



WA Business Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 14th 2017
Emperor of India 3:30pm - 5pm

Attendees: Monique Bourgeois Nuway
Andrew Nordick Logica Law
Paul Jablonsky Nicollet Car wash
Keya Corraya Emperor of India
Emanuel Tekke Community Action Partnership
Michael Malone Tasho

WA Staff: Ricardo McCurley, Marcus VanderSanden

Guest Speaker:

Introductions/Call to Order

Meeting begins at 3:45

Minutes approved

Agenda approved

Spotlight on Business - Emperor of India

Emperor of India opened May 6th, and focuses on a variety of Indian cuisines. Business has been a little slow to start but they feel it has been picking up slowly and are now using services such as Bitesquad and Amazon Food to bring delivery and other forms of advertising. Keya came to the U.S. in 2000 for school and worked as a server in a restaurant with the now chef and partner at Emperor of India who has over 30 years kitchen experience cooking Indian cuisine in Minnesota, New York and London. Keya and their third partner have been longtime friends with a dream of opening an Indian restaurant, both maintain full time jobs during the beginning stages of the restaurant and split managerial duties between themselves. Transitioning from Prairie Dogs (former tenant) was fairly cosmetic in the front of house which included new flooring, painting and light fixtures however the kitchen remodel was a larger undertaking to accommodate the cuisine with the addition of several specific pieces of cookware and equipment. Moving forward they would like to attain their catering license and the boulevard tree directly blocks their signage and they have been in talks with the city to mitigate that problem or will move their sign.

35W Closures-Whittier Response.

35W closure will be effecting Whittier by cutting off one its main access points in some capacity over the next 5 years. Anybody wanting to visit Whittier will have access restricted to exiting on 46th St and returning south or coming from downtown.

Concerns

- Accessibility of the neighborhood and the effect it will have on the patronage of the businesses
- Congestion and confusion surrounding detouring through Whittier
- Safety -will the influx of traffic affect pedestrian and bike culture of neighborhood- especially business clients and patrons

Whittier Response

Main point of discussion was how proactive of a response should the Whittier Alliance and Business Association have to this issue, topics included

- Wayfinding- State budget has been cut for wayfinding regarding 35W closure suggestion made Whittier Alliance could take on larger role in communication to mitigate confusion regarding closures and help in detouring to Whittier businesses and cultural assets
- Hiring it out- could this be an opportunity to contract an ad agency, within Whittier or otherwise, to form an ad campaign or market research to promote 'stopover' in Whittier to get proactive about this problem rather than reactive
- Further Research- influx of traffic due to diversion or construction not novel problem, seek examples and guidance from other instances of major construction projects affecting business districts
- Financial Assistance- Whittier Alliance has financial resources for business assistance however is in transition phase with strategic plan and banking RRRRR but this could be opportunity to set up some kind of relief through WA loan program.
- Customer Origin- where are customers and clients coming from? Will this affect destination customers or are local customers the base of Whittier and is there value in putting in the resources into researching just how big of a problem this will be or is it better to assume and act accordingly

Resolution

The business association knows the neighborhood better than anybody else however it will be worth it to communicate with the proper people going forward regarding this problem including MnDot and other traffic consultants. The entire neighborhood will not be affected until second stage of construction in April of next year so opportunity is there to get in front of this problem. Primary concern is where customers are coming from and how influx or decrease in traffic will affect Whittier business. The business association would call for a larger meeting with more representation to specifically address 35w closure that would call for collaboration with other neighborhoods. The customer origin survey would help answer several questions primarily- Who are the patrons of the neighborhood? (destination vs. local) Which could lead to inferences on biking and parking problems mitigation. Motion for **Customer Origin Survey** carries with two yes votes and three abstentions.

Business Inclusiveness and Outreach Discussion

There is some concern over inclusivity and diversity of representation in the Business Association. There are contingents of people in the neighborhood who are underrepresented in the Business Association and there is some sentiment that the Business Association and Whittier Alliance could improve their presence in the neighborhood. Catalyst for this conversation is the lack of inclusivity of businesses within Karmel Square and wondering why that is and what could the BA and Whittier Alliance do to increase sense of welcomeness. Karmel is a unique situation because of previous interactions with landlord and ownership however it is acknowledged that it can also be a difficult culture gap to bridge. Language is an acknowledged problem by office and have no good system for in house translation and can be better. Another challenge to Whittier BA is other business associations with larger staff and more proactive roles including a Karmel Business Association. Overall several primary problems including

- Notification - Communication and language
- Bringing value into the meetings while not strong arming businesses into coming every month

Next month's agenda- getting people here (inclusivity) value (function of meeting)

- **Big Ideas Grant**

More inclusive idea for programming anybody can submit an idea. Only one winner but also getting multiple ideas for potential implementation in the future.

- **Whittier Farmers Market**

Opening next week - looking for vendors and musicians paid \$50 fill out form on website

- **Monthly Good Biz Nominations**

- **Business Growth Task Force**

The Business Resources tab is live on the website and has a variety of good resources in different categories of business

- **Eat Street Festival**

Final date is set for September 16th with confirmed participants including Black Forest, Marissas Bakery and Rainbow a planning meeting is forthcoming.

Meeting adjourns at 5:09 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Marcus VanderSanden