

DEPARTMENT OF CITY CLERK

CITY HALL

MARCH 12, 1986

The Committee on Urban Redevelopment Renewal and Planning, meets this day in the Department of City Clerk, City Hall.

Present: Councilman Thomas F. O'Connor, Jr., Chairman, Councilwoman Brassil and Councilman Dillon.

Also present are Edward C. Clifton, City Solicitor, John C. Simmons, Director of Administration and Michael R. Clement, Assistant Clerk.

RELATIVE TO RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE COMMITTEE ON URBAN REDEVELOPMENT RENEWAL AND PLANNING TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SOUTH PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY BOARD AS IT RELATES TO ITS ROLE AS ADVISORY TO THE PROVIDENCE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND REQUIRING ALL RELEVANT AGENCIES OF THE CITY TO COOPERATE WITH SAID INVESTIGATION.

Councilman O'Connor informs those present that he and the committee have conducted an investigation relative to the above resolution, and the committee has concluded the following steps be taken and refer to both the South Providence Community Board and the Providence Redevelopment Agency. The recommendations are listed below:

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON URBAN REDEVELOPMENT RENEWAL AND PLANNING
ON INVESTIGATION OF CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE
SOUTH PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY BOARD

On February 7 the Committee on Urban Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning was authorized to conduct an investigation into the conduct and administration of the SPCB based on complaints of current and former members. The Committee held 3 meetings at which it received testimony from those complaining as well as others concerned with the issue.

The complaints had centered around the manner in which meetings were conducted, who participated and whether the organizations by-laws were being followed.

The chief administrator of the organization, its President, was invited to give testimony and refused to cooperate.

During testimony it became evident that several areas of concern had substantial merit. Statements to the effect that the by-laws of the organization were consistently and flagrantly violated were confirmed by substantially all who testified.

Persistent problems of communication between the board and the PRA were also raised as a point of concern and there appeared to be some merit to that argument bolstered by the disorganization of the leadership of the board.

In addition it can be said that the board failed as a whole to focus on the issue-oriented aspects of redevelopment which was the purpose for which the board was established. In essence, under the board's leadership, it delved into matters other than those specifically concerned with its project area commitments to Redevelopment.

On examination of testimony it is found that regular meetings were not held and regular notification was not given to board members as required by the by-laws. In addition the community concerned was not on the whole given an opportunity to participate or even to be made aware of what decisions were being made on their behalf.

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It is also found that during the conduct of meetings members were treated with extreme disrespect and in some cases were subjected to physical and verbal intimidation.

On the basis of testimony received the Committee on URRP makes the following recommendations:

1. Organization

That the by-laws of the organization be amended to allow for a smaller board. The current board is much too large at 80 slots which makes it difficult to conduct business in a reasonable fashion.

That the current established quorum be amended to reflect greater participation of the smaller board. The current policy of allowing a quorum to be established at 10% of board membership is ludicrous, fraught with opportunities for abuse and consequent decision making by a very small number of people. For instance, 10% of current membership, if it were at 80, would be 8 people. We suggest that if total membership were established at 40, a quorum could reasonably be established for action on any issue before the board at 45% or 18 members. The normal quorum for most deliberative and/or community groups is a simple majority or half plus one. Understanding the delay that can ensue when a quorum is not reached for action is reason for establishing a quorum at a lesser number.

That at its next election in November of 86, the board hold its organizational meeting on time and in accordance with its by-laws.

That the board should do all in its power to involve a wider number of residents in the community by not only advertising in the newspaper since many residents never read the newspaper or by advertising on radio station WBRU, which not all of the residents of the city listen to or if they do, may not listen to all day on Sunday, but by distributing flyers door to door within the neighborhood.

That the membership on the Board be restricted to residents of Upper South Providence since that is the area the board is recognized to be advising for. Provision can be made for others representing organizations within the community and those with businesses or non-residents owning property within the community to have input but the overwhelming majority should (must) be residents from Upper South Providence. The board should not be dominated either in its leadership or its composition by those from outside Upper South Providence.

2. Meetings:

That meetings be held in a centrally located established consistent location with proper and consistent notification of members and the residents of the neighborhood.

That agendas for meetings be established and followed to enhance the probability of completing tasks in a timely manner.

That minutes of meetings be kept showing attendance and action taken by the board on issues relevant to the agenda.

That the chairman of the meeting allow for full interaction with and by members of the board without exception or discrimination.

That private meetings with agencies such as the PRA or DPD be authorized or ratified by the board at its ratified or duly authorized and recorded meetings, and that any agreement reached in such forum be reviewed and approved of by the board or such agreement shall be null and void.

That whenever such private meetings shall be necessary, it shall be attended by the president and either the secretary or the treasurer of the organization so as to allow for differing viewpoints in relaying information to the board at its meetings. This is a standard precaution against misinterpretation.

3. Communications:

That all communications with individuals or agencies on behalf of the board be approved by the board as to content and intention at its regular and duly authorized and recorded meetings.

That all communications be drafted and posted by the duly elected secretary of the board on behalf of the board.

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That any and all individual opinions or communications by board members be so noted as such so as to distinguish between when a member of the board acts of his/her own accord as opposed to an official action of the board.

4. PRA

That the PRA require that advisory committees appearing before it supply copies of minutes of meetings at which actions or recommendations to the PRA have been taken.

That the PRA require PAC to provide updated current list of members along with its by-laws on a yearly basis subject to an established date.

5. General:

The committee recognizes and sincerely regrets that certain actions taken by certain individuals on the SPCB, as related to us in testimony, have contributed to an atmosphere of intimidation and certainly have placed severe limitations on the boards ability to be effective in acting on behalf of the Upper South Providence Community.

Based on some of the testimony, certainly it could be argued that recommendations more severe were in fact in order. However, there seemed to be a strong feeling that given the recent election particularly of several new officers of the board, that the SPCB ought to be given an opportunity to correct the inequities that exist and to move toward representing the Upper South Providence Community more effectively and efficiently on matters of Redevelopment. We concur in providing that opportunity, but feel strongly that unlimited opportunity is not in order given the circumstances.

The committee highly recommends to the PRA that the South Providence Community Board be placed on Probation until such time as it can demonstrate its willingness and determination to correct the complaints attested to in testimony and implements the recommendations provided herein. The committee suggests the probationary period extend to the next scheduled election of officers in November of this year and that in the interim all minutes of meetings and attendance of each of its meetings and actions taken thereon be submitted on a regular basis to the PRA as proof of implementation, and that if upon reexamination it is found that the boards inappropriate and detrimental conduct and administration continues that the SPCB be terminated from recognition as representing the Upper South Providence neighborhood on matters concerning redevelopment and that another group be certified and recognized in its place.

We feel this is a fair assessment and equitable resolution to the complaints brought before us and urge those involved to comply for the good of the Upper South Providence Community.

For the Committee on Urban Redevelopment,
Renewal and Planning

Thomas F. O'Connor, Chairman

cc: City Council
City Solicitor
PRA
DPD
Mayor's Office
SPCB
Committee Members on URRP
Providence Journal c/o Thomas Morgan

Chairman O'Connor states that if there are no questions by the members he would recommend that the report be transferred to the City Council as being received and that the said investigation is hereby closed.

On motion of Councilman Dillon, seconded by Councilwoman Brassil, it is voted to transfer the said report to the City Council as being received and that the investigation is hereby closed.

RELATIVE TO RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE NATIONAL GUARD TO

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CAUSE THE CHAIN LINK FENCE, ERECTED ALONG THE CRANSTON STREET ARMORY, TO BE REMOVED.

Chairman O'Connor informs the members present, that he has invited a representative from the National Guard, along with area residents and the sponsors of this resolution in order that we may resolve this controversial fence issue, but I have been informed by the clerk, that Major John W. Kiley, has refused to send a representative here to the meeting.

After some lengthy discussion on the above matter, which is available on tape (verbatim) it was then put to a motion for passage to the City Council.

On motion of Councilman Dillon, seconded by Councilwoman Brassil, it is voted to recommend passage to the City Council.

Adjournment taken at 7:50 o'clock P.M.

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[Signature]

Michael R. Clement
ASSISTANT CLERK

Compared

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