

**Community Issues Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2015 — 6-8:30pm — Whittier Park**

Attendees: Felino de la Peña, Erica Christ, Jesse Oyervides, Laura Jean, Rochelle Woldorsky, Tony Hull, Christine Popowski, Mary Gazca, Gina Christ, John Wilson, Ted Irgens, Heather Cram, Tom Bissen, Shane Morin, Wade McLaughlin, Joseph Amrhein, Lori Chu, Marie E Listopad, Barb Ludack, Kenya Weathers, Marcella Kendall, David Schroth

Staff: Marian Biehn, Rita Stodolka, Camilla Jamal

Welcome

Call to order at 6:11 by Marian Biehn. Reminder given that agenda and minutes are posted on our website a week in advance of the meeting; different opinions are welcome – reminder to follow code of conduct. A **Motion** to approve agenda as written **Carried**. The March 9, 2015 minutes were reviewed with a call for changes or additions. A **Motion** to approve March 2015 minutes as written **Carried**. Attendees introduced themselves.

Election of Community Issues Chair

The CI Chair facilitates the CI meeting and also has a seat on the board. The position is a 1 year term and runs the same as the board year. A call for nominations for Community Issues Chair was made. Brett Vandebussche was nominated and accepted the nomination to serve as CI Chair. Wade McLaughlin was nominated and declined the nomination. Kenya Weathers was nominated and accepted the nomination; Kenya later withdrew his name from consideration.

Brett introduced himself and gave some of his background. Originally from Michigan, Brett has lived in Whittier for about 4 years. Brett has a lot of meeting facilitation experience and tries to keep it neutral. Vote of affirmation **carried**. Brett Vandebussche was elected CI Chair.

Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion

10th Ward – Ben Somogyi, 10th Ward Aide

CM Lisa Bender sits on the planning commission, which also meets on Monday evenings. She attends the CI when she can. **Curbside Organics** will launch in some parts of Whittier during Phase I. Letters were sent out to people that already signed up notifying them of when to expect their green bin. Others received a letter with a postage paid return card to sign up for the program. The program is for housing with 1-4 units only. Larger buildings contract their waste disposal privately, so contact owner/manager if interested in implementing at your building. **Prairie Dogs** received their liquor license.

NuWay application for reasonable accommodation was granted by the City Council the Whittier Alliance appeal was denied. Members of the committee inquired why Councilmember Bender didn't advocate for the neighborhood. The response indicated that the entire City Council were obligated to allow the accommodation to comply with Federal Fair Housing laws. Members of the committee requested that the 10th Ward have listening sessions at the CI rather than just giving updates. The group continued to provide examples of how the Whittier neighborhood is already saturated with supportive housing – several within the ¼ radius of the proposed NuWay location – breaking the quarter mile rule over and over. The neighborhood wants to have some assurances that it won't keep happening- makes no sense to have the ¼ mile rule if it continues to be overturned. Apparently the Council views the ¼ mile requirement differently, depending on who will be served/resides at the residence – whether or not they are considered disabled. The neighbors have concerns that Councilmember Bender doesn't think Whittier matters – developers continue to break codes, build things that weren't approved, no consequences. The group requests that Councilmember Bender listen to our concerns. Ben reiterated that constituents can contact Lisa Bender's office at any time.

Street Sweeping starts this week – beware No Parking signs. **Open Streets Lyndale** will be June 7. A discussion followed regarding various city funding policies – Target referendum, 20 million for People's Park, etc. Ben will follow-up with answers.

5th Precinct Report, Chelsea Adams & Todd Loining

A recent trend is theft by swindle – five instances since last CI meeting – fairly unusual. In one example, the suspects are selling fake tickets on Craigslist – Wild hockey, concerts, etc. Victims should call the 5th

precinct to report. Another has victims convinced they received a grant and only need pay to claim it. Lastly, false rental property listings: a scammer lists a property that they don't own; they place an ad, get a deposit; victim shows up to find out the property isn't even being rented. The City website has information on property ownership to check before renting.

Fifth Precinct Open House, May 13, 5-7 p.m. – K-9 unit, bomb squad, S.W.A.T, free food, police band – all welcome – FREE.

Burglaries are still a problem throughout the city. Thefts are most common from laundry rooms, underground parking/storage facilities (bikes, etc.), unlocked garages / houses / apartments. The precinct staff meets weekly to discuss intel, patterns, etc. they do a lot of networking then meet to strategize. Numbers are decreasing. Arrests are happening. The precinct has a Crime Prevention Specialist as a liaison to the Somali community. They are aware of some of the barriers between new residents and the police/calling 911. A resident reported finding an abandoned bag in the alley between Pillsbury /Pleasant, from 26th /27th with ID and personal items. Advised to contact the precinct. It may be important. Officers will try to find the owner. It seems there is quite a bit of suspicious activity happening in this area and a request was made for patrols. Committee members asked about data that might be obtained – how does our precinct compare with others, especially drug related arrests. Chelsea will look into providing the requested data. A commendation to officers was made regarding a prompt response to a complaint about cars speeding up at Grand Ave on 26th to and essentially running the red.

Welcome new Community Organizer to the Somali and East African community, Camilla Fartun Jamal. Camilla was born in Somali, lived in Kenya and Malaysia before moving to North Dakota, where she completed school in Fargo. She moved to Minneapolis recently, and will also be working for the Lyndale neighborhood. **The Black Forest Inn** is celebrating their 50th Birthday with a weekend block party May 15, 16 and 17. Mr. Christ opened the restaurant and still goes to work every day to make sausage. It's going to be a big party – music, food, beer, games, etc. The parking lot will be closed – plan accordingly. They are applying for an amplified sound permit. Free and open to the public. Beer and food for purchase. The Whittier Alliance will sell wrist bands for beer – volunteers needed. Wrist band proceeds will be support the Whittier Alliance.

Midtown Greenway Arbor Day planting will take place on May 2 from 9-noon. Volunteers from Whittier are needed– trees will be in Whittier section.

Annual Meeting Recap

New board members were elected. There was some excitement, but ended up being a calm evening. BA reps were elected at the BA the previous Wednesday.

2200 Harriet, Beth Dryden

This property owner, Beth Dryden, is seeking a parking variance for 2200 Harriet. The building currently has five licensed units and a sixth unlicensed unit. This sixth unit has been consistently rented for almost 20 years and is a complete unit – 700 sq feet, 2 bedrooms. The previous owner also rented out the unit, but sold it as a fourplex – thought financing would be easier. In order to license the sixth unit, the owner needs to provide a parking spot – per city code since the city views it as a new unit. There is only one parking space for the building, and there isn't room to add more. In order to keep the sixth unit the owner will need a variance from the city. If the owner doesn't get the variance, the current renters would not be able to live there. One of the tenants of the sixth unit was attending the meeting and stated she would like to remain. The owner uses a management company and was not aware the tenant was at the meeting.

The city would grant the variance based on hardship – the difficulty of putting in the parking. The current space can accommodate two small cars only, but there is no room for six cars. The parking space would be attached/rented with the 6th unit exclusively.

The owner intends to complete additional improvements (landscaping, electrical updates), but doesn't think she will be able to without the income from the sixth unit. Even though the wiring is very old, it's grandfathered in and complies with city requirements. Concerns from the owner of the home next to the property were voiced: basement tenants leave a lot of garbage in the window wells, other things. The owner of 2200 said those tenants have been evicted. Ms. Dryden presented a photograph of the building, but attendees wanted to see landscaping and other plans – Ms. Dryden doesn't want to

spend the money on planning / architects until she gets the variance. There was significant discussion about the condition of the unit, maintenance, tenant behavior, need for more oversight, landscape screening etc. Discussion suggested that these issues be remediated before a variance is sought. The presenter replied that she has until early June to get the variance and legalize the 6th unit. A question was asked about what the committee can do to address the applicant and the community concerns. The committee can suggest conditions to a motion but they are not necessarily binding.

CI Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee does not support the request for a parking variance for 2200 Harriet Ave. **Motion Failed. 6-9-1**

A second motion was presented and discussed without an immediate vote.

CI Motion 2: *The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee supports the request for a parking variance for 2200 Harriet Ave.*

A third motion was presented:

CI Motion 3: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to table the motion until next month. **Motion Failed. 7-8-2**

The second motion was called to question:

CI Motion 2: The Whittier Alliance Community Issue Committee supports the request for a parking variance for 2200 Harriet Ave. **Carried. 9-7-1**

City of Minneapolis, Kellie Kish

The City will be rolling out organics recycling for housing with four and fewer units in a phased approach. Many areas of Whittier will be included in Phase I, which will begin implementation in the summer. If you signed up to join the program, you will receive a letter indicating when you can expect your green bin. If you have not signed up, you will receive a letter with a postage paid reply card allowing you to sign up easily and quickly.

The cost of solid waste services will not change and you do not have to get a green bin. However, the cost will be the same regardless if you use the bin or not. Because much of what normally goes in the garbage can be diverted to organics recycling, many residents are able to trade their large garbage bin for a small one, which does cost less. There will be a learning curve, but a lot less waste will go to the garbage burner. It's likely the city would make it mandatory in the future.

The green cart will be about 1/3 the size of the regular cart, but weigh about the same to keep it stable. The list of things that can go in the cart is extensive, including pizza boxes, all-paper cotton swabs, human/animal hair, meat, bones, dairy, compostable table and drink ware, etc. Handouts were made available – extras are at the Whittier Alliance office or on the City website. A few things that won't go in the green bin include dental floss, feminine products, animal waste, and diapers.

The contents of green bins will be collected on the same day as garbage and taken to an industrial composting facility for further organic breakdown. When ready, the compost is sent to community gardens. Composted soil is good for fixing toxic soil; adds nutrients. The city uses it wherever soil is needed – road construction, etc. Compost might become available to participants with green carts. TBD. For in-home compost collection, a container with venting is recommended– air will help prevent odors.

Housing Discussion

In alignment with the Strategic Plan, the Whittier Alliance has consistently taken a position to deny support for new/renewing gov't subsidized affordable or transitional housing units with the recommendation from residents to pursue policy change. Recently, the Whittier Alliance and several other neighborhoods signed on to a complaint against HUD to help change policy that would spread housing throughout the city rather than concentrating in just a few areas. This affordable housing is not the same as having housing that is affordable/reasonably priced.

The group discussed a variety of impacts created by this concentration: people seeking housing to support recovery don't have a lot of options as to where to live, recovery rates tend to be low when supportive housing and services are in areas of high narcotics violations, residents often aren't allowed to associate with neighbors, emphasizing the institutional aspects of the residence. Specific to the NuWay position, the proposed housing at 2118 Blaisdell would serve residents for up to 90 days, with an attrition rate of 50% by 30 days. Neighborhoods with a high concentration of these residences

receive fewer property tax dollars and tend to have higher poverty rates. It confirms a pattern by the city to place or allow supportive services and transitional or affordable housing in areas of poverty since they are less likely to be opposed.

The City of Minneapolis has consistently approved transitional and supportive housing in Whittier, although a ¼ mile restriction is in place (there are ten, including 3 other NuWay facilities, within ¼ mile of 2118 Blaisdell). Arguing the Fair Housing Act, they believe denying placement would open them up to lawsuits. Conversely, the complaint led by Myron Orfield interprets the same law to prove that concentration is discriminatory by not allowing persons with disabilities/in recovery or in poverty more housing choice. Someone stated the act specifies that concentration is essentially institutionalization, and therefore discriminatory. Throughout the city, 90% of subsidized affordable housing is in poor neighborhoods – and a lot of supportive housing gets placed right next to affordable housing. The way the city code is written, less than 2% of the metro area qualifies to have these types of housing. The size of the proposed NuWay facility should make it fall under a different category. It's clearly not a sober house, which is supposed to provide an environment like a home and house maybe 5 or 6 residents.

One attendee gave an example of the difficulty for someone with disabilities – especially mental illness – to find a clean place to live to get self together. So, isn't for taking this away (the complaint would not take existing housing away). A few people spoke in response to emphasize that changing the law would actually provide more choice, in more neighborhoods for all. Other areas of the metro that have very little subsidized housing also have more employment available. NuWay already has several units in Whittier. It's more convenient for them- Nearly a campus; they plan to open additional/want clustering.

A suggestion was made to contact an organization called Mind Freedom International, which fights psychiatric abuse and segregation. Many facilities for mentally ill don't want residents associating with neighbors, making it more difficult to integrated into society.

Comments from the group include that NuWay House residents aren't really neighbors, they are often told not to interact with neighbors. Would be good to contact the Humphrey Institute, maybe a grad student for a capstone project. Get better data. Situation gets complex due to state, county, licensing, etc. If the City Council was 100% taking the side of Federal Fair Housing law in overturning the ¼ mile rule, seems like the neighborhood should be working to get City Council on same page/make it a priority for them. It seems the Council thinks it's black and white, and are afraid of a lawsuit. Even though hundreds of people signed the petition asking for denial of the reasonable accommodation. The neighborhood needs to keep talking, keep looking at the big picture. There is data kept by treatment centers that needs to substantiate that having the treatment center does not increase crime – NuWay has a poor record. Once the problem is quantified, can compare to other neighborhoods and fight it through legislation. There was consensus that the areas around sober houses attract drug dealers.

If NuWay is going to open the facility, the next step is to apply for a conditional use permit. The first round was only to waive the ¼ mile rule. The WA and neighborhood can get involved in the process and keep the issues up front.

Old/New Business

Whittier Walkers – contact the office to sign up. **May Day Soirée** – May 7, 5:30-8:30pm, \$25 in advance. Silent auction, raffle two Rolling Stones tickets, food by local restaurants, entertainment. **Single Family & Rental Property Low Interest Loans** – available soon. **Earth Day Cleanup** at Whittier Park – Saturday, April 25, 9:30am-noon **World of Whittier Family Fair** – meeting this week to plan.

Adjourn: 8:34

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rita Stodolka, Admin Assistant