

## Betty Robinson

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**From:** Betty Robinson  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 24, 2001 8:10 PM  
**To:** 'regclark@aol.com'  
**Subject:** Save Middle East

Hi Rev. Clark, I've been thinking lots about the Monday meeting and the work that needs to be done! I'll just write down some thoughts off the top of my head that I as an organizer would be thinking about --

**First, the meeting:** The city had clearly already made their plans even though they denied it. They didn't disclose much -- in fact deliberately and cleverly kept information from people -- the SUN article showed us that because the SUN clearly had access to the Abell report (for example, the 1,000 market rate homes at \$115,000) -- and they tried to give the appearance of inclusion. Also by inferring with their maps that the bio-tech park would only be three city blocks, they were manipulating people. All these businesses that the bio-tech park needs to "grow" will also need land. Land that will be taken for the most part from elderly homeowners. Hattie Harrison was completely out of order in saying that the residents had contributed to the downfall of their own neighborhood and then trying to shame people into thinking they hadn't been responsible because they didn't make citizens arrests! That was another splitting tactic. [People sometimes need an organized opportunity to discuss meetings like this and share their anger and frustrations about it.]

SMEAC could request a copy of the feasibility study from the city and/or from Abell Foundation (410-547-1300, Robert Embry, Abell Foundation, 111 S. Calvert St, 21202). First, ask Laurie Schwartz's office. If they refuse that's a good base on which to question the city's real interest in including residents. Abell will probably say they did this for the city and they can't give it out. Somehow, however, there will be a way to get it!

**On the SMEAC side:** Residents there had their first and second victories when the city hadn't come with enough packets and when they forced the city not to split people up in groups. There was another victory when you asked people to stand up if SMEAC had been the ones to tell them about the meeting. To me this showed the power of the people! These will be important lessons to draw for people and will help to gather city-wide support. Now people have to work on winning some bigger victories....

[BTW - It was pretty clear that Hattie Harrison and her son Skip think that alot of the people will move to the houses in the Oliver community. I wonder where this \$\$ is coming from? They are renovating 50 at this time. ]

### ORGANIZATION BUILDING

Organization building is key at this time. This might include finishing the survey, building a data base, having some regular contact with people with information (a newsletter?) and inspirational ways to keep people together and seeing that they really can rely on eachother. The city and the politicians have kept people so passive and divided, this will be an uphill battle but not impossible. It could include having some regular contact with people (a one page newsletter?), community wide information meetings -- on the experience of other communities, on whatever that word was that Carl Clark told us about (the word that meant residents insisting that their demands are met to let the city have theirs), another on the Federal relocation rules, etc.

### ORGANIZING SUPPORT AROUND THE CITY

If you think about all the places support can be drawn from, it is enormous -- first would be families and friends of the people affected. Residents need to encourage families, etc to give support and get involved. SMEAC might want to provide an opportunity for this to happen -- a big fundraising event or something like that -- or even a smaller thing like a 50-50 raffle which can be used as an organizing tool as well. Then there are other neighborhoods who may be facing this same issue; churches, college groups, other organizations -- especially ones that the homewoners belong to -- their unions, churches in other parts of the city, etc are alos potential supporters. Each resident has to become an advocate for themselves and for SMEAC and can be asked who they have relationships with who could join this fight.

### INCLUSION IN THE CITY PROCESS

The first (possible) one that comes to mind is to SLOW DOWN the city's time table by coming up with a PLAN from SMEAC of how the community can really be involved and then going to the city to insist that they follow the SMEAC plan. (with whatever process you all want). It will be really hard to really organize the community in 6 weeks, ie by mid-July when the city will be having its "charette" .

Another option --to start work on a planning process that SMEAC does independently of the city -- kind of an agenda that people agree they want to fight around -- and then go to the charette prepared to really stick to certain of the demands while still being open to discussing options. The city was good (and will continue to be) at splitting people from eachother

Monday -- people may get scared and will be frustrated and may go along with offers the city makes because of their fear of what will happen. Sometimes a low offer sounds good if there hasn't been discussion of what people deserve for their hard work as stable tax paying, law abiding citizens. SMEAC will have to work hard to make sure this doesn't happen.

Other types of demands:

#### JOBS

What kind of jobs will be good ones? What are the employment needs in the community currently? What do young people think? A guarantee of xx number of jobs for EB residents, as well as the training programs having to take into account the skills people need to even qualify for the jobs as well as to get them? For example, someone told me that those sterilization jobs they kept talking about which have a 12 week training program are not going to be jobs which everyone can easily qualify for. I think the figure was of 300 applicants, only 40 passed the mental and dexterity tests which were required to actually get the training. A guarantee of certain % of all construction jobs for EB residents? -- getting people into apprenticeship programs NOW so they are in responsible positions by the time the construction begins.

#### HOUSING

What do the senior homeowners want their community to be like -- would there be blocks specifically renovated for the present homeowners? What do the people estimate "making them whole" would be? Certainly not the market value of their houses. Maybe people should be encouraged to add up all the improvements they've made in their homes like the lady paying for a \$6,000 furnace. Also, low income homeowners need to share in the city's revitalization -- one way would be for the city to make them "Whole" by being sure that whatever home they have provides them some equity. [At some people could learn the history of government sponsored programs which kept black families for developing this equity in their homes: examples are many but one is government policy is the VA loans after WW2 and Korean War -- you had to buy houses in stable areas. White vets bought in new subdivisions which were defacto segregated, blacks had to buy in the city. White's homes are now worth > 100,000; black homeowners are lucky if they can get 10,000. This was government sponsored racial inequality. (Not to mention blockbusting, red-lining, etc).]

Sorry if I rambled. I just wanted to get this out on paper to you. I have every trust and confidence that you and SMEAC will develop great ideas and plans and I am ready to help in anyway you need me to.

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If you give me a fish, you feed me for a day...

If you teach me to fish, then you have fed me until the river is polluted or the shoreline is taken for development

But if you teach me to organize, then whatever the challenge I can join together with others and we will find our own solution