

**Buckingham Lake Neighborhood Association (BLNA)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 15, 2016**

The meeting was held at the Bethany Reformed Church, 760 New Scotland Avenue, Albany, New York on Sunday, May 15, 2016 at 4:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Dan Sleasman, President of the Buckingham Lake Neighborhood Association (BLNA), at 4:06 p.m.

Dan Sleasman welcomed those in attendance and introduced Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan and her presentation entitled, "Neighborhood Association Presentation, City of Albany, State of New York." Mayor Sheehan began the presentation by thanking the members for creating the Buckingham Lake Neighborhood Association (BLNA) and saying the communication between all the Albany neighborhood associations and the City is critical. Mayor Sheehan said that she is a big supporter of neighborhood associations and that she presents frequently to them in addition to working with neighborhood schools, families and businesses on a variety of quality of life issues for the City of Albany.

Mayor Sheehan's presentation included information on the following four major areas of focus by the administration within the City:

1. Public safety for the residents and businesses in the City takes precedence.
2. Fire service and emergency response is a major focus. A new grant is paying for 15 positions, saving money and adding much needed personnel.
3. Service delivery to those in need to prevent recidivism is being addressed.
4. Thriving neighborhoods with a focus on housing affordability and strong commercial districts is critical throughout the City. Mayor Sheehan cited many examples of the work being done by her administration in the City of Albany, including:
  - a. Park South, a mixed income neighborhood where there used to be high crime
  - b. The Oak Street park opening, which used to be a high poverty area.
  - c. West Hill and the West end is being transformed from a weed infested lot into a solid urban area.
  - d. North Swan Street park renovations has transformed that area into housing for artists, both public and studio space. There will also be a re-paving of Swan Street with more storm drains.
  - e. The Lincoln Park steps and ramp have been completed, ensuring that the park is now fully accessible.
  - f. The Quail Street revitalization.

Mayor Sheehan stated that all of the above improvement projects were community driven and brought to the attention of the administration by the people in the City neighborhoods.

Mayor Sheehan discussed the following other initiatives taking place within the City:

1. Façade Improvement Program to help small businesses by getting matching grants for improvements.
2. Google Digital Capital and Broadband citywide. Albany has been named Google Tech City of 2016.
3. City Sustainability Initiative. The City has made a commitment to reduce the City's carbon footprint.
4. NYPA is paying for a City energy manager for 3 years. This represents a savings of \$750,000.
5. There is an open working environment now within the City departments. There is collaboration and departments working together like never before.
6. 200 Henry Johnson Blvd is becoming a "one-stop shop" with all the services people need.
7. Bloomberg Arts Grant for "Breathing" Lights (installation of lighting in abandoned buildings in the City).
8. More utilization of the Washington Park Lake House for community activities.
9. Working to improve downtown commercial space and storefronts, waterfront parks and areas. Re-zoning is happening all around the City.

Mayor Sheehan ended her presentation with the statement that we need to also remember to focus on the positive and all that the City of Albany has to offer. Mayor Sheehan told all in attendance to look on the City of Albany's website to keep current with all projects and initiatives going forward.

Dan Sleasman opened the meeting up to questions. The following questions were asked by members in attendance and answered by Mayor Sheehan.

1. There used to be two people doing maintenance on Buckingham Pond and now it's been cut to one. What can be done about this? Mayor Sheehan responded that the City now has maintenance zones and there are other who are responsible for the pond.
2. The slumlords don't take care of their properties in the City and are tax assessed lower. What can we do about this? Mayor Sheehan responded that this needs a legislative fix. Zoning needs to be looked at and the law needs to be changed.
3. The City is riddled with businesses that pay no taxes. Can we renegotiate the PILOT's in the City? Mayor Sheehan responded that she would love to have the neighborhoods involved in this issue because it is important that we raise this revenue.
4. There must be an interest in SUNY Albany students helping to keep neighborhoods clean. What do you think about this? Mayor Sheehan responded that there are some good partnerships with some of the schools having their students help to keep the neighborhoods clean, but again, there is a problem with slumlords and garbage in the City which the students can't help with and this needs to be addressed.

5. Can you tell how many hospital employees actually live in the City? Mayor Sheehan responded that it is hard to tell, but we do know that the lower wage jobs are held by people who live in the City.
6. Those of us who live on Buckingham Drive feel unsafe due to City traffic. What can be done to help educate these businesses and employees and also help with enforcement? Mayor Sheehan responded that the City is looking at speed “humps” and that she would consider stationing a patrol officer there during high traffic times.
7. What can be done about public smoking? There are lots of cigarette butts in the streets and people smoking at businesses. Mayor Sheehan said that she would look into this, but was unsure what could be done to prevent this.
8. Can we make the City speed limit 25 miles per hour? Mayor Sheehan responded that we cannot lower the speed limit without State legislation.
9. Do we have speed data regarding City drivers in our neighborhood? Dan Sleasman stated that we get 5,000 vehicles per day on Buckingham Drive and that a large percentage of those drivers are traveling over the speed limit. Buckingham Drive has become the “path of least resistance” for drivers to get out of the City and many of them are coming from St. Peter’s Hospital and Albany Medical Center.
10. The street lights have been out on Rafts Way for 4 months. What can be done about this? Mayor Sheehan responded that this needs to be fixed and that it is an infrastructure issue with the Department of General Services and Niagara Mohawk.
11. The bike lanes on Madison Avenue are impressive. Is there any talk of continuing these in our neighborhood? Mayor Sheehan stated that the City is looking at many ways to “calm the traffic down” including bike lanes and more sidewalks.
12. What’s happening with Family Promise? Dan Sleasman stated that the BLNA sent a letter of support to the organization and that the Association is looking into filing an Amicus Curiae brief on behalf of Family Promise as they go forward with their appeal of the last court decision.
13. Has a request for a second stop sign on Buckingham Drive been put in? Dan Sleasman responded that the request has been made and the City is looking into this on a temporary basis.
14. Is there an answer to the question how many lanes is New Scotland Avenue heading toward Buckingham Drive? Dan Sleasman stated that Chief Cox has said that the road is a two-lane road (one car on either side of the line) and it becomes a four-lane road at the traffic light at the top of Buckingham Drive. Chief Cox has stated that the road will be better demarcated.

Dan Sleasman introduced Ruth Pelham, who spoke about the Music Mobile program closing. Ms. Pelham will be working on the Music Mobile legacy program which will include cataloguing of photographs, models, etc. There will also be an oral history project.

Dan Sleasman stated that one of the BLNA's short term goals is to become a member of CANA, which would be achieved soon. Dan Sleasman also asked that the BLNA be officially recognized on the City of Albany website as the official association for our neighborhood, and stated that there are many long term goals for which the Association will need volunteers.

The meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Margie A. Sheehan, Secretary of the BLNA, 2016 term.