

BUCKHEAD Reporter

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Neighborhood council forms to add clout to shared issues

By John Schaffner

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An effort is underway to organize the 43 neighborhoods within the boundaries of Buckhead into a single representative organization, the Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods (BCN).

The purpose of the new organization is to address and protect the common interests and quality-of-life issues shared by the individual Buckhead neighborhoods, such as transportation, traffic and the Connect Atlanta Plan.

Jim King, the chairman of BCN and president of the Chastain Park Civic Association, said, "The formation of this group is long overdue and clearly makes sense for Buckhead."

He said each of the 43 neighborhoods is "focused on its individual concerns and does not have an effective vehicle for making a lot of headway on larger, Buckhead-wide issues."

"The BCN will empower our neighborhoods to address matters in a more unified and influential manner that will get positive results," he added.

Participation in BCN does not alter the way individual neighborhood associations operate but provides a larger influence group to address political issues and to seek funding for common-interest projects.

King said BCN differs from organizations such as the Buckhead Coalition and similar groups that primarily see NEIGHBORHOOD, page 3

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COMMUNITY

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ly represent business interests and the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation, which is dedicated to reducing property taxes.

Since incorporating as a nonprofit organization this summer, BCN has elected officers, established bylaws, signed up 18 dues-paying neighborhoods and begun addressing issues. Membership dues are \$100 per neighborhood.

King explained that some of the 43 neighborhoods in the city-designated area of Buckhead do not even have a neighborhood association, but BCN is encouraging them either to form their own association or to partner with a neighboring association for purposes of being involved in BCN.

BCN already has issued two petitions: one to encourage governments to complete the "problematic interchange" at I-85 and Ga. 400 and a second to urge early completion of a long-delayed project to improve Northside Drive between I-75 and Arden Drive by converting the reversible lane into left-turn lanes through restriping and the removal of signage.

At BCN's Dec. 11 meeting, the 30 neighborhood representatives present seemed to agree to pursue a third petition urging Mayor Shirley Franklin and the City Council to re-evaluate the fiscal 2009 budget cuts made to the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department and to return that department to full funding by

finding \$3 million to \$4 million in cuts elsewhere in the city budget.

Since the initial BCN meetings last spring, discussions have been held with about 80 percent of the neighborhoods, and most have designated a representative to the association.

The organization meets the second Thursday of every month at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, and meetings are open to all Buckhead residents. Voting is reserved for neighborhood representatives.

In addition to King as chairman, board members include Kim Kahwach, representing Buckhead Forest, as vice chairman; Gordon Certain, the president of the North Buckhead Civic Association, as secretary; Henry Wyche, representing Grant Estates/South Tuxedo Park, as treasurer; Jennifer Moyers, representing Whitewater Creek, in charge of communications; and John Haliburton as a member at large.

The member neighborhoods as of Dec. 17 are Ardmore Park, Buckhead Forest, Chastain Park, Grant Estates/South Tuxedo Park, Kingswood, Memorial Park, Mount Paran-Northside, North Buckhead, Paces, Peachtree Battle Alliance, Peachtree Heights East, Peachtree Hills, Peachtree Park, Ridgedale Park, Tuxedo Park, Wesley Battle, West Paces Northside and Whitewater Creek. 