

Community Issues Meeting DRAFT Minutes
Monday, July 11, 2016 — 6:00-8:00pm — Whittier Park

Attendees: Brett Vandebussche, Kenya Weathers, Marie Listopad, Laura Jean, Anastasia Schroth, Jen Kader, Mary Gazca, Greg Schmidt, David Schroth, Felino de la Peña, Natalie Turner, Jonathan Welters, Johan Engerit, Brian Foster, Christine Popowski, Erin Sjoquist **Staff:** Ricardo McCurley, Paul Shanafelt, Lucy Lawson **Presenters:** Ron Harris, Aide to Council Member Lisa Bender; Chelsea Adams, Crime Prevention Specialist & Matt Wilcox, Community Attorney, 5th Precinct MPD; Anita Tabb, District 4 Parks Commissioner

Welcome

Welcome at 6:10 by Brett Vandebussche, CI Chair. Agenda was reviewed. Standard of conduct policy was reviewed. **Motion** to approve the Agenda **Carried**. Introductions were made. Minutes from June CI meeting were reviewed. **Motion** to approve May CI meeting minutes **Carried**.

Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion

CI Chair Position Announcement

Brett Vandebussche

After living in the neighborhood for 4 years, Brett has now bought a property in the NE. As a result, next month will be his last month as CI Chair. If you're interested please talk to Brett or to the WA office. It's a great community position, and you also get a board seat.

5th Ward Update

Ron Harris

Ron Harris (Councilmember Lisa Bender's policy aide) briefed attendees on City Council activities.

- The Snyder mansion in Whittier received historic designation.
- The City received a certificate of occupancy for a new coffee shop at the 26th and 1st building.
- The Sabri Properties project Rana Village (between Pleasant & Grand, S of Greenway) was submitted to the City this week; the office is not a fan of the skyway. The March 31 Planning Commission staff report for that project is online. After an application review there will be a Planning Commission public hearing.
- The City has given municipal assent to the 35W transit project – extra traffic issues are coming! The Green Grocer is going to move from Lake St; it will relocate to one of 3 possible locations.
- Two possible ballot initiatives in this election year: police insurance and minimum wage. Office is looking at whether good ideas and whether enough verified signatures.

Lastly, Ron acknowledged the deaths that took place in the last week – the shooting of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, and the two babies that were shot on the north side due to gang violence. The councilmember's office acknowledges that systemic racism underlies a lot of deaths, and is participating in several Mayor's initiatives relevant to this, such as the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice.

- Attendee said traffic stops being used as a fundraising measure was a problem in Falcon Heights.
- Attendee commented that we should be careful of incendiary language. He is part of the Chief's Citizens Advisory Council, trying to bridge the separation between community and the police department. There isn't enough focus on gun violence – he had a personal connection with the elderly resident killed by gun violence in North Minneapolis recently. Having been in the military, know that a gun has one purpose, to eliminate someone. The divide between the community and the police benefits the criminals and contributes to unsolved homicides.

Ron agreed that all these issues matter, and the office is trying to be careful about leveraging its resources. They are open to hearing commentary.

Further Community Announcements

Crime & Safety Task Force

Meeting next Monday if you want to work with members of the 5th precinct on safety in the community.

Enviro Task Force

The TF members will be doing recycling outreach to businesses, also running a bike incentive scheme.

Bob Walser – School Board Candidate, District 4

Bob is running for the school board. He has worked in schools since 1979 and his wife is a teacher. His kids have come through our public schools.

Crime Report

Chelsea Adams

Chelsea has been updating these meetings for 9 years, but for the last 4 months has switched to attending the Crime & Safety TF meetings, she encourages any community members interested in the topic to come to the meetings. She agrees with Ron that everyone should check out the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice website <https://trustandjustice.org/>

- There is an ongoing trend of Hispanic victims of robbery and assault, also a recent report of a bias crime against two Hispanic victims in the Walgreens parking lot. The robberies now have more physical assaults involved, even knives. Chelsea can connect interested community members with personal safety workshops. Property crimes tend to be crimes of opportunity more than other crimes: items in view in cars, unlocked windows, etc.
 - National Night Out is coming up on August 2.
 - Officers Kevin Wells & Marshall Collier are on the community engagement team and on Thursdays through summer 2016 they will be going on bike rides with kids ages 10-14. They stop for ice cream and go around the parks. Kids need helmets; if they don't own one, the cops will provide one.
 - Attendee asked if the emergency call boxes on the Greenway that call 911 directly could be installed in Washburn Fair Oaks park.
 - Attendee witnessed an assault and robbery in her alley. 911 asked to put her on hold (she said no), and she didn't see the cops for a couple of hours. Chelsea will follow up on the incident.
- Matt Wilcox is the new 5th Precinct Community Attorney, he has prosecuted a lot of cases in courtrooms but this is a new community engagement opportunity. He will act as a liaison between community groups and the police. He can track cases community members are interested in, and he'll be going to the Crime & Safety meetings.

Parks

Anita Tabb

Anita Tabb presented to the meeting about the parks capital improvement program. The park board will be getting an infusion of cash for capital purposes. 'Capital' in this context meaning a permanent structure, like this rec center – e.g. a new roof, air conditioning, repainting the parking lot lines or replacing a playground – not maintenance. This neighborhood has Clinton Field, Washburn Fair Oaks, 28th St Tot Lot & Whittier Park. It recently became clear the parks needed \$15M a year to do the capital improvements required. The City has agreed to about \$11M a year.

- In terms of how to allocate the money and what criteria to look at to rank the order of parks, the parks settled on a criteria matrix. The ranking criteria are: racially concentrated area of poverty, density of the neighborhood, percentage of youth, what are the neighborhood crime rate, current asset conditions, age of assets and proportion of value.
- Attendee asked the assumed inflation rate if problems are not addressed. They assumed a 3% rate of inflation.

- Using this ranking criteria matrix, out of 106 parks, Tot Lot was ranked #2, Whittier Park #35, Washburn Fair Oaks #57 and Clinton Field #64. In 2020, the 28th St Tot Lot and Whittier Park will be worked on.
- The Tot Lot will be affected by the 35W project but the construction should dovetail okay.
- **Q:** How about installing playground equipment at Fair Oaks Park? **A:** don't want an overabundance of playground equipment in the neighborhood – it's very costly to install.
- Under the new plan, parks will also have additional money for regular maintenance, like mowing the lawn on time. The mowing schedule will go from 14 days and 10 days.
- **Q:** What about repurposing lawn to pollinator space, and accounting for climate change resiliency? **A:** Parks is looking at the full 680 acres, and planning what makes sense where.
- **Q:** Is there a no spray, no pesticides policy? **A:** It's more about minimizing the use of pesticides. Buckthorn is a real problem, and they use Roundup to keep it at bay.
- **Q:** Will you be looking at a safety fence for the 28th St Tot Lot or a soccer field for Whittier Park? **A:** Yes, there will be a community engagement process, with four or five community meetings. They get kids and adults to give feedback, about things like play equipment and seating/shade. With Whittier Park they will talk to the PE Dept, perhaps a field that is a combination of a soccer and softball field would be good fit.
- **Q:** How much of the budget is spent on safety? **A:** The Police Dept spends \$5 mn on safety, and the parks annual budget is online. Safety can be looked at in a couple of ways. Things like creating sight lines and adding lighting won't show up under police budgets, but under work done from a design perspective.
- **Q:** What is the parks position on artificial turf and how safe it is? **A:** Currently considered safe, and has the advantage that real turf needs to be rested. She is not a big fan of artificial turf, however. The chemical off-gassing on very hot days may pose problems for young children.
- **Q:** Whittier Park is slated to get natural turf, but it has dirt spots because used for many different sports every week. **A:** Problem is a beautiful field of natural turf requires chemicals and rest. Could propose a multi-use scenario to accommodate all the different uses.
- **Q:** Regarding air conditioning, recognizing that neighborhood rec centers are one of the few free places that people can go to on hot days, and that there will be an increasing number of hot days, does the MPB commit that every rec center should get air conditioning? **A:** Absolutely.
- **Q:** How safe is the water on the beaches? **A:** They're closed down if not safe. Often after a big rain event the beaches will be closed.
- Webber Pool is a new type of swimming pool that uses a natural filtration system. People need to get out every four hours, and the pumps switch the pool water with the treatment lake next to it, where all the algae is. It's a great design for kids/adults. It also has to be closed down if there's a big rainfall run-off event.
- **Q:** Are the Park Board and the City working together on stormwater run-off? **A:** The Ice Garden parking lot has rain gardens. Lake Calhoun has a big stormwater run-off area. In the sculpture garden, the parks are doing a big project to capture rainwater and use it to water the plants.
- **Q:** Going back to some Whittier history, the Chinese Friendship Garden is Washburn Fair Oaks Park was pushed back as other capital projects ran late or ran over. Is that project dead in the water? **A:** Anita did not support that project, and it had a number of problems from the start.

Old/New Business

Ricardo McCurley

- Ricardo posed an open invitation to talk about violence of last few days, and asked whether attendees were interested in analysis of police community relations and police practices.
- Whittier called a citywide meeting of neighborhood groups/associations about two months ago to ask questions about funding and the future of neighborhoods.
- Columbia Heights and the 5th Precinct do a 'coffee with a cop' program as part of their wider community engagement program. Chelsea can help organize it if you're interested.

Motion to Adjourn: 8:20pm. Motion Carried.**Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson.**