

Bobbie Walthall

To: David L. Corliss
Subject: RE: City Commission Meeting - 12/16/2014 - Regular Agenda Item #4

Mayor and Commissioners,

I am writing to respond to the ELNA Letter sent on Monday, December 15th, 2014 regarding "Full participation" in the 9th Street Corridor project.

At the November 18th City Commission meeting, KT Walsh, a Board Member of the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association, stated the following in regards to ELNA's authority to be the sole voice of the East Lawrence Neighborhood:

"We speak...We are the official neighborhood organization and we do speak for the neighborhood. We are the elected representatives....We are the representative body"

On, Monday, November 3rd, 2014 ELNA held it's 2014 election of board members via secret ballot. These are the results:

22 voting ELNA Members (2 were non-resident members)

13 Open Board Positions

14 Candidates for the open Board Positions

11 Board Members Re-elected, 1 board member retained position without vote, 2 new board members elected

14 Total Board Positions

***These results can be verified with the ELNA Coordinator, Lane Eisenbart at: eastlawrence@yahoo.com**

****Candidate information was not submitted before the election. There were no introductions or statements of qualifications by the candidates. Names were simply listed on a ballot.**

Jeff Crick from the City of Lawrence Confirmed that there is an estimated 2,250 residents in the East Lawrence Neighborhood. This means that there were only 7 non-board member residents of East Lawrence voting for the current ELNA Board which represents less than 0.312% of the residents in East Lawrence.

On, Monday, December 15th you received a letter from some members of ELNA which is associated with the agenda item before you.

The letter was not the product of a consensus vote amongst current ELNA Board Members and it was not voted on by the ELNA Board before being submitted for your consideration. Furthermore, all of the existing property owners, residents, and business owners along the 9th street corridor were not fully engaged to provide input into the content of the letter.

To respond to the specific requests of ELNA:

1) ELNA as a full partner must approve design plans before the plans go on to the city commission for the East 9th Street Corridor project.

Response - As established above, ELNA is not a representative body of East Lawrence residents. In addition, ELNA is a volunteer organization with no financial or legal accountability to taxpayers, residents, or even its members. Furthermore, ELNA has no liability insurance or professional credentials to serve in this capacity.

2) Two East Lawrence residents, selected by and accountable to ELNA, will be included as neighborhood specialists for the project. As part of the project management team they would be involved directly in shaping the engagement process and design plans, as well as helping coordinate all meeting times and agendas. These two positions should be paid at a living wage.

Response - As established above, ELNA is not a representative body of East Lawrence residents and does not have the authority to designate individuals to fill positions paid for from City funds. With no financial or legal accountability to taxpayers, ELNA has no authority to select or manage these so-called 'specialists'. Furthermore, El Dorado as a professional design firm with expertise in community engagement will be specifically contracted to provide this service. They have demonstrated, through their work on past projects, that they will engage the neighborhood in an appropriate manner and have indicated that they will seek input from neighborhood groups like ELNA to shape the engagement process.

3) ELNA will be granted funds to compensate for the time and expense of newsletter & extra communication expenses related to the East 9th Street Corridor project.

Response - ELNA has acted as a valuable resource for distributing information, and many residents do subscribe to the ELNA newsletter through membership to be updated on neighborhood activities and events. ELNA also provides a Facebook page that provides information about the neighborhood. ELNA currently receives Block Grant funds and depends on volunteer fundraising, membership dues, and donations for this very purpose.

This is an appropriate neighborhood role for ELNA. Because of the complexity of this project it is not unreasonable for ELNA to request modest financial support in helping with the distribution of information about the 9th street corridor process which will likely include working closely with El Dorado to shape that very process.

4) All proposals and present and future budgets related to the East 9th Street Corridor should be known and made publicly accessible.

Response - The City of Lawrence has a standard of public transparency and legal protocol to follow regarding the 9th Street Corridor project. As a resident and taxpayer I'm confident that City Staff and its contractors will continue to operate at this high standard going forward.

As a former Board Member of the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association I have serious concerns about ELNA's ability to speak for the neighborhood based on low participation rates at ELNA meetings and the lack of official solicitation of neighborhood opinion. ELNA's claim that it arrived to the conclusions of the letter before you through a process of 'consensus' are patently false. ELNA goes on to state:

"ELNA (East Lawrence Neighborhood Association) as the representative civic body of East Lawrence hold these shared values."

Response - As indicated above, based on it's own board election process, ELNA is not a representative civic body. Although the values listed may be shared by many residents of East Lawrence, ELNA has no legal authority to represent or speak for East Lawrence Residents.

As an East Lawrence resident and stakeholder in this process I ask that you move forward with the 9th Street Corridor process and contract with El Dorado as the lead design team with the good faith that they will engage East Lawrence Residents through inclusion in the design process. I also ask that you deny ELNA's requests #1 and #2, consider request #3 and continue to meet your legal obligations of transparency through request #4 of the letter sent from ELNA on December 15th, 2014.

Sincerely,

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