Historic Downtown Residents Association, Inc.

General Membership Meeting

Minutes -August 5, 2019

HDRA held a general membership meeting on August 5, 2019 at the Harrison Center to address traffic and pedestrian safety. The social period began at 7:00, and the meeting was called to order at 7:30. About 30 members attended.

President George Evans introduced Maria Cho, who spearheaded a group exploring traffic and pedestrian issue last year, interrupted by Florence. She expressed the goal of developing a citizen’s committee to formulate goals, strategy and education for city-wide action. Alderman Sabrina Bengel said this could move forward more quickly if it a citizen’s committee, rather than a group organized by the city, which would be subject to governmental procedural rules.

Maria then introduced Captain Daren Fuller and Sergeant McInnis, who presented an update on the New Bern Police Department’s efforts to improve downtown traffic safety, and address questions submitted by members. Chief Summers and public works department head Matt Montanye also attended.

Sergeant McInnis described the work done in the last month by the Police Department at residents’ requests. He said that 18 tickets had been issued since June 24 for rolling stops, some as a result of plainclothes officers sitting in front of the Tryon Palace. In the future, this will be done periodically, with enforcement directed by messages on the department’s “hot board” of initiatives.

There were no reported violations observed in the traffic circle, perhaps because the officers could be seen. Members said that some drivers do not seem to know who is to yield, and others go through too fast. Larger yield signs may be helpful. Several warnings were issued to drivers for failure to yield to pedestrians on Broad Street. Education efforts in the future regarding crosswalks will include a message board and social media posts.

Data collected over five days, and about 5600 vehicles, showed that the average speed on Front Street was 18.5 MPH with only about 29 above 30. Attendees pointed out that at certain times of day, especially early morning, they had observed frequent speeding vehicles. The officers noted that visual estimates cannot be used to prove speeding-actual readings are required. The police will check the data at particular times to see if there is a pattern. On Craven, over 1400 vehicles had an average speed of 15.9 MPH, with only 4 over 30. They will periodically check at other locations. The speed limit on Queen must remain at 35 unless reduced by a city ordinance.

Truck traffic on E. Front has been reduced, in part due to a “no truck” sign being replaced. Also, Maola will be discontinuing use of the Riverside location. Officers will be alerted to watch for trucks in the area. It was suggested by members that a four way stop is needed at George and Queen. Matt Montayne said they will look at reducing parking near that intersection. At members’ request, they will follow up on reports of speeding cut-through traffic on Bern between Queen and Pollock.

Mr. Montayne said that the city is working to add audible pedestrian signals at intersections with traffic lights. The blinking light signals on Broad may be shortened -drivers sometimes become indifferent when traffic is stopped and the pedestrian has already crossed. He will look at signage relating to the library and the Palace in response to observations that some tourists seem confused.

When the meeting closed, Maria Cho asked that those interested in serving be in touch with her.