

Whittier Alliance-Community Issues Committee- DRAFT MINUTES
Monday, October 10, 2011, Whittier Park Recreation Center

Attendees: Greg Beckel, A. Covegrove, Niani Cunningham, John Donahue, Verne Greenlee, Jim Harley, Mr. Hwong, Laura Jean, Justin Kader, Willow Kreibich, Linda Martin, Diane Moe, Jeff Nelson, Felino de la Pena, Daniel Phang, Jade Robinson, Yaneli Rojas, David Schroth, David Schuster, Josie Shardlow, Chad Whittlef,
Presenters: 5th Precinct Reps., Phil Rooney and guests, Anita Tabb, Osla Thomason, Sam Turner,
Staff: Marian Biehn, Lisa Hermanson, Jen Wendlund

Call to order at 6:17 by Maurice Battle, CI Chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion to **approve the agenda** was made, and carried. The September CI minutes were **approved**.

Announcements and Community Comments

Comments and Topics from Whittier Residents

Construction at the Joe's Chicken Shack on 26th St and 1st Ave is due to renovation by Bill and Nancy Blanski who bought the property about 2 years ago. They are planning to have a spiritual retreat business where clients could reserve a room and spend time in reflection and spiritual renewal. There will be 3 guest suites, and the Blanski's will live on 3rd floor. There is currently no timeline as to when they will open. They have done roof work and tuckpointing and will be installing period-appropriate windows, but the bay window will not be replaced. This property is not designated as historic. Bill is an architect with HGA and Nancy owns Vente—a meditation and spiritual business.

5th Precinct Report: Officers have been visiting businesses along Nicollet so that owners may voice concerns. Many report problems related to loitering and trespassing. Since the Franklin Liquors shooting, the area has calmed down some and is projected to continue to calm down as winter approaches, along with the entire precinct. Violators as well as crime may also be shifting east on Franklin toward Clinton. The Community Response Team has been doing details at night at two different locations. At Washburn Fair Oaks Park there has been a continued nuisance of 8-15 Somali youth gathered and drinking excessively. They have been observed storing their liquor bottles in garbage cans so they aren't in possession of an open bottle. Police are working with park police figuring out how to enforce the no drinking in the park ordinance—such as restricting park usage for those caught with open bottles or that have to be taken to detox. Report drinking on park premises to 911. A description of the violators should be given. Police have also been patrolling the area watching for the problem. There are two areas being targeted in the n'hood for narcotics sales.

Senate Dist. 61 Candidate Forum: The forum will be held at Whittier Park and Rec Center on Tues., Oct 11th. All four candidates are expected to attend. The election will be to fill the seat Linda Bergen vacated this past summer. Residents are welcome to submit questions in advance or bring them to the forum. Since only two hours are allotted for the entire forum, there is no guarantee that all questions will be addressed. The election is on Oct. 18th. You can register at the polls. See the WA website for polling locations. The League of Women Voters will be moderating with KFAI recording. The forum is cosponsored by Stevens Square Community Organization.

Whittier Clean-Up—Sat., Oct. 29 1-4 pm: There is still more room for teams to register. Six of the nine clean up areas are represented. Invite people in your building, on your block or in your family. WA would prefer teams to register one week in advance so team leaders can pick up supplies. Prizes will be given out for the best individual costume or for the best dressed team as well as garbage collection prizes. Spyhouse will provide warm beverages and pastries as a sponsor. Teams will meet back at the Rec. Center for social hour.

Whittier Green Fair—Sat., Nov. 12: So far a number of different organizations have registered to have booths. The Wedge will cater with pinwheels and fruit tray. Renters can talk about community

gardens. Homeowners can visit a reuse center for recycled building materials and historic preservation. There is something for everyone from renters and homeowners to business owners and children. WA is still looking for volunteers to help before and during this event.

Wine Tasting—Wed., Oct. 26 6-9 pm Tickets \$25: The Wine Tasting is a fundraiser that supports n’hoods in South Minneapolis. Tickets are available in advance or at door. Proceeds from tickets bought advance go to WA for n’hood activities and outreach. There will be over 400 wines to sample and food from Chef Tim McKee. See WA website for tickets. The event will be at Calhoun Sq. on the 1st and 2nd floors and is usually well-attended and enjoyed by all.

Mpls Park & Rec—Anita Tabb, Park Representative: The Chinese Friendship Garden (CFG) is still in conversation mode. The Park Board is seeking input from residents. CFG Society came to the Mpls park & rec board interested in installing a northern China Friendship Garden in Minneapolis. The Society presented their plan to the Whittier neighborhood for the Garden in the SE quadrant of Washburn Fair Oaks Park. The community originally said it was interested in continuing to explore the possibility of a CFG, but considerable funds are needed. The Mpls park & rec board has agreed to allow this as long as the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) gives permission to move forward, meaning the garden has to meet historic guidelines since Washburn Fair Oaks park is in the Historic District. CFG Society needs to find historically accurate associations with the CFG and the WFO Park. There is nothing is concrete at this point. Concerns were that it might disturb people who play volleyball and are active in that area. Would it work better in another portion of the park? Opinions differed on whether the park should be primarily for athletic and playful activity or for an opportunity to enjoy outdoor aesthetics or whether both options could work in tandem. Residents felt that the park board and CFG Society was infringing on a valued space in the park. There is no indication that this is being defended. The consensus was that CFG Society and the park board need to come together and define why that particular spot is necessary. The park board wants a community advisory committee to “hammer out” a lot of the details, but it’s difficult to be doing that without setting some plans first. There is underutilization on Clinton field and the park board needs to do some work there, but volleyball nets could be at Clinton Field rather than Washburn Fair Oaks. There is already one sand volleyball court there. The CFG Society looked at this particular location and liked the topography because it looked like they could do like in traditional northern Chinese Gardens, but it might still be possible to bring up a change of the location. Others believed the main reason may be for that location is to be seen on certain streets. The community has always used this park on its own terms. There is not a strong connection with the Chinese community in this area, and Tibetan community would be very upset about this plan. It has bigger ramifications than just a garden. This issue has been traditionally split down the middle whether the community wants it or not, and the project is still working with HPC.

Diane Moe also shared that Whittier Park is looking for ideas such as adult volleyball night. She would appreciate other youth and adult programming ideas.

2600 2nd Ave. S.—Osla Thompson Ms. Thompson is applying for two variances to build a new garage on corner of 26th St. and 2 Ave S. Copies of the plans were distributed. The current two car garage was built several years ago, and property lines have changed since, making the garage’s current placement too close to adjacent properties. She wants to put it in same position, and does not want to build closer to 26th St. as the garage would be too close to the sidewalk. The design of the garage will closely mimic the appearance of the house. The current garage has a 4.5x12 pitch and is falling in; the house has a 12x12 pitch. On the 26th St side there will be a rake—a gable pitch surface—but the eaves will not cross the property line. For her to rebuild the garage in any direction, she needs at least one variance. Proposed are 2 variances to build within the allowable distance of her neighbors’ property lines versus encroaching on the public sidewalk. Both neighbors are supportive. The property is not in a historic district. Part of the city variance application requires notification of n’hood.

CI Motion1: The Community Issue Committee supports a variance request to reduce the 5' minimum setback requirement on the south side property line of 2600 2nd Ave S. to allow the construction of a new garage contingent upon written verification of neighbor's support.

Motion carried 12-0-2

CI Motion2: The Community Issue Committee supports a variance request to reduce the 5' minimum setback requirement on the west side property line of 2600 2nd Ave S. to allow the construction of a new garage contingent upon written verification of neighbor's support.

Motion carried 12-0-2

2807-09 Pillsbury—Lyndale Youth Farm & Market—Phil Rooney Youth Farm is proposing building youth-run garden at 2807 and 2809 Pillsbury Ave. It is currently a city-owned site. Youth Farm's mission is to involve youth in growing food to develop skill and appreciation. The program started in the Lyndale n'hood 17 yrs ago and has since expanded to several other Minneapolis n'hoods as well as one in St. Paul. Annually, 500 youth grow over 6000 lbs. of food, with roles for youth ages 9-18 years. Ages 9-11 learn skills such as basic farming, basic cooking, respect and conflict management. Service projects to contribute to and learn about the n'hood and leadership are targeted toward 12-14 yr. olds. The oldest age group (15-18) benefit from the teen employment program, leadership opportunities such as an internship with the farm and planning the upcoming spring layout. Youth Farm would like to expand to the Whittier n'hood and contribute to it by offering a free youth program that's not currently offered, utilizing the two adjacent lots of 2807 and 2809 Pillsbury. These lots have been vacant for over ten years. Also, the city does not consider 2807 (about 3000 ft²) a buildable site and wants a five year lease, which aligns well with Youth Farm's needs. Though the other lot, 2809 is a larger, buildable site, the City will allow Youth Farm to use it. Due to this difference, the garden will remain on 2807 and 2809 will be utilized as an activity space. Currently, there are no plans for development at 2809, and Youth Farm will cooperate if viable plans do arise. The city would also like to see this happen. Youth farm would begin recruiting youth from Whittier: about 5 per summer. There would also be an after school program at Whittier elementary. Food could be sold to local businesses such as Old Arizona. The children harvest, process, and bike the food to family doors. A group tried to start a community garden on the site a few years ago but were faced with irrigation and insurance barriers. Due to their organization and track record, Youth Farm has solutions to these barriers. They are able to obtain permission to use water from fire hydrants or snake a hose through the sewer system to irrigate the garden. Also, the City requires a \$2 million liability insurance policy, which Youth Farm already has in place at other sites. The final barrier is the fact that Whittier is a transitional n'hood, where many children do not spend their entire childhood. Youth Farm is hoping that farm space in the n'hood would engage kids and neighbors in building and organizing, which gives families incentives to remain in Whittier. Youth Farm's funding is mainly from corporate and family foundations as well as individual donations. Some funding is occasionally available through government contracts. Only about 1% of Youth Farm funding comes from the sale of produce, and those proceeds go directly to programming. Support for Youth Farm was shown by a mother whose now grown children were part of the original Youth Farm; she said it was very beneficial to their growth. To move forward, Youth Farm needs letters of support from WA, adjacent property owners, and Councilmember Lilligren. Youth Farm has tried to contact the adjacent property owners to no avail.

CI Motion3: The Community Issues Committee supports a Youth Farm community garden at 2807 Pillsbury Ave. contingent upon letters of support from immediate neighbors. **Motion Carried 14-0-0**

CI Motion4: The Community Issues Committee supports use of the lot at 2809 Pillsbury Ave. for Youth Farm community garden activities contingent upon letters of support from immediate neighbors. **Motion Carried 14-0-0**

2937 Garfield Ave—US Internet—Sam Turner Minneapolis Public Wifi Network is planning a project that would serve the Whittier n’hood with fiber-optic cable for faster public internet speeds. Minneapolis is home to one of the fastest, most reliable municipal wifi networks, but the network is reaching its limits. US Internet and the City want to be able to offer the same thing as competitors at a cheaper price. Each fiber-optic cable contains 1 gigabit (internet speed) and will service one taxed lot directly from the facility. This project has been piloted (215 out of 315 possible customers used it and approved), and is now at the planning stage for most of South Minneapolis. Rather than putting fiber optic cabinets on the blvds on every block, it has been proposed that US Internet get rid of the cabinets and build a central office at 2937 Garfield. US Internet and the planning commission have come up with a building that they feel would fit in aesthetically with the n’hood and is in line with the current expansion plan. They are proposing a 32x48x10 ft. brick over cinder block building with a landscape plan. It would be set back 15 ft. to accommodate a pocket park and green wall. Nothing is finalized yet, and US Internet is willing to take recommendations, such as whether to use a surface coating for graffiti. US Internet will need a conditional use permit to build a telecommunications exchange. City ordinance requires the roof to be flat, US Internet would like a variance to have a 12 inch pitch in the roof to accommodate snow; it would not be seen due to wall height. Because this building will not be occupied by people, there will be no water to the building. Water and fiber optics do not mix. The rendering indicates the roof as green but there will not be a “green roof.” This project will hit 95% of people in each product area—100% is not cost-efficient because it is double the price. Densely populated areas need fiber optics so there isn’t any interference. There have been growing concerns about radioactive waves and electromagnetic interference; this is not applicable because fiber optics are made of glass and only pass light through them, so there is no static. The building will cost \$75,000-100,000, and is an important part of the project. It will be routinely checked and maintained by trucks that roll in daily to access equipment. It will also be monitored by the network operations center in Minnetonka.

CI Motion5: The Community Issues Committee supports a request for conditional use permit by US Internet for a communications exchange at 2937 Garfield Ave. **Motion Carried 11-0-0**

CI Motion6: The Community Issues Committee supports a variance request by US Internet for a set back from 8 ft. to 15 ft. at 2937 Garfield Ave. **Motion Carried 11-0-0**

CI Motion7: The Community Issues Committee supports a variance request by US Internet for a 12 inch pitch on the roof of the communication exchange at 2937 Garfield Ave. **Motion Carried 11-0-0**

Old / New Business

35W transit access update: The project advisory committee is still meeting and has narrowed it down to 2 designs. WA did prepare some renderings to show the preferred scale from a neighborhood development standpoint such as a lower profile bus station and retention the “previously agreed upon width” is 190 ft., which includes 1.5 lanes in each direction. WA’s renderings also included a contained transit station and a minimum impact on the street below – mainly keep the n’hood feel of Lake St. and keep it at its current width. Hennepin County, MNDOT, the City and the Metropolitan Council are all talking about widening Lake St. The big question right now is money. No one has it or wants to spend it.

Meeting adjourned: 8:10pm

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Hermanson, Whittier Alliance Administrative Assistant

Next meeting: Monday, November 14th, 2011