

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

**Attendees:** Allen Young, Bashir Garad Dahor, Paul Marino, Kamardh, Michael Ujifusa, Jennifer Abbey, Jeff Nelson, Diane Moe, Mary Gazca, Jeff Helseth, Felino de la Pena, David W. Schroth, Gregory Schmidt, Joanne Krause-Johnson, Ben Somoji, Xalimo Mohamed, Kathy Anderson, Brooke Erickson, Nicole Emery, Chris Popowski, Fadumo Abdinar, Billy Werb **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Paul Shanafelt, Camilla Jamal, Lucy Lawson  
**Presenters:** Chelsea Adams, Crime Prevention Specialist, & Inspector Todd Loining, Precinct Commander, 5<sup>th</sup> Pct.; Sean Gosiewski, Alliance for Sustainability; Dana Hallstrom, Minnesota Community Solar; Lisa Bender, Councilmember; Ahmed Hassan, Crime Prevention Specialist

**Welcome** **Call to order** at 6:10 by Marian Biehn. Introductions were made. A **Motion** to approve November agenda as written **Carried**. Attendees were asked to review the October 12, 2015 minutes. A **Motion** to approve October minutes **Carried**.

**Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion**

**5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Report:** **Chelsea Adams** (Crime Prevention Specialist) gave overview of recent crime in the 5<sup>th</sup> precinct – also a reminder that the new Crime & Safety Task Force will be meeting Thursday December 10, 7pm, at Wedge Table. Everyone is welcome. This month male victims of robberies were Somali & Mexican – groups perceived as vulnerable may be being targeted. One narcotics-affected man went on a crime spree, with several hit and runs and a carjacking – six victims in total. If anyone is interested in contributing to a community impact statement they can contact Chelsea.

**Inspector Todd Loining** (Precinct Commander) also spoke about police activity in the n’hood. The precinct is getting police in high visibility areas, and also doing alley patrols, hanging placards on unsecured garages. The 5<sup>th</sup> precinct is leading the city in crime reduction. There was a possible luring incident near the school last week – a guy in a green SUV talking to two teenage females, offering a lift. If anyone has any further information please let police know. Regarding the two recent shootings, one on 3700 block and the Somali man shot at Lake and Pleasant, police are door-knocking & asking people how they can make them feel safer. The two Lyndale beat cops are covering the area around Grand and Pillsbury, trying to be visible.

**Community Solar** **Sean Gosiewski** (Alliance for Sustainability) briefed meeting attendees on the new opportunity for solar garden investment – households can subscribe to a garden, rather than having panels on their roof. You pay a subscription fee to Community Solar and get a rebate on your monthly electric bill. It is a way of supporting solar without having to install panels. The Alliance for Sustainability has been working with n’hood groups for several years (Powderhorn, the Wedge) to subscribe together 500 neighbors. Renters, condo owners and homeowners who have an Excel bill can sign up. It’s a 25 year subscription, and can transfer to the new owner or take it with you when you move. Hoping to sign people up by January.

**Dana Hallstrom** (Minnesota Community Solar) also briefed attendees on the program. Can make a positive impact on climate change emissions and local pollution. The power goes into the grid, and the subscription is sized to cover your usage. Need a credit score for a no upfront cost subscription, but there are also prepaid subscriptions.

**5th Ward update** Lisa Bender (Councilmember) briefed attendees on City Council activities. Citywide, they are in the middle of the **budget** approval process. Lots of funding for bike & pedestrian services, and a focus on police community engagement & diversifying the police dept.

More n’hood-specific news is that the purchase of the Kmart site is about to go before the Community Development Committee then the full Council. There are two parcels of land and two lease agreements involved: Jerry’s Foods and Kmart. City now has a deal with 3 of 4 of the private entities. Have negotiated the purchase of the Jerry’s site for \$5+million and have a purchase agreement for the land under Kmart store: 10% non-refundable deposit with option to purchase the land for \$8 million in two years time. The 4th party is Kmart, who have another 38 years on their lease, making it difficult to negotiate. Kmart want to stay on-site in a building the City builds for them, which is unfeasible financially. It’s not a done deal that the purchase will pass the Council. Staffers are modelling the risks and benefits. However, this is the best place

the City has been in since 1977 – 3 out of 4 private entities is a huge step forward. The money will come from the City CPED budget; opportunity cost would be other redevelopment projects.

**29th St** will be the first Shared Street in Minneapolis. 29th between Hennepin & Lyndale (near Greenway) was in bad condition. Now first two blocks will be a single surface – plaza-type environment. Cars can drive on the roadway, but speed limit will be 10mph. Traffic volumes were very low, so Public Works is confident it can be taken off the street grid. There will still be loading zones and parking.

**Somali Dialogue on Crime & Safety:** Ahmed Hassan (MPD Crime Prevention Specialist) led a discussion amongst attendees about crime and safety in the Somali community in the Whittier n'hood. Ahmed is based in 1st precinct but works citywide because he is one of two bilingual crime prevention specialists – the other one is a Spanish speaker. He has worked for the MPD for 15 years, and when he started there was very little trust in police among the Somali community. 911 has Somali speakers now, because it's very hard for people with limited English proficiency to report when they become victims of crime.

Whittier Alliance has safety programs – what can it do to help Somali community members to feel safer? One of the issues is homicide, and that people responsible are not brought to justice. Two days ago, a man was shot dead in St Paul – apparently unrelated to recent shooting in Whittier. Rarely do Somali people who witness these events come forward with information. One of things needed is recruitment of Somali speaking police officers. Most Somalis are afraid to approach Caucasian police officers and may have trouble communicating. Advocating for that would be positive.

Business owner in n'hood commented that he has concerns about safety, and bringing his kids to this n'hood. He has experience as community liaison to police in Seattle, and police here don't care enough about preventing the crime, rather than trying to solve after the fact. Commented that police need to outreach better to the community and mosques, hire Somali officers/detectives and be more proactive in general. A police station in this n'hood would be positive, particularly for the commercial areas. Job creation for Somali youth is especially important – the City should help to create opportunity for youth. Most Somali men loitering, using drugs and alcohol, were not brought to America by parents, but by distant relatives – and these kids often need assistance.

Whittier Walkers are a preventative force, residents who walk around n'hood. Citizens Patrol in Cedar Riverside area is similar. A couple of attendees offered to walk together.

Attendee asked how much Minneapolis police have a real interest in outreach, and how much is window dressing? MPD now has six Somali police officers. Have to remember that in Africa being a police officer is not an honorable job – the police beat people and take bribes. A lot of progress has been made. The 5th precinct doesn't have a Community Safety Centre, something n'hoods might want to advocate for. There is one in Midtown. Monthly Somali elder meetings are attended by police, but many people from Karmel Mall don't participate. Attendees commented that often people are disappointed by meetings without action. Example raised of an assault incident where a Somali man was being beaten, his two friends called 911, and the police refused to pursue assailants into an apartment building. Could invite beat officers to monthly safety meetings as well.

#### **Old and New Business:**

Whittier Events – Reopen Nicollet Avenue Workshop #3 on Tuesday Nov. 24, 6.15-8.15, at Whittier Clinic. Third out of a series of five workshops. Also is a Wiki page where you can interact with what has happened so far – see WA website.

**Motion to Adjourn: 8:15pm. Motion Carried.**

**Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson**