

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Business Association Committee – DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday March 11, 2009 4-5:30pm at Old Arizona, 2821 Nicollet Ave S

Attendees Erica Christ (Black Forrest Inn, BA Chair), Pastor John Darlington (Simpson United Methodist), Elizabeth Grzechowiak (AZIA), Nick Grzechowiak (AZIA), Mike Harristhal (HCMC), Paula Horan, Jim Hubal (Edina Realty), Darcy Knight (Old Arizona), Aaron McCallum (Three Sons Signature Cuisine), Dan McGough (McGough Contractors—HCMC) Julie Moline (HCMC), Gary Nyberg (HGA Architects—HCMC), Councilmember Ralph Remington, Deb Sweetland (HCMC), Marcy Tollefson (Washburn Center for Children), Elizabeth Trumble (Old Arizona), Lisa Vecoli (MIA)

Staff Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen, Becky Neamy

Call to Order at 4:06pm by Erica Christ, followed by introductions. Erica recognized the Whittier Alliance meeting policies. A **Motion** to approve the agenda with the following additions: HCMC announcement for demolition; May Day Soiree and Annual Meeting announcement; vacant storefronts ordinance update; and follow-up to the February 5th Precinct report; was **carried**. Attendees were given time to review the minutes and make additions or corrections (there were none offered). A **Motion** to approve the February 11, 2009 BA minutes was **carried**.

Liz followed-up on the February report of **car break-ins at businesses along Nicollet**: At that BA meeting, Lt. Hayhoe had responded to questions about the 911/311 policy and he had affirmed police interest in viewing any security tapes of break-ins. After an early morning break-in at Azia to which the police did not respond, Liz contacted Marian and crime prevention specialist Chelsea Adams. The police response to the concerns of area businesses has been underwhelming. Inspector Kris Arneson did email Marian, and said a policy change asks callers to report a break-in to 311, and only call 911 if the break-in is in progress or if there is physical evidence at the scene. Azia has installed additional lighting, and paid for surveillance notification signs, but management feels frustrated by the lack of police concern over repeated incidents. Marian noted the WA office collects data on thefts from motor vehicles, and could report issues to the LEG group highlighting areas of concern. Marian will check to see if auto break-ins is part of the neighborhood policing plan. Liz **moved** that the BA send a letter regarding the negative impact of theft from motor vehicles to the 5th Precinct and to the neighborhood's city councilmember, and it was **seconded**.

BA Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to send a letter regarding the negative impact of theft from motor vehicles in the Whittier neighborhood—and specifically around 26th and Nicollet—and the dissatisfaction with the current process of addressing the problems (the prioritization of the calls placed to 911/311 and the lack of police response) to Lt. Hayhoe and Inspector Arneson of the MPD 5th Precinct, and Councilmember Lilligen. **Motion Carried**.

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS: OLD ARIZONA (ELIZABETH TRUMBLE & DARCY KNIGHT) Old Arizona includes a center for the performing arts/non-profit-theater, a chocolate lounge and tea store, a café and wine bar (opening in early spring), and a wine and spirit shop (opening in April). They also offer a free after-school program for teen girls in the arts. The building itself dates to 1906 when it housed a company that painted backdrops for vaudeville shows. The Log Cabin Flower shop that sits in the courtyard was moved from another section of the neighborhood and saved from demolition. Old Arizona has won a Whittier Alliance Good Business award, and the owners have also won awards from other foundations for their involvement in the community.

HCMC ANNOUNCEMENT: DEMOLITION SCHEDULE HCMC is moving forward on the plans for demolition at the former GFI site on the block of 28th and Nicollet. Dan McGough, of McGough Contractors, will be the lead on the demo process. The intent is to start in April and have the demolition finished by early June, with the goal of starting on the build process in late June. The demolition process will start with utility disconnects then the abatement of asbestos and soil erosion control. There should be a 6 week period of demolitions. They will take dust control measures, and have a perimeter security fence. There will be a full-time supervisor on site that can field calls and will coordinate all the work. McGough plans to work 7am to 5 or so, with noise levels on par with a typical construction site. The staging will take place mostly onsite; there will be some street closures for electric disconnects (HCMC will provide notice beforehand to the neighboring businesses). The initial demolition process is equipment heavy—there should be no more than 10 workers on-site, who will try to park on-site as much as possible. McGough anticipates using Blaisdell and working toward Lake and out to 35W, although the one-ways, congestion on Pillsbury, and current traffic conditions will affect what routes they will ultimately use. There shouldn't be traffic headed north into the neighborhood. Old Arizona has parking in the lot at 28th and Nicollet; Deb/HCMC will check the liability issues of providing parking on-site during the demolition. HCMC anticipates having a contractor on board in 6-8 weeks.

PRESENTATION: SOUTHWEST TRANSIT LINE (KATIE WALKER OF SOUTHWEST TRANSITWAY) Katie overviewed the southwest light rail line process and the technical aspects of the alternative light rail transit line proposed by Cmbr Remington. The scoping process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was held September 08 to January 09. The scoping process was used assess the environmental impact of the proposed lines and understand the potential mitigation measures that would be necessary to implement the various LRT options. Over 350 individuals submitted 900 comments to the committee. Cmbr Remington submitted an alternative to the proposed 3C (Nicollet) alignment, using Blaisdell or 1st Avenues (as the line would go through Whittier) rather than Nicollet Ave, and using 11th/12th rather than

Nicollet Mall in downtown/Steven's Square. The Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) recommended that Remington's alignment—termed the LRT 3C (11th/12th) Sub-Alternative—be included in the transitway DEIS, along with the 3C Nicollet Mall Sub-Alternative, the 3A Kenilworth alignment and the 1A alignment.

The 3C 11th/12th Sub-Alternative would follow the route of the 3C Nicollet Sub-Alt until it turns off the Midtown Greenway Corridor near Lake/Blaisdell. The LRT would then tunnel under Blaisdell or 1st Avenue instead of tunneling under Nicollet. The line would re-emerge near Franklin. Stops for the variations of this line would be near 28th and Franklin. Both of those stops were projected as open air stations; it now looks as if any stop near Nicollet and Lake would need to be underground. The PAC is currently refining the engineering plans & going into more detail for each alignment.

The Southwest Transitway project is in the process of applying evaluation measures to the alternatives. The evaluation measures include looking at: what has changed since the end of 2006 (the original study of the alternatives); changes in city policy/comprehensive plans (policy changes will need to be reflected); changes in development/planned and ongoing projects (such as the HCMC clinic in Whittier); and any major plans/city projects (the Twins Stadium, the Basset Creek Development Project, etc). The committee will also update the information on the cost and ridership expectation, recalculate the cost-effectiveness index, and examine engineering issues, right of way considerations, and the need for residential and commercial relocation due to line placement. During the first phase of the environmental work, the committee collected an inventory of the local historical and cultural properties, sites sensitive to noise and vibration, and parks, contaminated sites, wetlands and waterbodies. The intent is to catalogue and understand the local environmental issues for each specific line. The committee should name the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) early this summer; the rest of 2009 will be used to gather more specifics about the LPA and its particular community impact and potential cost.

Councilmember Remington explained that he proposed this alignment to better serve the core of the city and so the urban community could use alt-transit to reach suburban jobs. He felt that using Nicollet would interrupt the businesses during the construction of the line and that use of a nearby residential street, although disruptive, would enable the route to go through the city. He would prefer that a LRT serve the core of Minneapolis rather than running along the sparsely populated Kenilworth trail.

Attendee questions: would a streetcar along Nicollet/the greenway better meet the neighborhood's needs? would Nicollet be open for extra traffic needs if there were construction on Blaisdell/First? would community members walk to/use the proposed stops at Franklin and 28th—or would the stops be too far to walk to? will a LRT line impact the reopening of Nicollet? would underground stations/rail lines require eminent domain? was the freeway wall along 35W looked at as potential option? is there any data that show how the Hiawatha line has impacted businesses in its proximity?

Other comments: the narrowness of First Avenue with no area for staging; the potential loss of livability for residents if either First or Blaisdell is under construction; First Avenue includes a section in the Historic District; both streets have affordable housing units; the impact to trees and landscaping; a Kenilworth line may increase the urban density (by adding businesses along the trail); and, the need for research on the impact of LRT to businesses.

Remington noted that federal funds will be used for LRT, while a streetcar would require city funds. The reopening of Nicollet is in the city's comprehensive plan so it must be considered in any of the LRT decisions. The city is looking at all the situations that would justify eminent domain. Katie noted almost every street was considered at some point; one problem with being next to the freeway is the limitation of access on one side. Southwest Transitway will use census data to look at affordable housing units and try to identify sensitive populations so lower-income groups don't bear a disproportionate amount of burden. The HCMC development was also noted as a new factor in assessing the Blaisdell-Nicollet-1st Ave line. Katie suggested following the Central Corridor project to see how the affected communities go through the process; the area does have a business advisory committee working on the issue. The Central project is scheduled to open in 2014; the Southwest line's earliest projections are 2015 but 2017 is more realistic.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS/NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATES Virtual Public Art Installation: The BA is using some CPED funds to commission virtual public art projects. Two artists, plus a class from MCAD, will present at the May BA meeting. The **WA Annual Meeting** will be April 2 at Whittier School. The Good Business & Neighbor Awards will be presented at the meeting. There needs to be 50 voting attendees to make quorum; please invite your neighboring businesses. The BA will elect representatives to the Board at the April BA meeting (2 non-profit, 2 for-profit, plus the BA chair). The WA May Day Soiree will be Friday May 1 at Blaisdell Manor. The event will feature Whittier dining, live entertainment, and auction/raffle items. There are funds available in the office for graffiti removal. The proposed city **Vacant Storefront Ordinance** has been revised, and will go before the city for more public comment before adoption. The ordinance will target vacant and derelict properties through a penalty fee. Marian has no update on the proposed fire ordinances (from December BA). There is discussion of a new mall catering to Somali business owners near Savers/Target/Rainbow. Source MN/Fallout raised close to \$1,000 and collected clothing at their Fundraiser for Homeless Youth a few weeks ago. The attendees welcomed new Community Organizer Becky Neamy.

Meeting adjourned at 5:38 pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen. **Next meeting: April 8 (TBA).**