

**Whittier Alliance Business Association Committee- Draft Minutes**  
**Wednesday, August 12, 2009 4-6 pm at Azia 2550 Nicollet Ave.**

**Attendees:** Beverly Down (Go Small Biz), Carolyn Humphrey (Gale Mansion/ AAUW), David Schuster (The Lost and Found), Jim Hubal (Edina Realty), Paul Jablosky (Nic Carwash), Erica Christ (Black Forest), CM Robert Lilligren, Becky Olson (Fair Oaks Apartments), Kevin Schill (Simpson Church), Lisa Vecoli (MIA), Sharon Lund (Falls Agency)

**Call to Order:** By Erica Christ, BA Chair at 4:13 followed by introductions. Erica recognized the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion was made to have CM Lilligren speak before the Spotlight on Business on the agenda, due to another commitment. Motion seconded and carried. The review and approval of the BA Committee Minutes for July 8, 2009 was postponed to the September BA meeting. David Schuster from Lost and Found nominated himself for the vacant BA-For Profit board seat. It was suggested that the BA Committee have an election for the position. David briefly spoke about his business and his experience within Whittier, and why he would like to become a board member. A **motion** was made to elect David as the BA-For Profit Board seat. **Motion passed** unanimously.

**COUNCILMAN LILLGREN-City Update.** Minneapolis is experiencing its lowest crime levels than it has in years. Downtown improvement district, people that are downstairs work as concierge to offer directions, connect people to one another. Check them out down town. Minneapolis was recently voted one of the best places to work in the US. (what publication?) The Mayor will be proposing the new budget in August. It will then be presented to the City Council in October, where amendments will be made for the final review in December. There will be two hearings open to the public prior to the final review in December. After the city budget was approved in December of 2008, the governor cut over \$18 million in aid to cities for the 2009 operating budget in anticipation of the worsening economic conditions. In response to the state aid cuts, the city cut its budget early in 2009 which helped to hold the City finances pretty solid for the balance of the year. There will be no more budget cuts to the 2009 budget, however, there will be some in the 2010 operating budget. Lilligren said that he thought the current budget was in good condition. **Street light fee:** Lilligren said that the city is looking for additional streams of revenue outside of property taxes. They are proposing a street lighting fee, which will be a flat level fee that will be added on to property owners. If this fee is not implemented the city will need to raise an additional \$30 million per year. The Council will vote on the street light fee on Friday, Aug. 14. At this point the city council is operating on a 8% annual tax increase. The mayor will be posting the 2010 budget later this week.

**Questions and Comments:** Street lights- Liz said that people do not want to be assessed for an additional \$20 if they are already paying about \$500 a month in taxes. Erica asked how could a fee be assessed if there has not yet been an official number calculated. Lilligren said that he feels that this is a basic service that should be included in taxes, and is leaning to not support the increase. Paul, who owns multiple businesses, said that he is getting tired of all the fees and taxes, and he is thinking that it is almost cheaper for him to just get rid of the businesses than keep them. Liz asked if there will ever be a break in commercial taxes? Lilligren said he was not sure and that he will see if he can have someone from the tax revenue department come to speak about commercial city taxes at a later meeting. What is the city doing to cut costs and not just increase revenue? City is looking to review the pension payment and health care plans. This is a \$35 million program that applies to all city employees. Lilligren did not know if service cuts will entail government job cuts. Will there be a cutting of NRP funds for neighborhood organizations? This will be debated in the 2010 budget.

**CLIC- Capital Long-Range Improvement Committee 5 year long range projected plan-** The reopening of Nicollet at Kmart is in the 2012 plan. The largest problem is site control.

**Southwest Light Rail-** There is a meeting coming up on Thursday Aug. 13, 2009 at the Library at 11:30. The project has been in the works for several years and now they are looking to select the preferred light rail. Reviewed the updated data of the cost and ridership of the A and C

alignment routes. The group then reviewed the Cost Effectiveness Indicator requirements for the city to receive federal funding. The A line is within the CEI cost requirements whereas the C lines are not. The city has decided to allow the LTR route to be a data/cost driven decision. Lilligren said that there is still a strong interest in the Nicollet street cars, however, there is no federal funding for this type of project at this time. Lilligren thought that the WA board and members should create a plan to propose to city officials as to why Nicollet is the most appropriate location for the street car.

**Spotlight on Business**- Azia opened 6 years ago as an Asian fusion restaurant. Shortly after they added the Caterpillar lounge; which offers music seven nights a week and a lounge feel. Their most recent addition is Amonie Sushi bar. They are open 7 days a week from 11am- 2 am, and have two happy hours nightly from 3-6pm and from 10pm-12 am. They just started opening at Sun. at 11 for Bloody Mary bar and light dim sum menu.

**Resurrection 2 of the Commercial Corridor-Eat Street**- Sharon Lund is looking to refresh the uniqueness of neighborhood and play up on the international cultures that are represented in the neighborhood. There was a survey done several years ago that asked people what they thought of as Eat Street. People enjoyed Eat Street as a destination but did not associate it with Whittier. People know “downtown” and “Uptown” as destinations not Whittier. At this point we have Eat Street and other small businesses. What can we do to improve the neighborhood's identity, to reflect not just the food component but also the other types of businesses that are in the neighborhood? We need to attract people from outside the neighborhood to spend money here. How do we do this? Could expand the brand of Eat Street to encompass all aspects of retail.

The group's immediate goals are to act together to send a strong message to employers who employ people from outside of Minneapolis as to: what Eat Street can offer their employees; the amenities of the neighborhood, and also allay their fears of crime. Offer newsletter type info and web to define the neighborhood and what it has to offer. Develop a “Passport to Whittier” retail, to encourage people to “travel” to other locations in the neighborhood. Have a funding component so that people can add or subtract money on the card (similar to a rechargeable gift card), that offers rewards to customers such as the Parasole card. We need to find at least 3 touch points as to how we can reach out to our potential partners. Include music and entertainment, movies or theater. Maybe host two large events in both the spring and fall where people can use their passports. Sharon would like to create a mini task force to address this subject.

Lisa said we truly have two kinds of populations that we are trying to address: the people who live and work here, and then the people that are visitors to the neighborhood. She thought that the passport idea would work great with the people who live here, but not for those that are visiting the neighborhood. There will be an open group meeting at the Falls Agency on Thursday at 4pm to discuss these issues and share ideas. Please come.

**Commercial Corridor Guidelines**- They are now up on the web. We are still taking feedback as they are in draft form. Façade improvement grant is still available. Graffiti removal supplies and funds are still available. We are still looking for a place to meet next month on Sep. 9.

**New and Old Business**- There are several new developments being proposed to the neighborhood: Trustone Financial on 28<sup>th</sup> and Lyndale, and a mixed use rental property proposal on 27<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet. Presented at Community Issues meeting, there was not a lot of support for either projects due to design for Trustone and rental component of Master's development.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:48.** Minutes submitted by Becky Neamy  
**Next meeting:** Sep. 16, 2009