

SPRING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOC.

JULY, 1983

DWI PRISON PLAN REJECTED!!

Residents of Spring Neighborhood turned out in force at the meeting of the school board for Tucson School District No. 1 on Tuesday, June 28 to oppose the use of John Spring Jr. High School as a prison for drunk drivers.

Board Chairman Tom Castillo said, "Anyone interested in using Spring Junior High should meet with the neighborhood first and resolve any differences which may exist before they come to the board to make a request." Castillo added that no formal proposal had been made by the department of corrections.

Neighborhood residents had become alarmed when a story appeared in the Tucson Citizen stating that the department of corrections was going to make a bid for the school to use as a prison to house felons under Arizona's new tough drunk driving law. The article quoted department of corrections' spokesman John Turner as stating that one of the main reasons for choosing Spring was that, "We also might not get as much community resistance in that neighborhood as we might in other areas."

Angered neighborhood residents met with department of corrections' head David Gaspar to air their grievances. The governor's office was also contacted. The result was that at the board meeting on June 28 the department of corrections did not even show up to make a proposal.

Approximately 80 neighborhood residents did, however. Patience was required since the Spring School item was the last on the agenda. After two hours of waiting the neighbors were given their opportunity.

Morgan Maxwell, Sr., principal of Spring School for 28 years and neighborhood resident, gave a speech citing the historic and legendary nature of the school. Maria Garra, neighborhood resident and great daughter of John Spring, Tucson educator for whom the school was named, also spoke, followed by...

Bruner and Mike Osborn. All spoke about the neighborhood spirit which people in Spring Neighborhood feel. The audience cheered loudly.

Another group made a presentation asking that the school be given to them to use. Daniel Fourwinds of Community House asked that his group be given Spring School to house the homeless.

"Even though the neighborhood residents don't like it, Spring School is the best facility around for our purposes," Fourwinds said. He was booed by the audience.

One of the neighborhood speakers pointed out in response to Fourwinds' proposal that Spring Neighborhood was already home to the Salvation Army and two halfway houses. In fact, most residents surveyed would like to even see the Salvation Army moved. Nobody favored the DWI proposal, though. In fact several neighbors were confused and believed that the proposal was to house first offenders overnight. After realizing that the proposal called for the incarceration of third offender felons for periods of a minimum of six months, they understood the serious consequences of having the prison in the school.

When asked what they believed would be the best use of the building, the overwhelming response was that the building should be used as a school. It was pointed out that the success of the downtown magnet schools should give the schoolboard the incentive to turn John Spring into another magnet school.

Many residents felt that if the facility could not be made into a school then it should have some sort of neighborhood use. A community center, daycare center, senior citizens center and healthcare center were some of the suggestions.

At this point, the feeling in the neighborhood seems to be that the Spring Neighborhood Association should make a proposal. Otherwise, it may just be one thing after another.

AVIATION CORRIDOR

The issue of the Aviation Corridor has the neighborhood divided. The vast majority of the residents in Spring Neighborhood do not want the highway in any way, shape or form. They point to the fact that anytime the city wants so-called progress it is at the expense of the inner-city neighborhoods.

There are others in the neighborhood who feel that the highway will be good for relieving the traffic problem and may stimulate downtown development. Still others think that the highway is coming no matter what so we might just as well get used to it.

No matter which side of the fence you sit on, the fact is that the plans for where the highway go are being made right now, and unless our neighborhood gets involved there may be more effects on Spring Neighborhood than we bargained for.

For example, when the city council voted last December 6th for the highway, Councilman Roy Laos introduced an amendment to make sure that the highway went south of Tucson Electric Power, along St. Mary's Road. Mr. Laos stated that, among other things, he "wanted to put the people's minds in John Spring Neighborhood to rest." The amendment passed, 4-3, supposedly assuring that alignment.

Now, it turns out that an alignment north of TEP, along 5th Street has been and is being studied. What the purpose of this study is depends on who is talking. Priscilla Cornelio of the Tucson City Department of Transportation emphatically denies that there are any plans to build the highway north of TEP. The study, she said, was being directed by the Arizona Department of Transportation. Jim Smith from that agency said that he was told to make the survey by the State Historic Preservation Office. Donna Schoeber, from Historic Preservation, has not returned our calls.

The pressure, it appears, is being exerted by certain residents of El Presidio neighborhood who wish to push the highway as far away from them as possible. Although this is understandable, it goes against the clear vote of the council.

It appears that the historic buildings everyone is so anxious to save consist of several abandoned warehouses.

Members of the El Presidio Neighborhood Association were contacted and advised that they were in violation of an agreement entered into by the neighborhoods whereby the Inner City Neighborhood Coalition (ICNC) would represent all the neighborhoods and the individual neighborhoods would not go lobbying on their own.

ICNC representative John Murphy was also contacted and urged to try to stop El Presidio's lobbying efforts. El Presidio residents had met with Councilman Volgy's office and had tried to get on the July 5th City Council agenda to get the council to change its vote. Mr. Murphy declined to get involved and stated that he was in favor of having "all options studied." An attempt to have a few El Presidio residents meet informally with a few Spring Neighborhood residents was also rebuffed.

John Murphy and Paul Smith, from El Presidio, have been meeting regularly with the "working group," a group representing many interests, including the consultants, the city transportation department, the downtown business interests and others, which actually makes the decisions about what part of the highway will go where and how the local streets will be changed to accommodate the changing traffic patterns.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

There are still a few people out there who are not on our mailing list. If you live in the Spring Neighborhood, please let us know your name, address and phone number. For more information call 624-0666 or 624-9122. It does not cost anything and you can get involved in an important issue for the Spring Neighborhood.