

Flint Neighborhoods United Meeting

January 4, 2025

Gloria Coles Flint Public Library

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU) is a coalition of neighborhood groups and residents who come together on the first Saturday of each month to share information and leverage their resources to create positive change in the Greater Flint community.

Announcements/Community Conversation

- Communities First, Inc.
 - African American Film Series at the Flint Institute of Arts
 - Film: This Is My Black
 - Showing: Thursday, Feb 13
 - Dinner at 5:30 pm, movie at 6:45 pm, discussion to follow - all free
 - Annual Ski Day event: Saturday, Feb. 22
 - Free event for folks interested in trying skiing
 - Mt. Holly
 - 810-422-5358
- Parent 2 Parent Flint Support Group
 - Support group for parents for children with special needs
 - If interested in more information/attending contact Forleasadon Harper: parent2parentflint@gmail.com or call 973-687-8838
- Flint Our Community Our Voice (FOCOV)
 - February issue is here and on newsstands
 - Send any event details to Cfrye31@comcast.net or fnucommunications@gmail.com
- Gloria Coles Flint Public Library
 - Literacy Festival on Feb. 8 from 12 - 4 pm
 - Authors Rae Chesney and Jamila Minnicks will talk about their respective works
 - Music time with Feimstro
 - Offering free, 6-week yoga session
 - Saturdays @ 11 a.m. (started Jan. 25)
 - Children's book club is also on! See Billy for more information.
- Kearsley Park Neighborhood Association
 - Flint River Watershed Coalition coming to speak with group on Feb. 11
- Brownell Holmes Neighborhood Association
 - Starting Feb. 27, "Read All About It" on Thursdays
 - Reading to learning support students from 12:15 - 1:35 pm for 6 weeks
- City of Flint
 - Working on senior center programming
- Genesee County Land Bank Authority
 - Showing its 20 year documentary after the FNU meeting today
 - Table also downstairs with info on the GCLBA
 - Current initiatives:
 - Pollinator Butterfly Garden on Dupont

- Exploring the possibility of using goats to mitigate buckthorn
- Comprehensive Plan Update/Planning Positions Open
 - Planning Commission Seats: Wards 1 and 3
 - Zoning Board of Appeals: Ward 2
 - Imagine Flint Steering Committee: Wards 2, 3, 4
 - Applications available today
- Crim Fitness Foundation
 - Workshop on volunteerism will take place on Feb. 13 from 10 am - 12 pm at the American Red Cross (1401 S. Grand Traverse Street)
- MSU
 - Continuing to partner with library's children services to provide snacks to those coming to library programs hungry. Please contact Lisa
- Michigan State Police
 - Trooper Kramer to come in to speak on MYLA (Michigan Youth Leadership Academy) program for young people in the community, happening in August, and a youth academy and youth swim program also planned for this summer
 - Also looking to start a Citizens Academy again
 - To contact Trooper Kramer: KramerS1@michigan.gov
 - July 18 - Troopers on Tour Event
 - Troopers, Flint PD, UM-Flint PD supplying basketball hoops, basketballs, free food, giveaways, etc.
 - Location TBD
 - To contact Trooper Belanger: 248-444-1365, belangera@michigan.gov
- Undue Medical Debt (see January 2025 notes for more on this program)
 - Passed unanimously by Flint City Council, so thank your councilmembers for that
 - Program launching soon
- Ruth Mott Foundation
 - Engaging 10 residents on a community engagement plan since May, sessions will start in March
- St. Mark Baptist Church / Community Outreach Center
 - Offers food giveaway every other week, suicide awareness/prevention, free therapy onsite, and a kids zone

Calming Council Chaos

- Council members present at the meeting:
 - 6th Ward Councilwoman Tonya Burns, Council President Dr. Ladel Lewis (2nd Ward), 9th Ward Councilman Jonathan Jarrett, 7th Ward Councilwoman Candice Mushatt, 4th Ward Councilwoman Judy Priestley
- FNU sent a letter to Council in an attempt to ask for cooperation and a return to business
- Discussion:
 - Mayor should also be held accountable, as he's the one helping to pit councilpersons against each other
 - Councilmembers are using police as a weapon rather than a tool; no one was held accountable for the violence at meetings, the mayor didn't speak up about it,

people are trying to change the narrative; we should also fault the voters, as we're the ones who voted for this foolishness

- We're all at fault, because if we had this group of people AT the meeting instead of watching on TV, we'd get more done and be able to speak on and up about it directly
- Thank you to the councilpersons who came to the meeting today, I know it's a thankless job; even if you can't come to an agreement on the 3rd Ward councilperson appointment, please continue to prioritize and put city business through otherwise
- We need to come together and stop thinking in terms of one ward or another, we all want a better Flint
- *Council President Lewis*: we must stand on Charter and rules, we must follow that. We need to appoint and then set an election for the 3rd Ward.
 - Carma: While we understand that, we still need city business to continue.
- Were all councilpersons invited to this meeting, because I don't see mine here?
 - Carma: Anyone in the community is welcome to this meeting. I only send out direct invitations if you are a presenter.
- *Councilwoman Burns*: I am here to listen, but I do want to say that we will all take calls from the 3rd Ward during that vacancy. All of us. The issue of appointing comes to the Open Meetings Act. I and we will continue to take those calls even outside of our wards. We need to be focused on the things that do need to get done. Yes, there is separation on Council. I don't know if team building would work anymore. But I'm here to listen.
- I do think that the council should have to learn the constitution and Robert's Rules of Orders
- I have to watch on Youtube because I can't handle being there in person. It's heavy. It's not just the council, it's the audience.
- I have been privileged to speak to many of these council members. One on one, all of them have been helpful. It may be worth trying to actually approach these people, remember that they are individuals too. How they respond is up to them.
- These letters we've sent are really about getting business done. We don't want to see money sent back or left unused. We'd like to see Council get back to being boring to watch. It should be uneventful.
- *Councilwoman Priestley*: This meeting is now on my calendar and I plan on being at every one moving forward. I want it to be known, in response to Ms. Burns' comment on the Open Meetings Act, the judge
- I think the big stressor for a lot of Flint residents is that, yes, when we speak to individual council members, one on one, they all can be very helpful and informative, but it's like they're totally different people when they get into the council, it's like tuning into Jerry Springer, and we are frustrated with the fact there's a lot of talk about how the money isn't going to the residents. What about the money that taxpayers are paying for these positions and the work isn't getting done? If I just didn't show up to my job because I didn't like the people I worked with. We wouldn't just wait for an election, I'd be fired.

- We don't care about the Open Meetings Act Ms. Burns and Ms. Priestley, but that's what consumes these meetings. We need to learn about the 3rd Ward appointee, we need services to residents. The needs of the residents aren't top of the agenda, and that just may be the reason for all your dysfunction.
 - There's no resolution for things that don't matter to us. We care about being heard and listened to.
- I have to say, I am a baby in terms of going to Council. I went to my first meeting and was pretty confused about why it was such a long process and aggressive. So I am going to approach this with some empathy. I was trying to go through that document and educate myself on what was being talked about that night, and I realized there's so much red tape behind just the language. It's not made where I can understand, where probably most people in this room can understand. So that may also be why the folks with resources are able to come in and do what they do, because they know how to present things so they can get passed. I hate seeing us so divided, that's what these corporations and people with money want. I do think the mayor needs to be held accountable too,
- Home repair and restoration funding should be prioritized by the city. We can't create thriving neighborhoods and protect the health and wellbeing of residents if they live in unsafe and hazardous living conditions. \$16 million in additional funding from the city is needed for the residents of Flint to feel heard and continue to be supported in improving the conditions of their homes and neighborhoods.
- Don't wait on people. Go make something happen. People that complain the most are the people that do the least. The people that do the most, you never hear from them. You will never hear them down there complaining about what ain't getting done because they're too busy working. Work will solve all our problems if we get out of work, we got time to complain about nobody, worry about nobody, talk about nobody, because we're too busy working.
- Put the personal stuff aside, guys. Walk with integrity.
- We are the City of Flint, not the people down there at city hall. Us.
- *Councilwoman Mushatt*: The reason why I'm so active and involved in my ward, and that I go to every single neighborhood association, once you elect a person from your ward, when we get down there, you stop treating us like we're part of Flint. You just said the people at City Hall are not Flint. I'm very much Flint. Born and raised here. This city matters to me. What my ward needs matters to me. There are a lot of moving pieces that you don't see, a lot of things that we fight for that it's like, if we announce it prematurely, and it doesn't happen: we're a liar. If we announce it and we think it's going to happen one way, we're a liar. The bottom line is not, don't start treating us like we're not a part of you, don't start saying "us" and "them" and they're on the council. That's not how this works.
 - There are a lot of factors beyond the mayor for why the council can't get along, and we can't put it all on the mayor.
 - HOPE Initiative: <https://www.cityofflint.com/hope/>

- I'm not sure what all of that was about. You just gave a lot of great information but the tone and texture of how you said it? I'm offended. But I raised my hand to speak on Hasselbring. I'm imploring all of the council people to look at that lease again, make the amended changes that need to be made and get that signed so that that very important organization does not lose a space that our seniors are used to using.
- Redlining has been happening for decades. If you can't afford the homeowners insurance and you don't qualify for the funding that's available to help. We have to communicate to the state level to make a change.
- *Council President Lewis:* We are not here to get rich. We're here to help. We may help you from these seats, and we want to help after these seats, because we have the spirits to serve. We can get a whole lot more done if we were not fighting. We have a lot of issues in this city and as they come up we tackle them. Fire safety, insurance, building neighborhood efficacy. I'm trying to build neighborhood associations in the 2nd Ward so they can get ARPA dollars, so they can have a voice, so they can do what the 7th Ward residents did when they got together and applied for ARPA. That's nothing to get mad at my other colleagues for. That's something to say, "Hey, how can we repeat that? How can we mirror that in other communities?"
- Please don't play to the audience, councilmembers. Also, I do need to call out Flint residents. Only 10% of you are showing up to vote in council elections. If you don't vote, you get what you get.

Next Meeting: Saturday, March 1, 2025