

FEATURED

Save Davidson expands its local initiatives

Jim McNally Aug 10, 2017

DAVIDSON – What started six months ago as a small handful of people trying to stop a land development project near their neighborhood has blossomed into a movement that could have impacts on the governing body in Davidson come this fall.

Denise Beall started rounding up folks in and around her neighborhood near Beaty Street in late fall to bring awareness to the multi-use development project proposed for a 19-acre tract of town-owned land. The group is now called Save Davidson. And it has an agenda.

In addition to still trying to put the brakes on the development, called Luminous, Save Davidson wants to get a new slate of town commissioners and mayor elected, especially since two commissioners aren't seeking reelection.

More than 100 members of the group gathered at D9 Brewing Company in Cornelius on Aug. 3 to talk about how far the group has come, get an update on Luminous and other proposed development projects in Davidson and discuss the November elections.

Eight of the 16 candidates who will appear on the November town ballot – three for mayor, 13 for the board of commissioners seats – were at the Save Davidson meeting.

The only incumbent among them was Jim Fuller, who was the only commissioner to take a stand against Luminous at the board's regular meeting of July 11 when a motion was passed that allows town staff to enter into negotiations with the project's developers, Davidson Development Partners, LLC.

Fuller spoke at the Save Davidson meeting and said his position on the Luminous matter – and the main plank of his reelection campaign – boils down to the town's core values. And while they are not numbered, per se, Fuller said the fifth of the core values is the one he considered most when casting his vote against the project.

That value read: "Davidson's traditional character is that of a small town, so land planning will reflect its historic patterns of village-centered growth, with connection of neighborhoods, preservation of rural area and provision of public spaces."

Fuller said he is "not running against anyone or anything" in the coming election. Rather, he said, "I am running for the future of Davidson and core value No. 5."

David Sitton, a leader in the Save Davidson movement who is also running for a seat on the Davidson Board of Commissioners, said the Luminous matter has raised concerns from the electorate about the trustworthiness of town government.

"For a lot of people there is a feeling that we are not having honest dialogue with town leaders about what is being done with our town," Sitton said.

Sitton explained that Save Davidson has established a three-prong approach as a community group: public outreach, political/voting involvement and the establishment of a legal defense fund for matters like Luminous.

Jamie Ramsden was the emcee of the Aug. 3 event and said Save Davidson is not opposed to all land development projects – only those that in the group's opinion could have an impact on the quality of life of the town's residents.

"It's not 'no growth,'" he said. "It's smart growth. And also, we've also been accused of being a NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) group, but we've tapped into a tone throughout the town that there is way of action going on that is not in line with the Davidson way."

Ramsden also stressed that the group is not just a one-trick pony with a singular focus on Luminous and with a single aim of rocking the election.

"Our intention is to be around after November," Ramsden said.

The group plans to hold more of what it calls S.H.I.N.E. (for Sharing Helpful Information Now with Everyone) meetings like the one on Aug. 3 and to hold other events.

Among them is assembling a group to take part in the Run For Green road races on Sept. 16 in Davidson. Kathy Goody, a professional trainer and finisher of the Ironman Triathlon, is going to try to whip people into go enough shape to run a 5K over the next five weeks. The training group will meet on Thursday evenings 6 p.m. at Roosevelt Wilson Park.

"I think that's a good way to get our word out," Goody said.

For more information about Save Davidson and to learn about upcoming events, go to its Facebook page.

Beall said the group is always looking for volunteers to add to its 60-strong group now who have put in “thousands of hours” to the cause.

“The people I have met since we started this are all good people,” Beall said. “And they all care about Davidson.”

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