

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
February 23rd, 2016, 5:30 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS,
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL

The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a Special Called Meeting to hear an update for Abilene Neighborhood Initiative. Mayor Norm Archibald was present and presiding with Councilmen Shane Price, Jay Hardaway, Steve Savage, Anthony Williams, and Bruce Kreitler. Councilmen Kyle McAlister was absent. Also present were City Manager Robert Hanna, Interim City Attorney Stanley Smith, City Secretary Danette Dunlap, and various other members of staff.

The Mayor led the pledge to the United States Flag and the Texas Flag.

Stan Standridge Chief of Police briefed the council on the Abilene Neighborhood Initiative known as ANI.

ANI – Program, Philosophy, or an Approach...

1. Program – a planned series of future events, items, or performances; or, arrange according to a plan or schedule.
2. Philosophy – the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence.
3. Approach – a way of dealing with something.

ANI – A philosophical, programmatic approach to revitalization...

In 2008, after a lengthy review of the City's Land Use Plan, Council Member Williams engaged the community and Police Administration to discuss intentional efforts to revitalize neighborhoods.

The intent was to listen to the community on what issues were important to them. From these discussions, five focus neighborhoods were identified and the Abilene Neighborhood Initiative (ANI) was born.

1. Elevate the quality of life in the ANI neighborhoods; and
2. Engage community partners, non-profits, churches and others to invest in the initiative; and
3. Encourage redevelopment in the ANI neighborhoods and the core of the City.

Five Focus Neighborhoods...

Carver, Stevenson, Alameda, Holiday Hills, and Butternut / Sycamore

Alameda Addition...

In 2008, staff met with community pastors at New Light Baptist Church. This initial meeting spurred momentum for a second meeting with the Alameda Addition neighborhood on August 12, 2009 in the New Haven Community Church. There was standing room only.

The City acted on concerns voiced by the Alameda Addition neighborhood.

In one year's time, crime in the Alameda Addition fell dramatically. Other quality of life issues were addressed, and are still being addressed in 2016.

Changing the way we Police...

- A key lesson that is integral to ANI was that Police needed to change the way they police:
- Increase a sense of ownership among police officers and residents; a more than "40 hour mentality."
- Improve relationships with residents, clergy, business owners, and civic groups.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Create intentional plans to reduce crime and the fear of crime; and allocate resource to accomplish the plan.
- Support and reinforce ANI's philosophical programmatic approach to community revitalization.
- Conduct Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats assessment of the neighborhood.
- Be intentional – giving officers random expectations will produce random results.
- Respond and engage with citizens, and refer to other City agencies if needed.

A case study: Holiday Hills...

- On August 6, 2012, at 5:25 pm, there were multiple shots in the area of 5300 North 9th.
- The Police Department received one call on this shooting, which happened to be the mother of the child who was shot. No other resident called, although there were witnesses.
- That phone call was from inside of the vehicle where a 12 year old boy was shot in the head.
- City met with community members in September and October, 2009.
- Police Association conducted back to school backpack drives and snow-cone and hot dog give-a-ways on several dates.
- Criminal activity began to decrease.
- Citizens began to call when they heard or saw something that appeared suspicious.
- The citizens in this neighborhood began to take their neighborhood back.
- Active Citizenship was fostered.
- In 2012 there were 78 crimes. Of those there were seven that were violent in nature.
- In 2013 there were 39 crimes. Of these there were three that were violent in nature.
- That is a 50% decrease in overall crime and a 57% decrease in violent crime in this area.

ANI – more progress...

- Aug 2011 - Carver continues their work and is classified as a Neighborhood Association
- Apr 2013 - Alameda continues their work and obtained City classification as a Neighborhood Association
- Oct 2014 - Sidewalk granting greater access for residents in Stevenson is constructed from EN 10th to E Hwy 80
- 2014 - Restroom facilities are added to Lee Park near Holiday Hills neighborhood
- 2015 – Cobb Park neighborhood meets to discuss concerns and continues with leadership committee

City Manager Robert Hanna briefed the council on the following:

Future Plans...

- 1.) Discuss CDBG opportunities
- 2.) Discuss Neighborhood revitalization
- 3.) Discuss Town West neighborhood pilot

CDBG Opportunities...

- We need to have a discussion on how we use our CDBG and HOME funds.
- Federal use guidelines change as federal policy changes. What we could do in the past may not be allowed in the present, or the future.
- This is a discussion much broader and more complex than we can accomplish tonight.
- Moreover, changes to the CDBG and HOME fund use must go through a strictly controlled process that cultivates community involvement.
- We should follow the principles of ANI and engage outside stakeholders in this discussion for it to be meaningful – Housing Authority, neighborhood associations, churches, community leaders, etc .

Neighborhood Revitalization...

- Our urban housing core is in decline. We need to be intentional in our efforts to bring it back.
- While CDBG and HOME funds are important, they come with many strings.
- We should explore alternative means to encourage private development.

1.) Develop neighborhood empowerment zones that correspond to each ANI neighborhood.

2.) Use the zones to encourage residential and commercial infill development through incentives and alternative development requirements.

3.) Seek partnerships with local banks for attractive financing offers for residential infill developers.

Neighborhood Empowerment Zones are authorized by the State of Texas under Chapter 378 of the Texas Local Government Code.

This tool has been effectively used in many communities to promote and encourage economic development in existing neighborhoods.

Examples of incentives within an empowerment zone include:

- 1.) Tax abatements (city only);
- 2.) Sales tax rebates (only City, no Type A);
- 3.) Waiver of impact fees;
- 4.) Waiver of utility connection fees;
- 5.) Waiver of building permit fees;
- 6.) Waiver of zoning and land development fees;
- 7.) Alternative construction methodologies and building materials;

Council and Staff discussion included: 1) Programs; 2) engage partners; 3) private sector; 4) 380 agreements; 5) incentives; and 6) Land Development Code .reference fees.

James Childers Assistant City Manager briefed the council on the Town West Pilot Program:

Town West Pilot Program: a unified approach...

- The City of Abilene will be partnering with the Town West Homeowner's Association to pilot an intensive City Services initiative in their target area
- This effort will focus on the code compliance, zoning/land use, and infrastructure quality issues that challenge the neighborhood's quality of life
- This effort will culminate with a neighborhood cleanup in April
- This concept can ultimately become the template to use on future ANI areas in addition to the efforts spearheaded by APD and key community partners

Council and Staff discussion included: 1) working together; 2) incentives; 3) communication (social media & apps); and 4) infill development.

Mayor Archibald opened a public comment period for those citizens that would like to speak.

- Glenn Weatherbee – Developer around Dyess Elementary and Hampton Hills Addition – issues with streets in that area
- Drew Bowen – support of ANI – Connecting Caring Communities
- Aaron Shaver – staff Connecting Caring Communities – support of ANI

Mayor closed the public comment period.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Danette Dunlap
City Secretary

Norm Archibald
Mayor