

Nov 83

The West Ender

By and for the West End Neighborhood

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

In keeping with an ancient tradition started this past summer, the West Ender came out late in November. You caught that, did you? Well, the thing got to you on about the 10th. We told you to vote on the 8th, and encouraged you to support the bond referendum; we also announced the Board meeting on the 8th. Well, as further proof of the effectiveness of this newsletter, the referendum passed and the meeting was well-attended. The same thing happened last summer one month, when about 50 fifty people jammed into an as-yet-to-be-announced Board meeting.

SO, WHY FLY IN THE FACE OF SUCCESS?

Because we want to remind you that the next Board meeting will be held on the first Tuesday of December, rather than the second one. That is, your Board will meet on Tuesday, December 6th, at 8:00 p.m. at the Gibson's house on Brookstown Avenue (1315). (Wear warm clothes, 'cause these people haven't paid their fuel bill in months.)

MORE IMPORTANT:

We desperately want you to come to the annual Christmas party. Remember, it will be held in the living room of the YWCA on Friday night, December 9th, from 8:00 until midnite. This gives you a chance to go early, so if you find it boring, you can still do something else worthwhile; or you can carouse for the duration, should the soiree prove to be as enjoyable as it has been during the past several years.

Beverages will be provided, but you've got to bring an hors d'oeuvre or a dessert. If you are interested in helping out, call Joyce Gravlee (724-3982), Martha Harper (722-2641) or Stephanie "10-Mile" Mitchell (722-6925).

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

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ZONING --THE HOTTEST TOPIC SINCE THE NUCLEAR FREEZE

*The main topic for discussion at your Board's November monthly meeting was, of course, zoning. Some heartening news was that there is a attempt afoot by a property owner to "back-zone" the tract of land on which sits the "Villa Rosa" house, near the intersection of Summit and West End Blvd. This proposal is scheduled to go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment on December 10th, at which time the petitioner is rumored to be asking for a change from B-3 to R-1 for that location.

The Association's Board unanimously approved of a motion to support this back-zoning effort. We feel that it will enhance the residential property nearby, without doing any harm whatsoever to the commercial locations in that part of the West End.

*A new proposal emanating from the county Planning Board was tentatively described at the meeting. Apparently, there is a move afoot to freeze the use of residential tracts in what are now R-1 zones, while creating a special zone classification (O-I? I-O?) for commercial tracts in those same areas. While everyone was a bit vague as to the specifics, your Board hopes that the effect of this proposal will be to keep present residential uses of buildings in the R-1 zones as residences, whether they be single- or multi-. There would be no threat to users of commercial properties in R-1 zones that their present uses would be prohibited or even challenged in any way; it seems evident that Grandfather Clause is alive and well in Forsyth County.

* The terms of Rence Callahan and Jonathon Edwards on the Zoning Board are about to expire. These two members have generally supported positions advocated by your association, and they have always listened to our points of view, even if they considered us to be off-base. Your Board unanimously supported a motion to let the powers-that-be know the West End Association backs the renominations of Callahan and Edwards.

* The application for a front-width variance of the Bitting House property on Fourth Street again consumed fervent discussion at the monthly meeting. Efforts to drum up support among West Enders for our opposition to the request and refinement of our positions before the Zoning Board marked the session.

*The next event was the Zoning Board meeting itself in City Hall on November 17th. At that meeting, about a half-dozen mobile home requests preceeded the Fultz case. When that case came up, Charles Freeman, the chairman of the Board, excused himself from the case, without offering any public explanation. Knowledgeable observers were aware, however, that it was Freeman himself who was the real estate agent who advised Fultz that the property could be used for commercial purposes.

Speaking on his own behalf, Fultz cited his good-faith reliance on the advice he received at the time of purchasing the property that it could be used commercially; he also described the rehabilitation he has done for the building. He described the lot as being "pie-shaped," pointing out that if it could be squared-up in some way there would be no width problem. He argued that his proposed uses would be less intensive than present use as an all-apartment facility. He claimed to have considerable support from individuals throughout the West End, despite the official opposition by the Association he knew he was facing that day. His theme was that his mixed commercial-residential use and the physical improvements would enhance the nearby properties.



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On the other side of the argument (as well as the other side of this sheet of paper) were the spokesmen for the near-by residents and the Association. Warren Sparrow, who lives a few houses down the street, led off. He asked for the people in the audience who had shown up in opposition to the variance request to stand. Thirteen adults, two teenagers and two little kids arose from their seats, taking the opportunity not only to make their positions noticed but also to stretch their legs. Sparrow cited the 1972 back-zoning of considerable portions of the West End by the Board of Aldermen, that this unusual move was done with many risks attendant, but in the faith that West Enders would make something of their own neighborhood. He suggested that the resurgence of this neighborhood as a choice place to live and raise families has been the direct result of the official decision to provide residential zones in this area, and he urged the Board not to undo this progress, but to continue insisting on the integrity of the 1972 zoning scheme, just as it did two months previously in the Gwyn request for a front-width variance a few houses down Fourth Street.

Your Association's President, Glen Gravlee, argued that the proposed commercial use of the Bitting House is not in harmony with preserving and enhancing the predominantly residential character of the West End. He pointed out that "prime downtown office space lies fallow while businesses seek to move into the West End." He cited the Planning Board's proposed R-1/O-I plan as being in harmony with our opposition to Fultz's variance, as well as the importance of center-city residential development to the Crane Associates comprehensive plan that Forsyth County has paid so much to put together. Glen also pointed out that owners of residences also have sunk considerable investments into their properties, which were as valid as commercial investments and perhaps more significant to the investors.

David Albertson, another nearby resident as well as a member of your Board, offered himself as an example of someone who has recently purchased a multi-family dwelling and has invested considerably in it to make it into a single-family dwelling. He asserted that there are many more people besides himself who are willing and able to make this type of investment, so that the transformation from multi-family to commercial use is not an inevitable one.

During his opportunity for rebuttal, Fultz insisted that he had received expressions of support from West Enders, and he quoted from the September newsletter as a tangible example of that support. This made it advisable for the imbecile who generally writes your newsletter to surrebut this evidence by quoting from the October newsletter, in which the neighborhood first expressed its official opposition to the variance request. Said imbecile also suggested that Mr. Fultz was not faced with an either/or choice between commercial and single-family use, as he had been arguing, but that he could still rehabilitate the property as a multi-family residence, which he is encouraged to do. (Editorial comment: Said imbecile further suspects that Mr. Fultz is confusing the genuine approval and gratitude individuals in this neighborhood feel (for the enormous face-lifting he has done for the Bitting House) with approval of his scheme to use a portion of the premises for an office.) After a couple of more surrebuttals by Gravlee and Fultz on the impact of parking and traffic flows in that area, the question was put to the Zoning Board: What y'all gon' do?

The Board did an unusual thing at that point -- it huddled together for a lengthy discussion which reflected the difficulty of the decision. At one point, the Board asks the people who had spoken whether or not a compromise could be worked out; opponents of the variance took the position that a compromise would result only in a variance, and choose to maintain their opposition.

(Continued) Shortly thereafter, a motion was made to oppose the requested variance, and it passed three votes to two (Vaughn, Edwards and Callahan FOR; Hartsell and Griggs AGAINST). Now, the thing to do, perhaps, is to help Mr. Fultz work out an economically attractive way of continuing to rehabilitate the premises as a multi-family residence.

MONEY

There was also discussion at the November Board meeting about money, that other topic that just will not go away. Many of you who are now receiving this newsletter have never paid your 1983 dues. While it is desirable to send the newsletter to as many residents as possible, it is more desirable to restrict the mailing to those people in this neighborhood whose dues help pay for the newsletter as well as for other Association activities. 1984 dues come due in January -- you will receive a bill and a solicitation for your continued (or new) membership in the Association.

FEATURED ADVERTISERS FOR DECEMBER

CITY BEVERAGE COMPANY -- 908 Burke Street -- has an abundant selection of foreign and domestic wines and beer. Among the gift suggestions are handsome four and five-bottle gift packs (some wooden cases) of wine at various prices under \$25.00. There are gift packs of imported beer with steins and/or unique openers for under \$15.00. Plus ice and mixers and draft beer coolers and everything but the people for your party. City Beverage is open 9 A.M. to 10 P.M., six days a week.

WEST END CAFE --4th Street @ Brookstown -- is a great place to meet your friends on a chilly evening to warm yourselves with their delicious hot soups or spicy chili. The West End Cafe opens for lunch and offers its full menu of quality deli food until 9 P.M., Monday thru Friday. Remember -- the Cafe has all items ready for take-out. When you are pushed for time, call them at 723-4774, and your order will be ready and waiting.

ABNER'S SHOE REPAIR -- 833 Burke Street -- located between Brookstown and Fourth, Abner's is open between 8:30 and 6:00, Monday through Friday, and until noon on Saturdays. Abner Gonzalez learned his trade in his native Colombia and developed it in Maine and New York before opening his store here in October. He has the machinery and skills to work with all leather products, including handbags, luggage and orthopedic shoes. His prices are competitive, his service is prompt, and his work is of the highest quality.

You'll note that we have added more "commercial members" as newsletter advertisers this month, and we welcome Abner's, Solomon's Antiques and 848 West Fifth to these pages. We urge you to begin your Christmas shopping with all of the advertisers who appear monthly in the West Ender. The best gift buys might well be right here in your neighborhood.

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