

MINUTES

PUBLIC INFORMATION PANEL MEETING

HOUSING RESOURCES COMMITTEE

June 16, 1967

The Public Information Panel met on Friday, June 16, 1967, at 1:30 p.m., in Mr. Cecil A. Alexander's office, Standard Federal Building. The following were present:

Mr. Dale Clark, WAGA-TV, Chairman Public Information Panel
Mr. Ernest Pharr, Atlanta Inquirer
Mr. Reese Cleghorn, Atlanta Journal
Mr. Jack Lange, Editor, Atlanta Magazine
Mr. Cecil A. Alexander, Chairman Housing Resources Committee
Mr. Ray Moore, WSB-TV

Mr. Jim Wood, WAOK, Vice-Chairman Public Information Panel, Mr. James L Townsend, Townsend & Associates, member Public Information Panel, and invited guests, Mr. Eugene Patterson, Editor Atlanta Constitution, and Mr. Thaddeus Stokes, Atlanta Daily World were not present at the meeting.

Mr. Dale Clark, Chairman of the Public Information Panel, presided. Mr. Clark gave the background of the Housing Resources Committee and told how the Public Information Panel was formed. He stated that this panel needed to tell the community what the problems of housing in Atlanta are. The HRC's recently prepared "White Paper" was discussed and the portion of this paper which pertained to the purpose of the Public Information Panel was explained. He also stated that he felt the "Problem Areas" which was discussed at the HRC Executive Group meeting would help to offer some concrete suggestions for solving housing problems in Atlanta. He also said that he felt that the Public Information Panel could only inform the public and not provide solutions as proposed in the "White Paper".

Mr. Cecil A. Alexander, Chairman, Housing Resources Committee, said that this was correct, but that a reporter in looking for a story might also find some places where low-income housing could be placed. He stated that one thing the news should play up now is the Rockdale Urban Renewal Area. A formal award was made to the successful bidder June 15, 1967. Another problem discussed was

Another problem discussed was HUD's refusal of any area of racial concentration, and the fact that HUD is not specific as to what "racial concentration" actually means.

Mr. Ray Moore, WSB-TV, asked Mr. Alexander to be more specific as to what the news can actually do about HUD and other such problems.

Mr. Alexander stated that the press should meet with HUD and get the full story and find out exactly what HUD wants and what HUD expects to get built. Mr. Alexander also stated that he would like to see some progress in locating low-income housing in the northeast and eastern areas of Atlanta.

Mr. Moore asked if the prices of land were not very high in the northeastern section?

Mr. Alexander explained that public housing can help but that the prices were high. He said that this Committee can do a study on this with help from FHA, HUD, and the real estate people, and then do an information series on these problems which are giving the housing program trouble. He also stated that he thought this Committee should find out what the problems are.

Mr. Clark asked if this Panel should be the one to do the spade work of digging up the opposition? He said that it might outline the activities for a program for everybody and give directions for what might be done. For example: radio public service announcements.

Mr. Moore said the most vulnerable areas are church's lack of involvement in this. He said that there are only two or three Negro churches actually involved as yet; that Wesley Homes Inc. is proposing to build in the Capitol Homes area and that this is not a real outlay of cash. The White churches are not involved at all as yet. He asked if anyone else knew of any others?

Mr. Reese Cleghorn, Atlanta Journal, said he did not.

Mr. Alexander said that the Unitarian was involved.

Mr. Cleghorn said that there was not much pushing to get the 221 d (3).

Mr. Clark said that the thought all the 221 d (3) was sales property.

Mr. Alexander explained that it could be built for non-profit and for limited dividend corporations. He said that one problem with the churches was that it was non-profit. Limited dividend has some appeal because for people with a big income it permits a substantial tax write off. He agreed that some effort toward informing the churches through the press should be made.

Mr. Cleghorn stated that he felt the press's job was to report the news and not to try to support one plan or another.

Mr. Alexander said that he believed that the education function is part of what this committee should be doing as well as reporting and that trying to find a platform is difficult.

Mr. Moore said that the press should not try to champion one plan or another and that when the press does this they lose their objectivity.

Mr. Clark said that he agreed; that this was not the purpose of this Committee. That it should not generate one particular project. He also said that this meeting was to share views with people who need to be in an up-to-date position as to the objectives of the HRC. Then it should get the news out to the people. If people know of the objectives this could lead to a solution.

Mr. Cleghorn stated that the town should know if the HRC is not moving as it should.

Mr. Moore said that if Mr. Alexander wants somebody to push his programs that this is what the Public Information Panel is for.

Mr. Cleghorn said that he felt it would be much better to hold an informal press conference off the record rather than as a committee.

Mr. Moore suggested that perhaps more public relations people were needed.

Mr. Clark suggested that a full-time publicist was needed to point out these problems to the public.

Mr. Alexander stated that he believed that a panel which involved HUD, FHA, HRC, and the Housing Authority would help, but the only platform or outlet for this is the civic clubs which are open to the press. These clubs are not against what is going on, they are just restricted. This panel should point out the problems of HUD of which the phases are: 1. economic phase 2. racial phase.

Mr. Clark explained that the problem is stimulation and suggesting a line of action to them. What our Committee's responsibility is, is to give the news media in Atlanta some kind of guide for help and exposure on these problems. He also asked if the news people on this Committee were knowledgeable enough about the problems.

Mr. Jack Lange, Editor, Atlanta Magazine, said that it would help to know who to talk to about certain areas.

Mr. Alexander stated that there were several people to whom he would talk if he were going to write a study of this program: the Mayor, Malcolm Jones, Cecil Alexander, the sub-committee heads, HUD, FHA, and the developers who are up against problems.

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Alexander to give them some other names.

Mr. Alexander suggested the Intergroup Relations Section at HUD, NAACP, and the people who are living in the slums, to get different opinions.

Mr. Moore stated that none of these people want to accept the responsibility for making a statement to the press about any of these projects.

Mr. Clark suggested that the next step would be to use the "White Paper" and write a direct statement that could be sent to every newspaper outlet in the City.

Mr. Alexander asked that if a newspaper decided that this was worth a crusade would it be out of line? He also stated that this did not mean defending one particular site or proposal but the program in general.

Mr. Moore asked if Mr. Alexander was saying that open housing was the answer to all the housing problems in Atlanta?

Mr. Alexander stated that it would work only in some areas and that plans are now being made for the City at large.

Mr. Moore asked about the position in the Northern areas, the BOP plant, and Lockheed--would these areas be useful for low-income housing?

Mr. Alexander stated that Lockheed should have some but that there were not many. There is one area outside of Oglethorpe where there has been a settlement for years, but he stated that if he were advising people he would say that this is expensive land. He stated that if it were sold commercial, much more could be gotten for it.

Mr. Moore asked the City's position toward condemning sites?

Mr. Alexander stated that some areas have been condemned.

Mr. Clark asked if there was any eminent domain?

Mr. Alexander said that there was, but that market prices must be paid on them. Urban Renewal is the only tool that will open up large areas for public housing. He also said that the Chamber of Commerce has decided to take the basic steps into this.

Mr. Clark suggested that the HRC should provide in its budget funds for a full-time publicist with a newspaper background.

Mr. Alexander stated that there was no such person for the Urban Renewal Program. He stated that we need to show what it is to live in slums. This Committee might arrange to take groups into the slums.

Mr. Moore said that the Chamber of Commerce is not very active on this as yet.

Mr. Alexander stated that he went to an Urban Renewal Committee meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, and that they were doing something.

Mr. Cleghorn stated that the press needs somebody to point out the things to sponsor.

Mr. Alexander stated that a Housing Fund ought to be created but that it was a long time coming. He said that one thing which should be made into an article is the involvement of Urban America in this.

Mr. Moore suggested that a flyer be sent to the churches to inform them of available land.

Mr. Cleghorn said that the Community Relations Commission might appeal to the churches.

Mr. Moore suggested that the Mayor issue an invitation to the churches who are able to sponsor and then give them a one-two hour briefing session.

Mr. Clark asked if there were any prospects for a revolving fund for the HRC.

Mr. Alexander stated that what was needed most was a large fund so that the Committee would have something to offer to the churches.

Mr. Moore asked about the Civic Clubs.

Mr. Alexander said that the Junior Chamber of Commerce was interested but that they needed something stable to work on and that maybe this revolving fund would help this also. He also stated that there are some people in Atlanta who know the ropes.

Mr. Cleghorn asked who?

Mr. Alexander replied Lewis Cenker, Austin Miller, Ham Doublas, Jim Robinson.

Mr. Cleghorn asked who could inform them on legal matters and requirements?

Mr. Alexander said that Malcolm Jones knows where there is land available, FHA--W.W. Gates. He stated that Mr. Gates had discovered that HUD will make loans of 3% to anybody whose house has been condemned or to anyone who must make repairs on it.

Mr. Clark asked if there was a requirement for the 3% loan?

Mr. Alexander replied that there was.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Approved by

Dale Clark, Chairman
Public Information Panel
Housing Resources Committee