

Community Issues Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2015 — 6-8:30pm — Whittier Park

Attendees: Rhonda Meyers, David W. Schroth, Laura Jean, Shane Morin, Felino de la Peña, Marcella Kendall, Jesse Oyervides, Ben May, Erin Sjoquist, Lori Chu, Christine Popowski, Erica Christ, Mike O'Dell, Greg Schmidt, Kenya Weathers, John Wilson, Diane Moe, Kathy DeKrey, Grayson Carr, Lisa Smyth, Eric Levy **Presenters:** Anita Tabb, Ralph Sievert – Mpls Park and Rec; Colin Gatling – 2512 1st Ave; Andy Cohen – The Bad Waitress; CPS Chelsea Adams, Inspector Todd Loining – 5th Precinct

After a Meet-and-Greet with Board Candidates, the Community Issues Committee Meeting was **called to order at 6:35 p.m.** by Brett Vandebussche. Brett reviewed the agenda and called for changes. The NRP Reallocation was moved to an early time slot. **Motion** to approve agenda with changes **carried.** The minutes from February 2015 CI meeting were reviewed. A **motion** to approve the February minutes **carried.** Introductions were made around the room.

10th ward Update: The Council office was not able to attend. A 10th Ward summary handout was provided.

5th precinct, CPS Chelsea Adams and Inspector Todd Loining: Chelsea handed out the crime reports. There has been a strong trend of bus stop robberies – Lake Street, Nicollet Ave. Victims were using ear buds or attacked from behind. People are also going on buses, taking stuff and going out the back door. There was an attempted kidnapping / auto theft near 28th and Harriet. A 2-year old was in a vehicle while an attempt was made to steal the vehicle. The child was safely removed from the vehicle and the suspect apprehended: Osman Bashir is still in custody without bail. Complete a community impact statement if you can. These are used during sentencing to help drive the judges sentencing decisions. They can be anonymous, but you need to request anonymity; it's possible the suspect could see your name.

There is still a guy running a scam asking for money to get into a shelter. Best policy is to not give money on the street. Shelters do not require money. If you aren't sure, call the shelter directly. Do not call the number the scammer gives you; the person on the other end is part of the scam.

Chelsea passed out a crime alert with a description and photo of Dariana Humphrey: she goes into stores, boutiques, hair salons taking phones. She's on chronic offender list. Has a court case soon. She might be out, so remember not to leave your phone out, even right next to you. As the weather gets warmer and sitting outside more, criminals will grab phones if they are sitting next to you on the table.

The phone scam where the caller says they are from the IRS – and the caller ID is actually the 5th precinct number – might still be going on, but not as much. Never give your personal information to unsolicited callers.

The 5th precinct has solid numbers of devoted officers fighting crime. Crime continues. They are convicting the criminals, but it seems others just take their place. The 5th Precinct Inspector wants us to take a part in not becoming a victim: lock doors, close garages, walk in well-lit areas, put your phone away while walking, don't leave valuables visible in your car, etc. If you see/hear something suspicious, call 911.

Officers are constantly making rounds, going down alleys. If they see an open garage door they try to contact the homeowner. If they can't reach the owner, they hang a tag alerting the homeowner to the fact their garage door was open and the risks involved.

Some blocks don't have leaders, so it's harder to get crime alerts out. If you can be a block leader, the minimum responsibility is to help get crime alerts out. You can also have meetings, NNO events, etc.

In a way it's getting easier to find people that steal phones. Phones can be set to be located via GPS; and, one suspect was caught after he stole a phone, took selfies and the photos automatically uploaded to the victim's cloud account.

Annual meeting

The Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting is March 26, 2015 at 5:30 at Whittier School, 27th Street entrance (not the park) – setup will start a little earlier, so you register earlier if you want. Bring the correct verification materials per the Whittier Alliance By-Laws. Business and property owners must verify their voting eligibility in advance and in-person at the Alliance office. Resource tables will be from 5:30 – 6:30 with refreshments from MIA AGRA Culture restaurant. The meeting will start at 6:30 with a review of 2014, Good Neighbor and Good Business awards, board elections and vote on NRP reallocation.

Board member candidates introduced themselves and said a few words about why they want to be on the board. Kenya is interested in safety, and feels like this is a way to contribute and take responsibility for this for his family; Mike is interested in being involved with important projects like 35W expansion, reopening Nicollet and safety; Laura hopes to continue working on the strategic plan, see the organization becoming self-funded, advocate for poverty; Jesse has a strong connection to a diverse community as manager and resident of the Park Square Condos (2930 Blaisdell). Wants to bring more gardens, youth programs and volunteers.

Nominations for the board are closed and cannot be made from the floor during the meeting. Read full board candidate bios on the Whittier Alliance website. The information about the NRP reallocation is also posted there. The membership will be asked to vote on the recommended reallocation of \$465K. These are program income dollars from Phase I and II of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, a 95 page document. Gave us our loan programs, safety, housing, etc. Each segment has many sub-segments. One requirement from the city is that 70% of the funds stay in housing. The remaining fund have been recommended to go into safety, youth, etc. If you have questions, please contact the office before the meeting – it is a complicated process. Funds for lighting will be for personal lighting, such as garages, porches, etc.; not for street lighting. The city has apparently conducted research of street lighting in the area and determined it meets their standard for lighting. This may not agree with how neighbors feel – might be worth canvassing the neighborhood to find out where lights are needed. And, develop a plan to get the nice decorative lights.

The reallocation will be presented as is. In other words, changes cannot be made at the annual meeting. The membership will either approve it or not. If not, then another task force would convene to rework the numbers. Notes from the NRP Reallocation Task Force meetings are posted online.

Bad Waitress, Andy Cohen: The Bad Waitress would like to add live entertainment. To do so, they must upgrade their liquor license from Class E to Class C1. They intend to have low-key music on the 26th St side of the restaurant. Amplification would be moderate so it wouldn't affect diners in the other areas of the restaurant or condo owners. They would like to add entertainment as

a way to pick up business in the evenings. They will only offer beer and wine and will not be making any physical changes.

CI Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to support the application for a Class C1 entertainment license for the Bad Waitress at 2 E 26th Street. **Carried: 16-0-0**

Mpls Park and Rec, Anita Tabb and Ralph Sievert : An outline was given as to how the city plans to approach the problem of the Emerald Ash Borer. A map was distributed showing the distribution of Emerald Ash trees in Whittier. There haven't been any trees identified yet here in Whittier that have the infestation. So, the plan is preventative since eventually it will affect them – nearby neighborhoods do have infestations. As shown by the map, the original planting of trees was done with non-diverse varieties. Meaning, whole blocks were planted with the same variety of tree. As learned by the loss of elms to Dutch Elm disease, the approach now is to have multiple varieties per block.

The plan will be to remove all Emerald Ash trees in the city over an eight year time frame. Thereby removing the only source of food for the Borer – an invasive species from Japan likely from shipping pallets – that only eats the one kind of tree. The ash will be replaced, a few trees per block (5,000 citywide per year), with a variety of different trees. The phased approach is less shocking to the block. Won't lose all trees at once. The city will not be using Maples as they are already overused. The city will take requests for trees to plant, but will not be advertising this.

There is an inoculation being tried in some areas – a company that supplies it voluntarily inoculated some trees as a test plot – but ultimately it's only to buy time. And, there is some concern that the inoculation could poison pollinators since the Emerald Ash does get flowers. Once a tree gets infected, it spreads exponentially. So, that's why preventive. There is a lot of research going on to find a cure, but right now there isn't anything that looks like a sure thing. Stingless wasps are one idea, but would only work in a densely populated area of trees, like by the river.

If you have an ash in your yard, will need to take action. The city is getting a lot of data to use to select good trees, taking into account climate, etc. Usually it's less about the tree and more about infrastructure. Replacement trees will be 3 inches in diameter. Height could vary; will be bare roots, no soil. When you get new blvd trees, please water. They are vulnerable and need a lot of water the first few years. If you have questions, you can contact Anita directly.

2512 1st Ave. Colin Gatling: Design elevations were presented for 2512 1st Avenue that will be used in a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Heritage Preservation Commission – a requirement for properties in a designated Historic District. The home has gone through many interior improvements and now the focus is on the exterior. The homeowner previously removed some exterior elements that were not part of the original home and were dangerous. The plan includes rebuilding the porches, and side of the house work that is not visible from the street. The railing system has a modern feel being stainless steel, but is a durable solution. The owner has been working with city planners for more than a year, making several changes to the plans along the way. In terms of historic preservation, the city is mostly concerned with street facing elements. ___Neighbors spoke in favor of the improvements; house looked much worse when first purchased.

CI Motion 2: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to support the application for a Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Certificate of Appropriateness by Colin Gatling for 2512 1st Ave S. **Carried. 13-0-0**

Old/ New Biz: Whittier Walkers: Help the police in their effort to reduce crime. The Walkers can use more volunteers. Email Marian if you are interested. Resident/citizen-driven crime prevention. **NuWay 2118 Blasdell:** NuWay applied for reasonable accommodation to allow them to convert this property to 22 housing units for persons recovering from chemical dependence for up to 3 months. They've stated in their request that they need to house the facility there because they can't find a structure elsewhere for this. The Whittier Alliance and residents are opposed to an additional supportive/transitional housing facility. We lost the first appeal—the city is stating that they have to approve the accommodation under fair housing laws, which is not true based on the research we have. The position of the Whittier Alliance is more about concentration and how concentrating these services and housing is more discriminatory than not allowing residents a broader choice in housing location. And, that the city zoning laws are discriminatory as they only allow recovery housing to locate in certain areas, thus not giving persons recovering from addiction equal access to any neighborhood. The next appeal hearing will be March 26 at 9:30 a.m. if you are interested in this issue – the bigger concentration issue – and can participate, let Marian know. Another petition will be circulated – looking at it from the fair housing perspective. There are already 30 similar facilities within the ¼ mile radius that is supposed to be imposed -- evidence that accommodation has already been granted multiple times. Organizations already here will stay. We're at our saturation point and want new accommodations to go into other n'hood that don't have the services. Hopefully influence changes to zoning to allow recovery facilities to be located in more areas of the city. If the city agrees with NuWay, then the neighborhood will need to regroup and decide on next steps. NuWay also needs a conditional use permit to actually put the housing there, so if we lose on this appeal, we will have another opportunity to oppose. However, the city has a history of approving CUPs.

The Whittier alliance has obtained input from lawyers and is looking at retaining legal counsel. Looking for someone that has experience with housing law. There is a lawyer in Chicago that has taken a similar stance of concentration being discrimination. Haven't gotten any dollar estimates yet as to cost. Anything we pay for this would have to come from our unrestricted funds, not any city funds. Would need to go to the board to approve.

The group asked about the position and involvement from city council leadership. Request for a meeting with city council just on this topic has not been responded to. Seems important to have them involved.. The position from Lisa Bender's office is the same as the city in that we need to allow the reasonable accommodation or it would be discrimination. **May Day Soirée:** May 7, Blaisdell Manor. \$25 per ticket for entrance - get a lot of good food, entertainment, raffle. **Whittier Park:** There will be an egg hunt April 4, clean-up April 25 and more.

Adjourn: 8:28

Minutes respectively submitted by Rita Stodolka