Georgetown Tiny House Village Community Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

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| CAC Name | Georgetown Tiny House Village |
| Date | Tuesday, September 10, 2019 |
| Meeting Location | St. Vincent de Paul, Georgetown |
| Call to Order (time) | 4:15pm |
| CAC Members in Attendance | Erik Maus, Bill Oliver, Barbara Grace Hill |
| Permitted Encampment Members in Attendance | Stacy Johnson, Hattie Rhodes, Chris McDaniel, Lorraine H, Donna Anderson |
| Operator Representatives in Attendance | Andrew Constantino/LIHI &GV, Scott Harris/LIHI CM |
| City of Seattle Staff in Attendance | Tom Van Bronkhorst/DON, Lisa Gustaveson/HSD |
| Recorder/Note Taker | Andrew Constantino |
| Previous Meeting Notes Approved (No or Yes/Date) | Yes/ August 22 |
| Previous Meeting Notes Posted (No or Yes/Date) | Yes / August 29 |

**Introductions and report from CAC members:**

Barbara reported on today’s Equitable Development & Renter Rights Committee of the City Council meeting @ City Hall about a proposed Bill by K Sawant. The Bill includes expanding Tiny House Villages to 40 in King County and clarification on how villages may be able to do an annual renewal on their stay. Council members Sawant and Juarez listened to public comment and testimony from villagers from Georgetown (GV), Othello, Whittier Heights and Camp Second Chance (C2C) including 3 letters submitted by Hattie Rhoades from GV, attached. Next representatives from LIHI – Sharon Lee, Eric site manager for C2C, Melinda Nickels volunteer and Barbara Hill GV CAC member discussed the overall success of the villages, the continued democratically run day-to-day operations of C2C, the positive outcomes of volunteers who build the villages and the community building that not only occurs within the village to stabilize residents but also the participation by the villagers in the neighborhood at events and neighborhood clean-ups. The panel agreed that more villages in more neighborhoods was a good idea not only because the villages were a good, dignified, cost effective way to help those who are homeless but also because they serve to break down myths about homelessness for those that take the time to interact and get to know each other.

Barbara was asked by councilperson Juarez if she felt there was a connection between rising Georgetown crime rates and the establishment of the GV. Barbara observed that the village happened to come at the same time as the as economic growth in the city (largely) due to Amazon which created a marked shortage of affordable housing resulting in a rapid increase in people living in RV’s and tents. This created an influx of RV’s and unsanctioned encampments into the community and with that desperation, crime, but no evidence that it was connected to the village.

**Further discussion at the CAC meeting included:**

Hattie made an important point that the “jungle” was also swept around the same time as the creation of the village, displacing more people into the area, perhaps feeding into the rise in visible homelessness in the Georgetown neighborhood.

Andrew mentioned that for years he has viewed neighborhood door cams (when shared on the Facebook group because of theft) to be sure no villagers are involved, only one such incident was seen and then was reported. He also pointed out that the village itself creates an ‘activated’ area around the flume that might otherwise not feel as safe.

**HSD input on agenda for September 16th meeting:**

Lisa Gustaveson/HSD reported that HSD is very focused on the upcoming GCC community meeting on the 16th. Staff has been making sure that Director Johnson is prepared for their presentation. The city will be ready to discuss the future of the village and the future of the property. As it stands now the village will close unless one of two things happen:

1. A church comes forward to sponsor the village, which is being sought by LIHI
2. The Georgetown community makes it clear to Mayor Durkan that they’d like the village to stay. Tom/DON suggested letters to be sent from individuals and the various Georgetown associations (Safety Task Force, Arts, GCC, etc.) if they are in support of the village staying before the end of October.

End of March 2020 marks the end of the 3rd year of the village. The original agreement was for 2 years at most and we will be well beyond that. The city realizes that losing capacity is not an option but must act according to their agreements. If the village is phased out, they are committed to finding existing villagers housing or other shelter resources. The city will have a phase out plan in place by the end of October and is moving forward with the assumption that the village will be phased out next year, if the Georgetown neighborhood wanted to keep the village that could influence the decision. The city’s impression is that the neighborhood is divided on this issue. Barbara reminded all of the January 2019 Community Survey (attached) that showed 71% of residents were in favor of keeping the village. Lisa said letters can also be sent to: [homelessness@seattle.gov](file:///C:\Users\jenkinl\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\HQVL90DV\homelessness@seattle.gov)

CAC members present discussed their feelings on the village and agreed to draft a letter of support that the village continue.

Tom Van Bronkhorst/DON suggested that a large village turnout at the GCC can make it harder for people to express concerns and make it feel more like a pep rally. Barbara suggested that anyone is welcome to attend the meeting and not have to worry about other people’s feelings, that there should be room for all opinions. She asked the HSD and DON for continued community conversations and engagement in planning any future social services. If the village does close does the city feel they can hand us other services? The ‘motel culture’ on Marginal is seen as far more negative/problematic than the village by many. Is that on the city radar at all?

**Report on Village Operations/Development**

Hattie (village bookkeeper) reports: 61 people (37 men, 23 women, 1 child, 12 couples).

There were 3 911 calls, all medical, 0 bars.

9 Villagers worked/volunteered this weekend at the San Gennaro Italian Festival in Georgetown. Thank you so much to the organizers for giving this opportunity!

Party this past Sunday, celebrating the 6 month winter extension on the village and our new Gatehouse. The volunteers who built it prepared food and it was well attended!

The villagers are very focused on what will be presented on the 16th about the future of the village. Lots of anxiety about it.

City inspections of the village site will also be happening on the 16th.

New villagers have joined us in the past 2 weeks.

**Case Management Report**

Scott distributes a physical copy of his report to those present. 2 recent exits, both to permanent housing. Both just needed help resolving minor legal issues and acquiring driver’s licenses. Once this was done both were working and able to take all the next steps on their own.

Much tighter restrictions now on budget. Narrower definitions on what qualifies as ‘providing services’, this can be both good and frustrating. An example of frustration is being unable to pay for transportation to medical appointments. Lisa/DON says she will look into some of Scott’s specific concerns.

**Next CAC is October 8th at 4pm at St Vincent de Paul**

**Adjournment: 5:15 pm**

**Attachments: Letters by Georgetown Village residents presented to City Councilmembers Sept. 10, 2019**

**Phillip’s Letter**

My name is Phillip and I have been out there. My lady and I have been homeless for almost 5 years. Being homeless is not a Walt Disney World Adventure. Nothing nice about living in cubby holes and bedbug filled shelters. I have had to sleep on buses, at the airport, on sidewalks and park benches. In order for us to change things in life we had to move to a tiny house village and we landed at Georgetown. Georgetown T.H.V. is a wonderful place. The people are great. Everyone treats each other with utmost respect and respect isn’t something you get a lot of living on the streets. We have 24 hour security that villagers all do themselves for the safety of all. My lady and I arrived here during the coldest time of the year. She and I are both disabled and find it difficult to get around but Georgetown made sure we had access to everything so we could physically live. We need this place. It’s the first place in 61 years of living, since I was a child, that has felt anything like a home. We are trying to find permanent housing but currently I am between surgeries for my back and I use a wheelchair and my lady uses a walker so it can be hard to get around. Georgetown Tiny House Village is here for us right now. We need privacy just like everyone else but we also have a community making sure we are all good too. We need everyone in need to have a way to live at a tiny house village. Thank you for your time to listen.

**What Georgetown Tiny House Village Means to Me**

By James Walker

To Whom It May Concern,

I’m writing this piece in response to a request from our village administrator, Andrew Constantino. It gives me joy to talk about what ‘camp’ has meant to me. I’m a cheerfully recovering crack addict. Fifteen months ago I was wearing out my welcome on friends’ couches and the “shelter world” looked like the next step. I’m a middle class kid with a college degree who’d worked in enterprise level sales but my habit had gotten so bad I couldn’t hold down a job. I was able to get space at St. John’s United Lutheran Church. They have a daylight basement and plenty of room for a mat to sleep dorm style, BUT at 7am you are on your own, no place of your own, a cubby hole of storage, but certainly a nice place to stay. On a typical day, I had to commute from St. John’s to get a meal, commute to another place to do laundry. Often it would take until noon to get breakfast and laundry done, grateful as I was to have these services. I knew as I faced homelessness, if I was EVER going to return to the middle class, sobriety was the only reasonable path. I started attending support meetings and got someone to act as a sponsor. Also, I hit the ground running and made it my job to find the best shelter I could. First came St. Johns but I kept asking questions and visiting people. Enter Andrew Constantino and the Tiny House Village life. Andrew toured me around the Georgetown village and….WOW. A little place of my own to BE and store things. Laundry facilities. An atmosphere of non drug use. This seemed like a better alternative than sober living which seemed a little forced and over structured. I called EVERY day to seek an opening. Georgetown has been my Cliffside Malibu. I’m out of my horrid lonely studio apartment and I am in community. I don’t think I’m missing out on that boating with Gary Busey or hanging with Dr. Drew. With reduced economic stress, I am now going to complete a music album I’ve been working on for 7 years...

**Jenny’s letter**

My name is Jenny and I have been homeless on and off for about 25 years. Homelessness happens for a lot of different reasons. Financial, or poor domestic situation, or just falling through the cracks of life. I never got used to living in cubby holes or in cardboard boxes on a sidewalk, or in homeless shelters. People have spit on me when they have walked by. I have been laughed at because my clothes are dirty or my hair is not perfect. Being without a place to call home was the hardest thing i think life has thrown at me. My fiancé and I moved to Georgetown tiny house village awhile ago and we absolutely love it. I deal with mental illness and serious physical disabilities. I have been able to work though some of my issues by having a private place of my own where sometimes a good cry is all I needed. Georgetown has a few rules to follow but it is ‘common sense’ stuff and everyone pitches in by doing chores. It is an incredible place and now with having some foundation underneath us we have grown up a lot. We are more responsible now. I have started telling others that you don’t have to be living in horrible conditions; go find a tiny house village to stay in and begin to grow as a responsible citizen again. It is a really nice feeling. We need more villages. Thank you for letting me share my personal story with you.