

WHITTIER ALLIANCE - Business Association – DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday June 11, 2008 7:30-9:00am.

Blaisdell Manor 2322 Blaisdell

Present

Hillary Askew (MCAD), Maurice Battle (7th Day Adventist Church), Erica Christ (Black Forest Inn), Mark Hockley (NICO), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Car Wash), Jeff Orluck (Fallout Arts Initiative), Marcy Tollefson (Washburn Center for Children)

Speakers

Aaron McCallum (Blaisdell Manor)

Staff

Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order by Chair Erica Christ at 7:56am, followed by introductions of all present. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. **Motion** to approve the agenda **carried**. The minutes from the May meeting were presented, and approval was postponed until the July BA meeting, as only one attendee from May was present at the meeting.

Spotlight on Business: Aaron McCallum of Blaisdell Manor

Blaisdell Manor is the largest mansion venue in the Twin cities (at 22,500 square feet), and is popular as a site for wedding receptions. The Manor was built in 1915 by the Bovey family, and its interesting history includes time as a Boys (recreation) Club. They have been hosting and catering weddings at the location since 1932. Their catering service—Three Sons Signature Cuisine—does both corporate and private catering, and generally serves 150 to 200 people a day with box/executive lunches. [Catering requires a minimum of 6 people, but there is no delivery fee if the location is within Minneapolis city limits.] The limited parking in the area restricts the number of people who can be at the Manor at any given time. The average event hosts 225 people, their largest being just over 400; the space could accommodate up to 750 guests for an event with the use of their ballroom, upstairs bar area, and downstairs lounge. This summer, Blaisdell Manor is looking forward to a busy wedding season, as well as bookings during the Republican National Convention.

Three Sons Signature Cuisine has another venue [in the St. Anthony Main Event Centre]. There, they offer a monthly wine tasting on the second Thursday of the month. The cost is \$35 for wine and all you can eat, with a max of 75 attendees to keep the event at a smaller, more personable size. A number of attendees are regulars to the event, which gives it a more familial feel. Aaron's brother Ben is the lead chef for the event, and enjoys pairing wine and food creatively. This month's event is "Japanese June", and tickets are still available [talk to Aaron, or go on-line].

Erica thanked Aaron and Blaisdell Manor for graciously hosting the WA May Day Soiree, and for donating time, space and food for the event. Aaron said the Manor would be willing to continue the partnership for that event.

Nicollet-Franklin Security Camera Feasibility Study: Josie Shardlow (Whittier Alliance)

Josie explained that the Stevens Square Community Organization has created an alcohol-related crime task force that Whittier participates in. She has been meeting with SSCO's Safety and Outreach Coordinator, Dave Delvoe, to include a Whittier voice in those proceedings. (Dave tracks the alcohol-related crime in Stevens Square (and down to 24th in Whittier) [handout of crime stats].) The businesses, residents, and property owners along Nicollet and Franklin are looking at how to address alcohol-related crime in that area. One proposed option is to install safety cameras. Safety cameras have been used successfully in downtown Minneapolis and along Bloomington and Franklin in the 3rd Precinct. The task force is asking the neighborhoods that would be part of the camera-cover area if they are in favor of authorizing a camera feasibility study. The study would determine if there is a need, the number and cost of cameras, as well as their location. The cameras view street activity in a certain area, and will be monitored by the 5th Precinct. They are moveable, are able to turn, tilt and zoom, and are integrated with the City's "shot spotter" system [which locates and tracks gun shots]. The conviction rate is currently 100% when information from the cameras has been used at trial. The data will be applicable for more than just alcohol-related incidents (cf. traffic violations). The City would organize and pay for the feasibility study. The actual cost of the camera system will likely be paid for by the City/police department and private funding (i.e. neighborhood businesses and condo associations), funding from neighborhood organizations would help to prioritize the project.

Discussion

Josie identified **multiple sources for the alcohol-related crime** in that particular area, explaining that the problem is likely due to a confluence of factors: the liquor store on Nicollet and Franklin; the proximity of St. Stevens and Loaves and Fishes; the connectivity to downtown and the Phillips neighborhood, and the services downtown; and the proximity of Fair Oaks Park as a place to hang out. Josie noted that **chronic offenders** seem to be drawn to this area. Paul suggested that connecting the cameras to those in charge of **social services in the area**, and requiring that the camera systems and the social services work together should be a priority and should be stipulated in the neighborhood's support of the camera system. Josie noted St. Stevens and Franklin-Nicollet Liquors have been involved in the task force, and have made some changes to their operations in order to stem crime. It would help if others in that area would be more active on this issue.

Josie reiterated the Inspector Arneson has said she would never replace the current beat cops that patrol Franklin and Nicollet [day shifts 10am-6pm] with cameras; she would prefer beat cops over cameras. One question is **how cameras will actually help with the crime issues** in that area (which includes some drug-dealing and prostitution), and if cameras at Nicollet and Franklin will actually push those crime activities over to Franklin and Third. Josie explained that one of the caveats of the camera placement is that they must be positioned in high pedestrian traffic areas, which is harder to prove about the Franklin and Third intersection. She noted that the camera system will be mobile though, so the feasibility study will address if, how, and where cameras could be relocated in the neighborhood if necessary. Maurice remarked that although there is always concern for crime that is being pushed into the neighborhood, any cut in crime would be welcomed.

It was questioned how the cameras would ultimately belong to, and who would pay for the ongoing funding. Josie noted that the cameras should belong to the 5th precinct, and would likely continue to service the neighborhood if they were later moved to a different crime hot spot. She noted that the Whittier neighborhood is the most impacted section of the 5th Precinct. The specifics of cost, how the cameras will be installed, the placement and location of all cameras, etc, would all be addressed in the feasibility study. Following the study, the neighborhood will be given additional opportunities to discuss the specifics of any proposed safety cameras.

Maurice **moved** to request a **Security Camera Feasibility Study** along Franklin and Nicollet from the City of Minneapolis, and the motion was **seconded** by Marcy.

Further discussion

Paul reiterated his concern that crime will move within the neighborhood, and suggested that having cameras already in place at those anticipated spots would be useful. He argued that encouraging the police to implement and budget for the biggest system possible then scale back if necessary. Erica noted that police meet once a week to track crime trends in the neighborhood, so they respond quickly to any trends; the question is how fast the camera system could move. Aaron asked if the cameras will be part of a larger system within the City at a later time, and it was suggested that perhaps the City is moving in that direction. In response to further questions about the feasibility study, Josie noted that she would bring the questions and issues raised in this meeting to the members of the task force. She will specifically raise questions about who will own the cameras, the social services component, addressing the root problems of the crimes and the later flexibility of the camera system. She will also give them a copy of the minutes from this meeting so they have a sense as to the concerns of the neighborhood. Aaron asked if anyone seems to be opposing the study; Josie noted that at one of the early meetings of the task force, someone passed out flyers about threats to civil liberties. She explained that some of the businesses in that area have their own security cameras, and that there is a traffic camera at the intersection of Nicollet and 19th. Paul also requested that Josie ask if the cameras will have a publicly available web feed that the public can watch in real time. Josie noted that Stevens Square would be writing grants for their portion of any later expenses, and that their neighborhood isn't necessarily in favor of cameras, but is supportive of having a study done.

BA Motion 1: The Business Association requests a Security Camera Feasibility Study from the City of Minneapolis to look at crime activity along Franklin and Nicollet. **Motion Carried.**

BA-CPED Grant: report on 2007-08 funds, and ideas for requests for 2008-09: Marian Biehn

The Whittier Alliance has applied for funding through the Community Planning and Economic Development Grant. Of the \$11,000 that was requested, the WA received \$6,000. The money had to be spent by May 31, and most was spent on façade improvement grants for businesses within the neighborhood. Some of the money was spent on the initial phase of creating the Commercial Design Development Guidelines, as well as some toward general operating costs. The WA will report on how the money was spent, and will request more funds by the end

of the month. In general, the money has gone toward some kind of commercial development (which in the past has included the WA business directory website). Because a new grant request will be submitted in two weeks, this is an opportunity to discuss ideas for grant requests.

Discussion

Erica noted that last year's funds helped finance the creation of a **brochure for Whittier restaurants**, and that those are the kinds of projects that would be feasible for these funds, in terms of scope and cost. Maurice asked if the restaurant brochure was advertised in the bigger downtown hotels. Erica noted that a number of downtown hotels used a third party service which increased the cost of getting the Whittier brochure into those hotels. She noted that another option would be to create a mailing to the concierges of the hotels detailing what services were provided in the neighborhood. "Meet Minneapolis" also mails out a list of all the upcoming conventions and it would be good to get that mailer and be aware who is gathering and at what time. One idea for the funding is to **be more aggressive about the marketing of the restaurant guide**. Marian noted that the brochure was in the process of being printed [about 20,000 copies] through a partnership with the MIA.

It was suggested that some of the money could be used to **hire a marketing person** for the WA. That person could do a small study of the retail and commercial development within Whittier, and recommend the best approaches to marketing the neighborhood to potential business developers, and to potential patrons of the establishments. Another option would be to hire a consultant to look at the best way to increase the creation of new jobs in the neighborhood. Marian noted that Stevens Square is in the process of conducting a retail study of their neighborhood. SS Com. Org. might be a good contact if Whittier followed through on this idea.

Maurice mentioned that he was familiar with a community in California that was revived by the creation of a local movie theater. He asked if there was a way to **encourage a movie theater** to move into the neighborhood. Erica agreed that a movie theater—providing it fit into the character of the neighborhood—would be a good draw for business.

The issue of parking was raised, and the possibility of **funding a parking ramp**. Erica noted that studies have looked at parking, and that the cost of parking ramps make them prohibitive. It was noted that the HCMC development of the GFI site on 28th and Nicollet included a parking lot. Although the tentative plans call for a surface parking lot, the neighborhood is encouraging them to look at the long-term development of the neighborhood and the need for a ramp or multi-level lot. Even the potential Nicollet Ave light rail alignment could impact the need for a park and ride lot within the neighborhood. Whittier is in a position where parking, traffic, and mass transit goals should be prioritized for future development.

Erica noted that every year a street or **outdoor festival** is mentioned as a potential project, but it is estimated that it would require at least \$40,000 to fund a project like that.

It was noted that past money went toward the creation of the **Development Design Guidelines**, and if additional funding could be requested for that project. Marian explained that the Design Guidelines follow the Nicollet Avenue Pedestrian Overlay, which dealt with zoning laws and the creation of guidelines promoting pedestrian use of the corridor. The Design Guidelines focus on the more aesthetic concerns of the commercial corridors, and help to establish neighborhood recommendations for new development (in terms of look and style, public art, building materials, public landscaping, etc). The WA is hiring someone to help create those guidelines as a vision of future (re)development within the neighborhood. Ideally the guidelines would inspire developers to work within the neighborhood vision and be creative within the recommendations. WA has interviewed four organizations about creating the guidelines, which seem to have four different approaches to the process, although two seemed to have a good feel for the neighborhood and neighborhood issues and concerns. Because some neighborhood money has been invested in this process, it would make sense to see the process through until the guidelines have been officially created and adopted by the neighborhood.

It was asked if the neighborhood could get additional money to put toward **landscaping grants**, and Erica noted that some CPED money could be put toward those concerns. Paul suggested that the funds could be divided between landscaping projects that would be more permanent and more annual. There was concern if requests for more money for landscaping would be prioritized by CPED funds.

Paul suggested that the WA designate funds and resources toward **opening up the Kmart site** and facilitate the reopening of Nicollet, as it is high on the neighborhood priority list. Marian noted that the process is happening, even if slowly, and Erica explained that significant process has been made even if there have been no big announcements about progress. Mark added that the owner of the lot has been identified in the last year, which was a huge step forward in the process. Erica noted that it is unlikely that the neighborhood would have significant funds to help, and that perhaps it is best left to the City and the process that is already in place.

Erica introduced the idea of a **Whittier Home Tour**, and suggested that funds could be applied toward a neighborhood tour highlighting the homes that are for sale/have been foreclosed/have been remodeled or renovated. If successful, the event could become an annual event and could promote the benefits of living in Whittier. Paul suggested that if a marketing consultant were hired, part of their responsibility could be to create such a tour. Maurice suggested creating a brochure that highlights the benefits of living of Whittier. Erica noted that the grant money would likely not cover such intense projects, but that the WA could talk to realtors and ask them what would be useful for them and go from there. It was noted that there are 15-18 foreclosures, and 8-12 vacant or boarded houses in the neighborhood. Erica remarked that the City holds workshops on how to buy vacant and boarded homes geared toward first-time foreclosure buyers; perhaps holding a workshop in the neighborhood would be useful. Maurice said that 7th Day Adventist would be willing to hold those kinds of classes. Erica explained that one idea of doing the home tour is to make it into an event, and that partnering with Whittier restaurants could help to give the tour a neighborhood feel. It was also noted that up until 5 years ago, there were very successful historic home tours within the neighborhood, and that those tours help to bring non-residents into the neighborhood.

Marian reiterated that having a multitude of ideas was beneficial. The grant will be written and submitted in two weeks.

Façade Improvement Grant from the City

Erica explained that there is Façade Improvement Grant money available from the City. The grant is similar to what the BA offered last year with CPED funds for façade improvements; the exception is that landscaping is excluded from the City grant. The WA applied for money, and received \$50,000 to distribute to neighborhood businesses along the commercial corridors of Nicollet and Lyndale. The money must be matched 2-1 by the applying business. These funds could make a larger project feasible for smaller businesses that are looking to make improvements. Marian passed out the City's design guidelines for commercial corridors, as a reminder of the type of development the City encourages along those corridors. Erica noted that the WA has two years to distribute the funds. Ideally, it would be great to distribute to 4-5 businesses for more major projects, and the rest for smaller projects.

Announcements

The **26th Annual Hennepin Lake Liquor Wine tasting**, will be tonight June 11, 5-9 pm: proceeds from the event go to South Minneapolis neighborhoods. The proceeds from any tickets sold through the Whittier Alliance go directly to the WA. Tickets are available in advance for \$25; contact the WA for more details. Jeff announced the Sixth Annual **Fallout ArtFest** on July 19 from noon to 10 pm, with an Indie FilmFest the night before at 7pm. Fallout is a great neighborhood festival, and will have art, outdoor music and performers, and activities for kids. The festival is located on 26th and Stevens, and draws people from all over the City. There will be free performances of **theater in Fair Oaks Park**: On June 19 at 2pm, Cromulet Shakespeare Company presents "Love's Labour's Lost"; July 17 at 7pm, Open Eye Figure Theatre presents "The Adventures of Juan Bobo"; July 31 at 7pm Heart of the Beast presents "On the Day You Were Born". All performances will be outside in the park; MIA will be open during those hours for any necessary amenities. The WA is working with local artists to create a poster to publicize the event. The performances are sponsored by the WA; they are a positive way to use the park. It was asked if 7th Day Adventist was still planning to do movie nights; Maurice noted that he is looking for a volunteer to run the shows.

Meeting adjourned at 9:36am. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

Next Meeting: July 9, 2008 at AFC Mortgage 2110 Nicollet Avenue, time TBA

Attachments: none