

Minutes of the SCAN meeting of Dec. 8, 2002

14 members present

1. Fern reported briefly on the City Council meeting of 26 Nov. and noted that the couch ordinance passed; the Mayor said he would not veto it this time since it included homeowners, not just renters, and provided for lower fines than the original ordinance.
2. Fern noted that Mr. Vegge had been invited to today's SCAN meeting but was out of town.
3. Some members felt that the City Council did not seem to know the history of the ordinance that governs occupancy. Others pointed out that any confusion on their part could be cleared up by consulting the minutes of those meetings where the original ordinance was discussed. Bill Armstrong commented that as it now stands the ordinance is clearly written and does not allow for grandfathering.
4. The membership is opposed to allowing the number of bedrooms in a given dwelling to determine the occupancy of said dwelling. It was noted that it would be easy to chop up large rooms into tiny ones, thereby making more "bedrooms." It was noted that an examination of similar ordinances in other college and university towns shows that the maximum number of unrelated tenants allowed is normally three.
5. Fern noted that the Council wants an ad-hoc mediation committee to consider the occupancy ordinance. It is to be made up of three students, three landlords, and three citizens, presumably members of groups like SCAN. The membership discussed the very notion of participating in such a committee and decided it would be best to do so. Our position should be that the ordinance is fine as currently written, and we should strongly oppose any attempt to water it down. Bill Armstrong and Steve Ringlee felt that if any attempt to weaken the current ordinance was brought forth, we should file a minority report opposing it. It was felt that SCAN might suggest some student names for the mediation committee. Fern will email Jeff Benson and inform him that SCAN will be suggesting some student names. Steve Ringlee will then contact the students and request that they put themselves forward as candidates for the mediation comm. Evidently at least one (the Gunnings) of the landlords in our area feel that we are a secretive group. We are not secretive, of course, and our meetings are open to anyone. During this discussion, it was also noted that at least five members of SCAN itself were landlords and that our group should be seen as supporting healthy neighborhoods and not as anti-landlord or anti-student.
6. Fern and Gloria Betcher reported that an Iowa State English Dept. class in Rhetoric and Professional Communication taught by Dorothy Winsor will work on written and visual materials for SCAN this spring term. Materials to be produced include a form letter that will both warn and inform new renters of SCAN's watchdog role, another letter for ordinance offenders,

- information for realtors holding open houses in our area, and still additional materials for new homeowners that will introduce our organization and its concerns.
7. Mr. Fox noted that in light of these informational materials, we should consider sending warning notices to renters and landlords first before going ahead with formal complaints to the city. This was favorably received.
 8. It was noted that SCAN would benefit from having a Web site, but that the City probably could not help us here. Gloria Betcher then noted that she has been working on some pages that could become part of our Web site in the future. She said that if we could equate Web site development with neighborhood improvement, we might be eligible for a grant. To see her work so far, log on to www.public.iastate.edu/GBetcher/SCAN/home.htm
 9. Steve Ringlee then guided the membership through the several sections of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws that he has drafted for our consideration and adoption. One of the models he used is the Old Towne Neighborhood Association. Steve focused upon several key sections, and most of the discussion that followed concerned itself with the number of Directors on the Board and the structure of the nomination and election processes. It was also felt that keeping our rules fairly flexible would be an advantage.
 10. The Incorporation materials and the By-laws will be presented to the larger SCAN membership at a large meeting to be held at Crawford School on Sunday, Jan. 26, at 7 pm. Emails will be used to alert the entire membership and a notice of the meeting will be published in the Ames paper. At the meeting, people will be asked to vote for a slate of nine Board members proposed by an ad-hoc nominations committee, but additional nominations will be accepted from the floor. It was decided that those living north of Knapp St. would be welcome at the meeting and as members if they so desire.
 11. During the discussion of the Jan. 26 meeting, it was suggested that block captains should alert those living in their respective area about the meeting. It was also noted that these capts. should normally be invited to attend Board meetings once the Board is up and running. People were urged to email Steve Ringlee if they had questions or suggestions for changes in the By-laws.
 12. Towards the conclusion of the meeting, Marsha Miller briefly reported on the progress she and others have been making on the Historical Preservation issue. The future looks good for this initiative. Gloria Betcher is also doing some work as well.