

Emma Dickinson/Orchard Homes NC
General Meeting Minutes from Monday, October 5, 2009

At first blush, it might look like not much has been happening in our neighborhood lately. Dig a little deeper, however, and you discover a lot has been going on behind the scenes. Here's some of the highlights we talked about at our fall meeting on Monday night...

1. First, Dave Shaw from Parks and Rec talked about the status of the Milwaukee Trail. The Milwaukee Trail will be a new path allowing people to bike / walk / run from Reserve Street to Russell (and to connect to other major trails from there). Fine, you say, but haven't we been talking about this for a long time now? What's the hold up?

Great questions. As you probably know, the Milwaukee Trail was originally a railroad right of way. In the 1970's the railroad went bankrupt and the right of way was sold back to adjacent landowners. This means is that before the city can build a trail system, all the right-of-ways need to be individually re-acquired. And that's what we've been working on.

Over the past two years, the city and our neighborhood leaders have been working to acquire access rights for the trail - we've made significant progress in the past 6 months, and there are only handful still to acquire. Parks & Rec is moving into the "engineering and design" phase (over the winter), with the goal of breaking ground in the spring. The trail will be paved asphalt, and it should be ready to use by next summer. Woo hoo!

2. Second, what's the status of Lafray Park (off River Road). Here's the good news: the grass and trees are in, the sidewalks are mostly paved (and the rest should happen this fall), the playground is the next big thing. We had hoped to have something in this past summer. And... it didn't happen. Here's what we've discovered. The \$30K we had to work with for purchasing a play set didn't really go far enough to build a decent playset. And so we've gone looking for additional funds.

The good news is that there's a very good chance we'll have quite a bit more money to work with (up to \$100K). In Jan/Feb of 2010, we'll be putting out bids for playground equipment; the goal is for an April/June install. So again, it should be ready to use by next summer. Woo hoo!

3. Third, once we get the new trail and park, we want to keep them in great shape. And the way we'd like to do this is by creating Citizen Groups! Great! So, um, what's a citizen group?

Another great question! A citizen group is simply a group of volunteers that agree to use the park or trail at least twice a month. Walk the trail. Play in the park. Whatever. Be eyes and ears. Keep things clean. Let someone know if something's broken or missing. Brainstorm on how to make things better. That's it! It's easy to do, and it'll make a big difference. If this is something that interests you, please let us know!

4. Name change - in the past, we've been known as the "Emma Dickinson / Orchard Homes Neighborhood." Ouch, that's a mouthful. Worse, it's no longer very accurate or meaningful -

Orchard Homes isn't really a part of our neighborhood any more, and Emma Dickinson school no longer exists (it's now the Lifelong Learning Center).

SO... we voted on a proposed name change to "River Road Neighborhood". The motion passed. The name is changed. We'll work on getting the website updated...

5. We also talked about sidewalks - this has been a recurring theme over the past several years. We're seeing a lot more families with young kids in our neighborhood, and there's an increasing concern that many of our roads here are unsafe. If we want to get sidewalks though, we really need someone who's passionate about this issue to join the leadership team and help us start figuring out how to tackle this next. If that intrigues you, please talk to us...

6. Elections - we voted on a lot of new leaders:

- Jeremy Flesch (Chair)
- Christian Cryder (Vice-chair)
- Mike Hathaway (Community Forum Rep)
- Kate Boyer (Secretary)
- Katie Mickey (Treasurer)
- Stephanie McCullough (Communications)
- Dax Kuehn (Membership)
- Andrea Kuehn, Cody Klaus, Toya Chaffee (Special Projects)