

## **#7**

### **RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Councilor Block supports the following Resolution.**

#### **Background**

Many residents of Newton are disenchanted with the process that their city government uses to collect input and feedback on large projects. Many feel that elected officials are not listening; that their views just don't matter; and that the city is not acting in the interests of the community. This cynicism discourages civic involvement and undermines trust in government.

The Planning and Development Department through the Community Engagement Manager can play a more constructive role engaging residents when major developments are proposed and when there is a continued pattern of development that people object to, e.g., the demolition of houses which are replaced by unusually large houses sometimes ironically referred to as "McMansions."

#### **The Role of the Community Engagement Manager**

The Community Engagement Manager, which is funded in account 511001 of the Planning and Development Department's budget, led the city's effort to involve residents in the Village Center rezoning ordinance adopted by the last session of the City Council. However, this position can and should have an ongoing role engaging neighborhood groups when a development proposal is being made which could have a significant impact on their neighborhood.

#### **Resolution**

Therefore, Councilor Block offers the following resolution:

That the job description of the Community Engagement Manager be expanded to include the following:

In coordination with the neighborhood elected officials, providing guidance and information regarding significant developments to residents in the area;

Contacting relevant neighborhood groups to discuss the continuation of a pattern of development that people object to;

Supporting the efforts of neighborhood groups to articulate the positive or negative impact on the neighborhood that a development might have;

Inviting the leadership of neighborhood groups to meet with the Planning and Development Department to articulate their concerns;

If no neighborhood group exists, then broadcast relevant information via existing media platforms and encourage the formation of an ad hoc neighborhood group;

Keeping the City Council's Community Dialogue Committee (or an alternate committee of the City Council) regularly informed regarding neighborhood engagement activities.