

Whittier Business Association – Draft Meeting Minutes

Wednesday April 9, 2008–4:00 P.M.-5:30 P.M.

Washburn Center for Children, 2430 Nicollet Ave

Present: Andrew Church (Simpson United Methodist Church), Elizabeth Grzechowiak (AZIA), Jim Curry (Los Amigos), Maximo Mena (Mena's International), Erica Christ (Black Forest), Lisa Vecoli (MIA), Dale Peterson (Bremer), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Car Wash), Hillary Askew (MCAD), Pamela Nordaune (MCAD), Darcy Knight (Old Arizona), Maurice Battle (First 7th Day Adventist), Tammy Wong (Rainbow Chinese), Christina Le (Truong Thanh), Barb Lickness (resident), Lynda Gradert (resident)

Speakers: Steve Lepinski (Washburn Center for Children, Executive Director), Marcy Tollefson (Washburn Center for Children, Director of Human Resources and Operations)

Staff: Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order by Chair Erica Christ. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. **Motion** to approve the agenda **carried**. The minutes from the March 12 meeting were presented and a correction was noted: "50-60 sq ft" should read "50-60 *thousand* square feet" in the HCMC discussion. A **motion** to approve the revised March 12, 2008 BA Meeting minutes **carried**.

Election for 2008-9 Committee Chair and Board Representatives

As the BA Chair, Erica Christ, was up for election, Barb Lickness volunteered to facilitate the election process. Max Mena (of Mena's International) and Liz Grzechowiak (of AZIA) submitted themselves as candidates for the position of for-profit representatives. Lisa Vecoli (of MIA) and Andrew Church (of Simpson United Methodist Church) submitted themselves as candidates for the position of non-profit representatives. Erica Christ (of Black Forest) volunteered to continue as the BA Chair. A call for other nominations was made. Hearing none and given the number of open positions and the number of candidates for each (2/2, 2/2, 1/1), a **motion** for acclimation was seconded and **carried**. A **motion** to approve the slate of candidates was seconded and **carried**.

Spotlight on Business – Washburn Center for Children: Steve Lepinski, executive director

Washburn Center for Children provides social, emotional, and behavioral services for children and their families. The organization was founded in 1883 as an orphanage, located at 50th and Nicollet, and over time has evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of at-risk children. Washburn has three locations, including satellite centers in Brooklyn Park and Hopkins, as well as the center at 2430 Nicollet in the Whittier neighborhood.

Washburn provides services for children from birth to adolescence, with their largest programs focused on pre-school and elementary age children. They also offer services for families, including family therapy and in-home services. With over eighty employees, Washburn employs some of the leading child clinicians in the area, making the center a teaching and training resource for students in Hennepin County.

With an annual budget of 5.5 million, their largest source of funding is third party payers. Funding also comes from corporate events (850 thousand was raised last year), and an endowment from which 5 to 6 percent is drawn annually. Each year, the Center serves 1500 children and their families, meeting a broad range of mental health and behavioral needs. This year, they are celebrating their 125th year of serving children in the Minneapolis community.

Nicollet LRT Alignment

Discussion of the Nicollet Avenue Light Rail Task Force Resolution (from April 7, 2008) commenced with a question of the progress on the proposed lines. It was noted that environmental impact studies of all three light rail alignment lines were moving forward. It was questioned whether other neighborhoods have neighborhood positions that are weighing in on the proposed alignments, and noted that most of the other affected neighborhoods do have positions.

There was a question of how well the resolution, in its current state, represents the position of the neighborhood on the proposed rail alignment. It was suggested that the resolution needs to represent both the residents and businesses of Whittier. Some present suggested that the resolution needs to be more strongly worded: more clearly demonstrating a position against the proposed 3C alignment. It was also suggested that the benefits section of the resolution relate to light rail in general and perhaps reworded and moved within the resolution (that moving them to the end of the document made more sense argumentatively). One attendant noted that the benefit section is contradictory to the opposition section, particularly the access to customer base: the way the stops are proposed, Nicollet businesses would generally not have access to the increased customer base. It was also suggested that the use of the term "intra-neighborhood" (in the section regarding opposition to the proposed rail line) might clarify how the proposed line will bypass the Whittier neighborhood, making rail travel *within* the neighborhood itself improbable.

It was generally agreed that slight amendments to the language of the resolution were needed to make the position of the neighborhood residents, businesses, and property owners, more clear. Following discussion of the Nicollet Ave Light Rail Task Force Whittier Resolution, Lisa Vecoli **moved** to amend the language of the LRT Task Force Motion (from April 7, 2008) as follows (changed are ~~applied~~ and in italics):

Change sentence one of paragraph one: “Based on the currently presented alternatives, the ~~WA-Whittier Alliance~~ (*representing the residents, businesses, and property owners of the Whittier neighborhood*) supports the Kenilworth Alignment ...”

Change sentence one of paragraph two to read: “The ~~Whittier neighborhood and~~ Whittier Alliance recognizes the following benefits of the proposed route 3C of the Southwest Transitway...”

Change paragraph three in the following designations:

“The Whittier Alliance does not support the proposed SW Transit Nicollet Ave. alignment (3C) as currently presented for the following reasons:

- *It contradicts the objectives of the pedestrian overlay*
- The reduced likelihood of a Midtown Greenway trolley or street car...
- ...
- The proposed Nicollet Ave trench from the Greenway and approaching Franklin Ave and the tunnel in the midsection of the Nicollet route may:
 - *Interrupt intra-neighborhood travel*
 - Render Nicollet Ave useless as a through street
 - Render reopening of Nicollet at Kmart infeasible, *contrary to city plan and neighborhood plan*”

Move the second paragraph to the end of the document.

Format the document so that it is all in one font size.

BA Motion 1: The Business Assoc. moves to amend the language of the LRT Task Force resolution. **Motion carried.**

BA Motion 2: The Business Association approves the amended version of the LRT Resolution forwarded by the Nicollet LRT Task Force. **Motion carried.** [*Complete motion at end of BA minutes*]

Washburn Center for Children--request for CUP for use of 2437 Nicollet Ave as a parking lot: Marcy Tollefson (Director of Human Resources and Operations)

Washburn is looking to purchase a vacant lot at 2437 Nicollet Ave to create a surface parking lot to meet the additional parking needs of their employees. They originally intended to request a CUP at this meeting, but are not at that stage in the progress of the purchase or knowing what variances or guidelines they need to follow. Instead, Marcy Tollefson offered an update on their intended use for the site.

Washburn currently estimates a need for 20 to 30 additional parking spots, and anticipate the lot could be leased by other businesses in the area for use at night. Washburn is asking the neighborhood’s approval for the conversion of the lot, with a “sunset clause” of seven years, given their intent to purchase and develop other land for a larger facility within the next seven years. At that time, the lot would be available for future development. Washburn has recently submitted the purchase to Pamar Brothers Company (the current owners of the lot), and the timeline for the project is this summer. Discussion of the potential purchase noted the need for night parking in that area for other businesses, and it was suggested that a parking lot used by Washburn and other area businesses would be mutually beneficial. It was noted that the pedestrian overlay would prohibits a parking lot in excess of 60 linear feet, and that the lot has 100 linear ft. M. Tollefson suggested that there would be more information on the specifics of the development as progress on the purchase moved forward, and that the neighborhood and the Whittier Alliance would be notified of all progress.

Old and New Business

5th Precinct Report: (none given)

May Day Soiree Thursday May 1st, 2008: Please consider attending or donating goods or services to this event. We are looking forward to a night of fun and fundraising!

BA-CPED Grant: There is some money available, which must be designated and spent by May 31st. Funds include money for graffiti cleanup and prevention, and design guidelines.

New business: Erica Christ encouraged discussion of the idea of a Nicollet Avenue sidewalk event, involving night time activities staggered at businesses along Nicollet Ave, potentially occurring in late spring or early next fall.

Meeting adjourned. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen

Next Meeting: May 14, 2008 from 11:30 to 1:00 at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Attachments: Nicollet Ave Light Rail Task Force Whittier Resolution (dated April 7, 2008)

**Nicollet Ave Light Rail Task Force
Whittier Resolution
April 7, 2008
(Amended April 9, 2008; BA)**

BA Motion 2: The Business Association approves the amended version of the LRT Resolution forwarded by the Nicollet LRT Task Force. **Motion carried.**

LRT Task Force Motion as amended and approved by the Whittier Business Assn.:

Based on the currently presented alternatives, the Whittier Alliance (representing the residents, businesses, and property owners of the Whittier neighborhood) supports the Kenilworth Alignment supplemented by a Nicollet Ave streetcar and a Greenway streetcar connecting the SW LRT and the Hiawatha line.

The Whittier Alliance does not support the proposed SW Transit Nicollet Ave. alignment (3C) as currently presented for the following reasons:

- It contradicts the objectives of the pedestrian overlay
- The reduced likelihood of a Midtown Greenway trolley or street car serving the entire Greenway from the western suburbs to the Mississippi River
- The reduced likelihood of a study or implementation of streetcar or trolley along Nicollet Ave
- The likelihood of reduced, rerouted or eliminated bus service currently serving the area
- The proposed line and station locations poorly serve the commercial nodes at 26th & Nicollet and Lake & Nicollet
- Vehicular traffic currently along Nicollet will be forced on to the residential streets
- The proposed Nicollet Ave trench from the Greenway and approaching Franklin Ave and the tunnel in the midsection of the Nicollet route may:
 - Interrupt intra-neighborhood travel
 - Render Nicollet Ave useless as a through street
 - Render reopening of Nicollet at Kmart infeasible, contrary to city plan and neighborhood plan
 - Isolate and render nearly useless the area between Cecil Newman (29th St) and Kmart
 - Eliminate Nicollet Ave parking
 - In the short term and likely in the long term, be detrimental to the commercial and retail business along Nicollet Ave
 - Be disruptive of the urban fabric of Nicollet Ave, the Greenway and the neighborhood

Even without factoring in the immediate (and possible long term) negative economic impact to the Nicollet commercial corridor, the projected cost of construction for the trench and cut & cover tunnel doesn't provide for a well executed system and appears to be under estimated based on the current cost findings for the U of M tunnel, the additional station installation along the Greenway, the cost of required station access & amenities (ADA, stairs, etc) for a trench and the flat increase in projected rider ship.

The Whittier Alliance recognizes the following benefits of the Southwest Transitway.

- Improved transit speed, reliability, frequency and connectivity
- Access to increased customer and investment base
- Minimized traffic congestion through grade separation

**Nicollet Ave Light Rail Task Force
Whittier Resolution
April 7, 2008**

LRT Task Force Motion:

Based on the currently presented alternatives, the WA supports the Kenilworth Alignment supplemented by a Nicollet Ave streetcar and a Greenway streetcar connecting the SW LRT and the Hiawatha line.

The Whittier neighborhood and Whittier Alliance recognizes the following benefits of the proposed route 3C of the Southwest Transitway.

- Improved transit speed, reliability, frequency and connectivity
- Access to increased customer and investment base
- Minimized traffic congestion through grade separation

The Whittier Alliance does not support the proposed SW Transit Nicollet Ave. alignment (3C) as currently presented for the following reasons:

- The reduced likelihood of a Midtown Greenway trolley or street car serving the entire Greenway from the western suburbs to the Mississippi River
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- Even without factoring in the immediate (and possible long term) negative economic impact to the Nicollet commercial corridor, the projected cost of construction for the trench and cut & cover tunnel doesn't provide for a well executed system and appears to be under estimated based on the current cost findings for the U of M tunnel, the additional station installation along the Greenway, the cost of required station access & amenities (ADA, stairs, etc) for a trench and the flat increase in projected ridership.