

East Lawrence Review

BY SUSIE HANNA

The East Lawrence Improvement Association tackled a lengthy agenda at its April meeting at the New York Grade School. Twenty people gathered to discuss the City Commission's decision on the use of next year's Community Development funds and to plan neighborhood improvement activities.

President Richard Kershenbaum, who represented ELIA on the Citizen's CD committee, reported on the City's allocation of the federal funds. (See related story on this page.)

Although the City disregarded many of the committee's recommendations, Kershenbaum said, the neighborhoods should be pleased with the increased amount for housing rehabilitation. The City appropriated \$250,000 for housing rehabilitation grants, an amount equal to what the City has spent in the past three years on rehab work.

Additionally, \$50,000 was allotted for a special demonstration rehab project. The funds will be used to purchase houses that are threatened with destruction, repair them, and then sell them. Money from the sale of a house will be returned to the fund and used to buy more houses.

Kershenbaum said East Lawrence may be involved in the first two demonstration rehabs. The ELIA executive board has recommended to CD Director Lynn Goodell that two houses at 6th and Arkansas, threatened with demolition for a new medical office, should be moved to vacant lots in the 900 block of Pennsylvania.

"I'd like to see these houses made available to low-income people who might not have a chance to own a home," Kershenbaum stated.

He said the houses should be offered to someone who'll make a commitment to live there for several years. Requiring a low down-payment would help a low-income family buy a home, he said.

Kershenbaum also explained the Commission's decision to change the funding of the six neighborhood groups. The City had annually allotted a portion of the CD money for use by the associations.

The Commission voted to set up a discretionary fund of \$66,500 for all six groups.

Commissioner Ed Carter explained at the public hearing on CD funds that the City needed more control over the CD money.



Barbara Willits told the other ELIA members that she thought the City's action will set neighborhood groups against one another by forcing them to compete for the funds.

Kershenbaum questioned whether the City Commission would have granted funding for the East Lawrence historic survey under the new system. Any project costing more than \$2,000 now has to have the approval of the Commission, whereas in the past, the CD director reviewed projects as to their eligibility under federal guidelines.

The Commission also approved \$12,000 for completion of neighborhood plans. The East Lawrence survey should begin in January 1979, Kershenbaum said.

"We hope we can gather information to help stabilize our neighborhood," he said. "I was hoping it would begin sooner. There are a lot of pressures on our area."

The ELIA also voted to support "Neighborhood Pride" month in May. Karen Goodman, president of the Old West Lawrence Assoc., asked ELIA to cooperate with the other neighborhoods in publicizing neighborhood clean-up activities.



ELIA members watched a film on historic preservation and discussed the group's application to recognize the area as a historic district. The State Historic Preservation Officer now has the completed application and should review it by June.

Ed Boles, who worked on the survey, said he planned to set up a meeting with the City Commissioners, the State Preservation Officer and ELIA representatives to discuss the historic district proposal. The meeting is needed to avoid misunderstanding and confrontation, Boles said.

Plans for the meeting started as a result of City Manager Buford Watson's comments that he plans to oppose the district's recognition. The City is encouraging redevelopment (mostly commercial) in the northern portion of East Lawrence (see related story pg. 1)

Although the Commission rejected the CD committee's proposal to use \$40,000 to begin restoring the Eldridge home, 945 Rhode Island, Kershenbaum told the ELIA that as a result of the request, the City had made a commitment to save the house. (See related story page 4.)

The Salvation Army, owner of the house, had planned to tear the house down soon, but these plans have been halted now, Kershenbaum reported.

No formal decision has been made, he said, but Glen Kappleman, a member of the Salvation Army board strongly supports saving the house and has suggested that they might be willing to help fund restoration work.

ELIA members also voted to spend \$1,500 to plant 25 large trees in the area north of 9th street. Judy Bailey, who has been working on the tree planting program for several weeks, recommended focusing on the northern area as a way to fight the City's plans for development, "by doing something positive in that area."

The group voted to purchase 30 more smoke alarms. Fifty smoke alarms, purchased in January, have been given away.

Permission to spend up to \$1,700 to purchase two new playground toys for New York Grade School was also granted by the group.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 7:30 p.m., New York School.



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