

Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 11th, 2021, 6:30-8:00 pm
Whittier Alliance office - 10 E 25th St

Attendees: Nick Hutchinson, Cyndi Hovey, Danny Villars, George Rishmawi, Veronica Valdes, Jo Ann, Mitch, Trent

Staff: Marcus VanderSanden, Robb Larson, Kaley Brown, Oscar Nieves Rubio

Presenters: Corenia, Valerie Ann (Say Yes Minneapolis)

Welcome at 6:35pm by Nick Hutchinson.

Introductions.

Agenda & Standard of Conduct is reviewed.

Community Updates

- Calvary Church will be hosting forums on the public safety amendment on October 14th and 28th
- Housing and Land Use Committee will meet next Tuesday 10/19. Council President Bender will be presenting on the Renters' Right to Counsel ordinance that recently passed.
 - Common Bond will be presenting on Whittier Community Housing renovations at 2609 Blaisdell.
 - Hennepin County will be presenting on a new women's shelter in the Minneapolis Hostel building at 24th/Stevens
- Lake Street is back open at 35W, and there is an exit to 28th St too!

Eat Street Fall Arts Fest

- Come to Eat Street Fall Arts Fest this Saturday 12-5pm at 2116 Nicollet! Live music and dance, mural painting, hands-on arts activities

Civic Engagement in Whittier

- WA has a guide to the 2021 Minneapolis municipal elections on our [website](#)

Yes 4 Minneapolis

Corenia, Yes 4 Minneapolis

- We have an armed-only police response to public safety. Question 2 allows us to open up options to expand public safety to include qualified professionals that meet the needs of the city.
 - Move away from armed-only police response
 - Directly address violence
 - Get to the root of and decrease violence and crime
 - Embrace a holistic model of public safety
 - Fund and support qualified professionals
 - Have city-wide representation and accountability
 - Do this in a racially equitable way
- Yes 4 Minneapolis collected over 20,000 signatures from Minneapolis residents to get this question on the ballot.
- MPD has a history of reforms: de-escalation, implicit bias, mental health, body cameras, civilian oversight, DOJ interventions, reform-minded chiefs; but the problems haven't changed because the city charter blocks change from being implemented.
- Yes 4 Minneapolis is a coalition of residents, small businesses, organizations, educators, survivors, elected officials and families.
- Question 2 would replace the current police container (MPD) with a department of public safety

- Rooted in a public health approach
- Proactive and responsive
- Mix of different strategies and types of staff (trained mental health workers, crisis specialists, emergency responders, and police when necessary)
- Flexible in staffing and budgeting
- Transparent and accountable with city-wide representation
- The Department of Public Safety would be led by a department commissioner with oversight from both the mayor and city council oversight.
- Full text of the charter amendments are available [here](#).
- Question 2 is the only concrete plan to:
 - Nominate and appoint interim DPS
 - Have a data-driven and community engagement process to establish number and type of qualified professionals in the department
 - Establish a budget
- First 30 days: Mayor + Council nominate interim commissioner of DPS.
- Next several months: hold data-driven and community engagement ordinance process.
- In 1961 the police union lobbied to have provisions in the charter for minimum levels of police staffing and budgeting.
- The charter amendment is about expanding public safety, not abolishing the police.
- **Q:** How would an emergency situation be managed with authority being divided between the council and the mayor?
 - **A:** Mayor would assume unilateral control in the case of an emergency.
- **Q:** What comparisons are there with other cities that have departments of public safety? If this amendment were to pass, how similar would this model be to other cities of comparable size to Minneapolis?
 - It varies from city to city. There are other examples of cities with dispatch that don't go right to police.
- **Q:** How would the budgeting process work?
 - That would go through the council and the mayor. There won't be a minimum required number of officers. There would be an evidence-based process of how much staffing is needed. We could move fire and EMS services to the Department of Public Safety.
- **Q:** Is Yes 4 Minneapolis supporting the proposed amendment for next year to create a civilian police accountability commission?
 - **A:** Currently, there is a state statute that blocks civilian oversight. The coalition would have to look at whether to support that as conditions continue to evolve.
- **Q:** What misinformation have you seen around the charter amendment?
 - **A:** First, this campaign is not meant to be polarizing. We all want more safety. We are asking to expand public safety. We are able to lay out a plan of how this works and what it looks like. Second, we are not abolishing the police. We have never advocated a specific number, because the city has to determine that based on its needs. State statute requires police officers to execute particular duties. Only licensed police officers can carry out warrants. Only police are able to make arrests. We want to use police when they are actually necessary. Third, we are not trying to create mistrust or dislike for the city council. People get to elect the city council and can vote against them if they don't follow their best interests.
- **Q:** Will it get rid of Chief Arradondo?
 - **A:** No, Police Chief is a title. If there's not a police department, there doesn't necessarily need to be a police chief. He can still maintain his leadership and title under the new department under the commissioner. He can be the commissioner if he's elected. There's nothing that would mandate that he be fired, or that he wouldn't

be in a leadership role in the police department. People should not be making their decision based on one person when we're trying to shape the future of public safety in Minneapolis as a whole.

- **Q:** How do you respond to the allegation that Yes 4 Minneapolis is mostly receiving outside funding?
 - We are a broad coalition and because this is a hyper-local issue that also has national implications, we have grassroots funders from the community, and institutional donors like the ACLU and Color of Change. Criminal justice reform organizations have also donated. This is not driven by just George Soros or just white funders. Those aspects are misleading and don't show the whole picture. We've been transparent in our campaign finance reports.
- [Fire and Police Protection draft ordinance](#)
- [Yes 4 Minneapolis FAQs](#)
- [Mobilize](#)

Ongoing work & open discussion

- Whittier Solidarity Network has been hosting urban design meetings focused on calming traffic, particularly around Whittier School. The goal is to put together a comprehensive plan for calming traffic, sidewalk safety and neighborhood improvement.
 - [The next meeting will be on the 30th.](#)
- Public Works is moving forward with a [new process](#) for community members to apply for street upgrades
- [Our Streets Minneapolis](#) is looking for board members for next year

Meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Robb Larson.