

**Community Issues Meeting  
January 12, 2015  
Whittier Park – 6-8:30 pm**

**Attendees:** John Charles Wilson, Heather Cram, Dave La Violette, Kurt Nelson, David W. Schroth, Laura Jean, Kathy Dekvey, Diane Moe, Erica Christ, Matt Barthelemy, Chris Popowski, Kieran Evensen, Eric Roper, Verne Greenlee, Brett Vandebussche, Joan Vorderbruggen, Tom Siler, Jesse Oyervides, Shane Morin, Matthew J. Harmon, Tim Harlan-Markes, Ben Somogyi, Natascha Shawver, Max Musicant, Grayson Carr, Greg Schmidt, Brian Foster, Ted Irgens, Andy Cohen, Anton Schieffer, Jen Kader, Justin Kader, Nadia D La Rosa, Osla Thomason, Scott Smith

**Presenters:** Chelsea Adams, 5th Precinct CPS; 10<sup>th</sup> Ward Councilmember, Lisa Bender

**Call to Order:** Brett Vandebussche called the meeting to order at 7:40pm. The Community Issues meeting was held after the Special Meeting of the Membership. The agenda was presented and a **Motion** to approve **Carried**. A sign in sheet was circulated.

**Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion**

Councilmember Lisa Bender was introduced and gave an update on 2014 accomplishments and 2015 priorities. Lisa cannot always attend the CI meeting since the Planning Commission meetings are on the same dates. Many past and future projects came out of ideas presented by constituents, which she welcomes. Highlights from 2014 include: expanding transportation options, including the Nicollet street car, authoring direction to keep lakes protected, securing extra money for protected bike lanes, installing the protected bike lane on 36<sup>th</sup> Street from the lake to Hennepin Ave, legalizing accessory dwellings (i.e. Granny Flats), getting approval for and installing the first Parklet – businesses will be able to apply soon, maintaining involvement with the 26<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> Streets repaving/bike improvement project, obtaining funding for ice/snow removal on sidewalks and transit stops, passing bee keeping ordinance, allowing in city farm stands, getting e-cigs added to clean indoor air act, starting an historic district in Lowry Hill East.

2015 work includes: ensuring all road projects include bike/ped safety at the beginning, continuing to move forward with funding steps and engineering plans for the Nicollet street car, working with utility companies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, studying housing and how best to support affordable housing and homeless shelters, looking at ways to loosen up parking zoning, continuing to expand transportation options by adding a new division in the department to improve street projects, making it easier to have block parties, supporting breast feeding health initiative, trying to ban candy flavored tobacco products, working with the police and fire departments to ensure recruitment plans are in place as retirements come up.

The 2015 budget has the most funding for bikes/peds ever. The levy was decreased, which Lisa voted against, which cut some good programs. Kudos to the city for being named a [Climate Action Champion by the White House](#) and for winning a Bloomberg innovation grant – allowing them to hire 5 full-time employees.

NuWay was initially denied their request to put a sober living facility at 2112 Blaisdell. However, they are petitioning this decision citing Federal Fair Housing Act, which protects disabled persons, including those with addictions. The new owners of the Washburn Center for Children building also wish to put in outpatient addiction services. Decisions are still pending, including how this reconciles with the city ordinance that doesn't allow facilities that treat addiction within a ¼ mile radius of another facility.

Kmart site update: The city appraised the Jerry's food site with the thought of making an offer to purchase it from the owner; however, a private developer outbid the city. The City met with this developer and discovered that they wanted to build a one-story Walgreen's on the site. The developer agreed to bring the city in on their plans to make it more conducive to the reopening of Nicollet. The purchase agreement is still tentative and is for the land only (not for the Jerry's business/building).

Composting: the community composting at the park has been postponed until spring. Curbside pick-up is still in the future picture; it's unknown if red worms will be part of city efforts. However, if you would like red worms for composting consider posting on Nextdoor – a meeting attendee has a surplus.

Homeless shelters: current ordinances require shelters to be housed in churches. This restriction

might not best serve the homeless community for many reasons. The council is looking at changes to free up where shelters can be housed. They are not planning to remove the ¼ mile radius restriction. Simply, churches just don't always have the best infrastructure a homeless shelter might need.

Infrastructure: a lot of bridges, roads, sewer systems are reaching the age of replacement or repair. Maintenance is being deferred while decisions are made on how to fund the projects. Sewers are being revised to extend their life, which saves money over replacing. But, there will be quite a lot of digging to get to the sewer systems over the next few years.

An issue was raised to Lisa regarding the use of shredded tire pieces for playgrounds. Research indicates high cancer rates in children exposed to these tires.

*(a number of attendees left after CM Bender's presentation)*

### **5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Update, Crime Prevention Specialist Chelsea Adams**

Crime stat reports were distributed. Some robbery victims were Whittier residents. If you see anything, call 911.

Please consider being a **block leader**. The process is very easy. You will only be asked to forward (or post on social media) crime reports that you will receive (typically a two-block radius from your address). **Criminal sexual conduct/assault** – typically higher percentage committed by acquaintance. The sexual violence center for all of Hennepin County is there to advocate for victims. There aren't any statistics tracking how often a **homeless person** is the suspect of a crime. However, it's common for the victim to also be homeless when the perpetrator is homeless. It isn't very common for homeless people to commit crimes. Open / street corner **drug dealing** seems to be on the decline. However, mobile drug dealing is still pretty common as are flop houses. Report any lurking, loitering, casing or prowling. Describe the behavior.

You may not always see the officers respond after you call 911. You need to specifically request if you want an officer to talk to you. A concern was raised by an attendee that off-duty officers are being eliminated at South High. Suggest contacting the precinct if off-duty officers are important to you.

### **Whittier Alliance 2015 Initiatives**

Strategic Plan: highlights from the strategic plan were discussed. The Nicollet Votes initiative of last fall is a good example of addressing one of our Stakeholder Engagement goals of increasing voter turnout and civic participation. The Whittier Alliance initiates a lot of n'hood events and activities to build a stronger neighborhood. We want to hear from you as a n'hood resident what is working and what you would like to see for Whittier neighborhood activities and needs.

NRP plan: this plan includes housing, business, community building & engagement and all portions of our Strategic Plan, plus safety and youth. Both these plans were arrived at after many months of meetings and community input. There is still money left in our NRP Phase II Plan, including our Youth Micro Grants. We received 8 applications for these grants for 2015 and a group of volunteers has been assembled to review the grants and make awards.

We are asking for volunteers to sit on a Task Force to review and recommend reallocation of some of our NRP program income and contracted funds. These funds need to be moved to make the best use of them. The funds will move from inactive areas to areas of bigger need. A special meeting of the membership be needed to approve the reallocation of the funds. If you want to participate in the Task Force, please contact the office.

The Whittier Alliance is audited annually for both financial practices and funds. We file tax form 990 annually, which is prepared by an outside firm hired and paid for by NCR. NCR also approves our budget in advance of receiving funds from the city. Our bookkeeping is meticulous.

Marian and the Board are working on a job posting for a new community organizer. It's a tough job. There are a lot of facets to the position and Whittier is a big and complex neighborhood. Please let people know that the position is open

The Whittier Walkers will continue with Heather taking the lead. Please contact the office to sign up.

Adjourn: 8:32

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rita Stodolka, Admin Assistant