rudd, the reconstruction of East Chicago Street will finally begin this summer!

HOUSEWALK COMMITTEE REPORT (Mike Haskins *haskinsmichael@sbcglobal.net*)

Although Mike thanked us for approving him to be the 2018 house tour chair after Pat Miller decided to step down from that position, more than a few in the room had to be thinking, "Thank you, Mike!"

This coming Monday, Jan. 22, will be the first meeting to plan for this year's tour. All who are interested in joining the committee are invited to attend the 7 pm meeting at the History Museum. The hope is that this year no one will have to do more than one job, so come one, come all.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT. (Moe Lee *708-828-9706*)

Currently 185 individuals in approximately 120 households are GPA members.

Plans are in the works for the April potluck. Please call Moe if you're willing to help with it.

Though everyone thinks that welcome baskets of goodies for new EHD residents is a great idea, needed are volunteers to help Moe get this project off the ground. Let her know if you'd be willing.

CODE UPDATES (Tom Lee *708-207-2789* & Code Compliance Officer Josh Von Dran)

Tom's meeting to discuss rentals with Colby Basham, Director of the Department of Neighborhood Services, yielded some interesting information.

- Elgin has 5,300 rental units, 418 of which are in the EHD. (A single structure, of which the EHD has 667, often has more than one rental unit.)
- Because it's been more difficult for flippers to sell properties, rentals have increased.
- Only two code officers are charged with inspecting the city's rentals. And very busy these two are, for recently changed is the frequency of inspection: now every rental property will be inspected every 18 months.
- The rental inspectors also regularly check to see that rentals being advertised are licensed and have no open permits.
- It is difficult to cite an owner for overcrowding because this would take many hours to stake out and prove.
- That a property is in a historic district and has additional criteria that must be met is in small print on the Title. Homeowners are often not told that their purchase is in an Historic District. The City is considering including a flyer with the transfer stamp to so inform a prospective owner, an idea all at this meeting were in strong support of. Homeowners appearing at Design Review often say they did not know they are in an Historic District.
- Sometime in late winter/early spring, all code inspectors will blitz the Elgin Historic District to check for code violations.
- Unfortunately, the City cannot force banks to sell foreclosed properties.

Tom reminded all that whether they call 311 or 911 to make a complaint about code violations or in an emergency, they can ask to remain anonymous so that their names/ addresses will not appear in the complaint. Those still uncomfortable about doing so may e-mail Tom at phototomlee@comcast.net, and he'll file the complaint.

Josh Von Dran—the non-rental code compliance officer for essentially half of Elgin's east side, including the EHD—noted that his frequent drives through the area convince him that Elgin is looking much better. Dan Miller subsequently praised Josh for being so proactive in helping residents help it become so.

Josh noted the status of the following properties in the EHD.

- Now painted are 162 S. Gifford and the property at the northeast corner of North & Channing.
- 352 S. Prairie finally has siding.
- The legal process required to demolish 71 S. Gifford (northeast corner of Gifford & Fulton) is underway.
- The City is working with the owner of 159 S. Channing so that projects that should have been completed will be sooner rather than later. (When a project is not completed in time, Josh takes the owner to court to work out a plan to expedite its completion.)

Josh also reminds residents that garbage men do *not* pick up TVs and that the owners of any left on the curb will be cited. To get a list of places that do, usually for a fee, call 311.

Josh emphasized that you should call 311 if you think work being done is questionable and/or if you see work being done but no COA (Certificate of Appropriateness) in the window. By calling 311, you can also ask about the status of work on a property.

ADJOURNMENT was unanimously approved, after which those in attendance stayed to chat as well as to take whatever they wished from Dan Miller's piles of past housewalk booklets and Gazettes as well as large and attractive downtown Elgin posters that were created in 1994. Undoubtedly he'll bring them to our next meeting, too.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Evans, Secretary