

North Fort Worth Alliance  
Minutes, March 16, 2013

President Rusty Fuller opened the meeting at 9:00 am

President Rusty Fuller and Vice-President Jerry Betts presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Fort Worth District 2 Councilman, Sal Espino. NFWA will no longer be in Councilman Espino's district after the May election due to re-districting, and the Alliance wishes to express appreciation for the work he has done in recent years, to strengthen and support North Fort Worth.

Kyle Clawson with Premier properties and Heritage HOA announced an Expo @ Ranger's Stadium Mar 22, at 1:00 pm. There will be activities, classes, baseball players, prizes. Everyone is invited.

NFWA Issues: A residential development has been proposed at Katy and Keller Hicks (traffic and safety concerns) The council has currently put consideration of this zoning change on hold. Problems with the development include not enough funding, needed participation of City of Keller, and RR because part of property is in Keller, and near a new track next to existing track. Until they find funding to widen Keller Hicks, and install a traffic light at the intersection, there are serious concerns about approving the housing development which would add several hundred cars to the traffic lanes.

The program was a candidate forum between District 4 Councilman Danny Scarth and Candidate Paul Gardner. Each candidate was given an opportunity to tell us about himself, and questions were collected on cards, and read, giving each candidate an opportunity to respond.

Councilman Scarth: Introduced his wife Lucretia. They have been married for 30 yrs, and have 2 sons. He moved to FW age 5, attended Trinity University, and broke his neck Freshman year at University. Everything changed for him with that accident. His Parents had a positive attitude, and didn't give up, so neither did he.

8 yrs ago, he was looking around his neighborhood, and saw neighbors helping each other, working together, and asked what could he do? He decided that council office would be a way to give back and serve. He has served 2 yrs as Mayor Pro Tem; serves on the Regional Transportation Council, and is on the Executive committee of NCTCOG.

Mr. Gardner introduced his wife Lindsey, and his father who was also present. He has talked to lots of folks who ask why is he running and how is he qualified? When he was 12, his grandfather taught him how to lay tile and in doing so, taught him value, proper planning, finishing something, work ethic. He runs a small remodeling company with his brother, and is also an Internet sales rep. for an automobile dealer. Paul feels that Dist 4 is diverse and has many issues and concerns, but the underlying root of concern is communication. He thinks we need to communicate and engage the people – keep the city from becoming stagnant. We love our city but we need to instill value with the citizens. The City focuses too much on cost of

things. We have a hot product, great vision, and we want to engage everyone. We need new leadership to do that, and a fresh set of eyes.

Question: How would you handle the proposed zoning change at Katy Road & Keller Hicks?

Gardner: Communication – need to engage the communities involved. The Zoning notice only encompasses the back part of the area. It's probably not the best idea with current situation

Scarth: Keller Hicks needs to be improved, and the City is looking at it for the 2014 bond package. He thinks they should continue dialog w/all parties to improve the intersection, which is needed before the zone change

Question: During Trash collection – paper gets all over the neighbor hood because of the method of picking up the cans. Is there something that can be done about that?

Scarth: The current method of pick up is better than the previous method!

Gardner: I saw neighborhoods w/trash problems but also trees falling down – people don't know who to communicate with about these things. Align people with organizations who can come together to solve the problems.

Question: What will be your #1 Priority as Councilman?

Gardner: infrastructure. Getting a sense of inclusion as a community, signage, bond \$ for municipal complex, bring people together and form a community.

Scarth: A sense of community is very important. The way the school district crosses city and county lines makes it difficult. Infrastructure is going to be a big thing, and there was no way to anticipate the growth we've had. There are a number of things in the bond packages that will help achieve this – municipal complex, city/county service center, regional park.

Question: How will you balance the infrastructure needs of North Fort Worth with the revitalization needs of the older neighborhoods?

Scarth: This is always a challenge. No Riverside Drive & Beach improvements will connect north and south. No Tarrant parkway has connected East and West. Strategic planning efforts are needed. We are lucky to have the Alliance.

Gardner: our focus is not development, but management of the development that we have. We need a higher standard of accountability for the developers. People will pay more to be in an area like this, more than older parts of city. The answer is not more government, but getting someone to bring people together, form relationships, and find solutions. Previous economic development efforts have not really been effective in the east side of the district. We need to find out what the people want, and how the city can facilitate.

Question: What do you know about Agenda 21 and what is your position on it?

Gardner: Knows nothing about Agenda 21, but will be happy to educate himself on the subject for later comment.

Scarth: Has some understanding of Agenda 21. There are some conspiracy theories that Agenda 21 is pushing us to do certain things, and it's just not true. Some of the efforts from the City of FW are made to get return on investment already made. They encourage development in areas that are already developed, and that gets a return on investment. Getting around is easier inside the loop than outside.

Question: In the past 2 bond issues, they have taken \$ form the operating side and moved to capital side. When they do that, we loose services (like code compliance) - now made up with volunteers. Next bond package they are doing that with another penny. Do you think that is a good thing to do? (explanation: they are using an additional 1 cent of operating revenues to pay down the bond debt faster)

Scarth: The first 2 yrs he was on council (06-07) there was huge growth. More revenue than ever. They expanded services to meet needs, lowered tax rate by ½ cent. Bond capacity is not enough to meet future needs, so they decided to move 1 penny. Now have a budget shortfall. (40-50 mil next cycle) So it is important to move that penny for debt service.

Gardner: We shouldn't get too hung up on revenue stream, and not how it's spent. The old way of building things doesn't work. We need to develop complexes with multi-services, sharing land use, staff resources etc. We need to spend money smartly. Look at macro things, and decide best use of funds we have.

Follow up question – one new library opened recently and immediately declared itself too small. Are the complexes you are talking about expandable?

Gardner: yes – we should build things that are big enough, have multi-level services, and land for expansion.

Scarth: We will probably never again build a single use building. The city will work w/County, DPS, etc and put other services together. One goal is to diminish drive time to do business with the city.

Question: Councilman Espino has given us a good understanding of the differences between north and south in Dist 2, what are some of the differences and challenges in dist 4?

Scarth: The Central area is 50's 60's development, some post war additions, across the loop, developments are 30yrs old, and some are new. Income varies from lower middle to upper. Most districts are very diverse. Challenges include some sub standard housing, typical 30 year cycle issues.

Gardner: The north side is the epitome of success right now. East side has some challenges. The east side has really nice people who love the city. We need leadership working with both sides. Fast forward the north side in 20 or 30 years – it will look like the east side. Vacant retail,

run down apartments, abandoned houses. The east side has a big sense of community. There is big potential there. North side is at a fork in the road – they need to make sure development is quality not quantity.

Question: What is your position on Trinity River Mission?

Gardner: Tourism is huge! Paul personally spends a lot of \$ in San Antonio. We have a lot to offer now. It's going to be expensive and we need to be careful. We shouldn't let the offering of federal \$ influence the decision. It should go at a manageable pace, and we should be sure everyone is informed on where \$ comes from, and how it's spent.

Scarth: It's about more than tourism. The central business district creates more tax revenue per sq ft than any other part of the city. It is an economic development problem, and a flood control prob. The TRV does address the flood issues. Twenty years ago, when the city invested \$20 million in Alliance, they thought they would never get that back – but Hillwood just paid its billionth dollar in taxes to the city. The local congressional delegation is supportive. They believe the added tax values will pay off the investment, the way Alliance did.

Follow up Question: The reason north Fort Worth residents don't go to activities in central Fort Worth, is the traffic. No improvements are made. Why can't we raise the gas tax?

Scarth: I35 improvements are going forward. They are lobbying consistently for a dedicated revenue stream for transportation expansion.

Gardner: We can incent property owners by lowering ad valorem property tax, and offset it by increasing sales tax. How much more \$ do you capture, by getting more people to move here and spend money paying sales tax?

Audience question – Rail system? It's non existent. What is the plan for general development of mass transit?

Scarth: High speed rail will be privately developed, the City would have input on locations (Houston to DFW to FW and Dallas, then up into the no part of the state). Regional Rail is a complicated issue. Our population is spread over 300 sq miles, unlike DC or Seattle, and other cities who sit on 50 or 60 sq miles. Other cities have growth boundaries; we will never do that in TX. The City is currently seeking a federal grant to expand the T from downtown to DFW – very doable in next 3 years. We have the TRE from down town to Dallas, which runs near capacity most days. DART in Dallas has a full 1 cent tax, in FW we choose to put ½ cent in DPS, and ½ cent into transportation. Not enough traffic now from downtown to Alliance to justify a bus route.

Gardner: The core thing is you have to have a cultural shift and make people see the value in mass transit. There is more interest in rail, but question is how much are you willing to pay for it and will you convince neighbors to do the same?

Audience question: Regarding that shift – when you talk about growth, you see young families and grand parents following the families. How are you communicating to young families about the things you have talked about today? i.e. I live in FW, but my grand son goes to school at Keller ISD – how do we reconcile that Fort Worth/Keller cross over?

Gardner: Getting young people involved with municipal government is hard. Everyone is busy with their young families. We need to educate people about the community they are in. Regarding the KISD, its complicated – you want to have kids go to good schools, and don't understand how school dist boundaries are drawn. It's a tough challenge. Social media helps.

Scarth: The Mayor has done a good job of moving to social media, and using technology to reach citizens. They could inundate us with news... There are good reasons why young families are not as involved as older citizens – they have kids, work, and families to deal with. Older people have more time. So the ones who are involved, need to do a good job so that those people can focus on their families and live their lives the way they need to. Someday they will be there too. Set a good example for them.

Audience question: What is city thinking about for Senior Citizen facilities for north Fort Worth, or Fort Worth in general?

Scarth: We have programs in the community centers for seniors, and there are other groups in the community that serve seniors. It's not a huge part of the city's focus, could be greater. YMCA has a big program. (a joint use facility) We do not do as good a job as we should or could

Gardner: Seniors need opportunities to be involved. We need to communicate those opportunities, wherever they are.

Rusty reminded us that none of this works if folks don't vote. Our area has great turn out for national elections, but dismal turnout for municipal elections. GO VOTE and get your neighbors to vote.

Next month we're planning to have Dennis Shingleton from District 7, who is running unopposed. The August meeting will be a public info session on the 2014 Bond Issue.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fran Rhodes, Secretary  
North Fort Worth Alliance

Disclaimer: I've tried to get each candidate's remarks into this record accurately, but I am not a professional at this. I apologize if I got anything wrong, and will be happy to make corrections if requested.