

**WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Community Issues Committee – DRAFT MINUTES**

Monday May 11, 2009 6–8:30pm at Whittier International Elementary School

**Attendees** Liban Ahmed, Jim Baker, Anthony Carchedi, Chris Carrow, Erica Christ, Mahmood Darvish, Mohammad Darwith, Mary Doffing, Joseph Fletcher, Michael Garr, Charles Glasgow, Ben Gross, Verne Greenlee, Eric Grumdahl, Jill Hamilton, Tony Hull, Peter Jochimsen, Shaun Laden, Melo Lawson, Rachel Maccabee, Thabt Mohamed, Destin Nygard, Felino de la Pena, Mahmoud Qassem, Dave Sasse, Brent Smith, Scott Smith, Soren Sorensen, Jory Steinman, Daphna Stromberg, Michael Tupper, John Wilson; Chelsea Adams (CPS, MPD 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct), Councilmember Lilligren, Julie Moline (HCMC), Ken Rowe (Henn Co), Patrick Todd (City of Mpls)

**Staff** Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen, Becky Neamy

**Call to Order** at 6:09pm by Destin Nygard, CI committee chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion to approve the agenda was carried, followed by introductions. Attendees were given time to review the April minutes; a **motion** to approve the April 13, 2009 CI minutes was **carried**.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & COMMUNITY COMMENTS** **Trader Joe's update:** The proposed development of Le Parisien 2 (with a Trader Joe's; 22<sup>nd</sup> and Lyndale) needs approval from the state legislature for an exception to the liquor statute to move forward as planned. The exception would give the City of Mpls the authority to consider a liquor license for Trader Joe's even though they are within 2000 feet of another liquor store. The consideration has been brought to the MN House and Senate, who will approve or deny the exception and move the development into City review. Contact your local legislators, Rep. Karen Clark and Linda Berglin to voice your opinion of the exemption.

**HCMC demolition/construction of clinic update (Julie Moline):** The buildings are down; they are working to remove the shallow foundation and then take additional soil samplings. Next month they will have a more defined schedule of construction, a probable date for the groundbreaking ceremony, and an estimated date of completion. McGough Construction has been taking daily photos of the demolition for HCMC's archival records. 2810 Nicollet will be the clinic's official address. Please email Marian with any comments or concerns and she will pass them on. **Attendee comments:** A resident thanked HCMC for building on the site and looked forward to their more diligent upkeep of the grounds/sidewalks; in prior winters the sidewalks were poorly maintained and were dangerous for pedestrians.

**5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Report** (Chelsea Adams, Crime Prevention Specialist): Upcoming events at the 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct include block leader training for new leaders, Tuesday May 12 from 6:30 to 8pm at the precinct (3101 Nicollet). From 8-9 there will be networking for current block leaders. Becky has a sign-up sheet if you would like to become a contact for your block. Thursday, May 14 from 5-7pm, the 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct will have an open house, with refreshments, K9, bomb squad and demonstrations and informational sessions with many of their departments. There is a handout of the city resource list; on the back is information on how to get police reports online. There is also a link to an e-alert, to sign up to receive crime information from the city. **Crime stats for April:** reported crime is down 3.28% compared to this time last year. Burglaries and aggravated assault are the two areas in which crime is up. Crime trends: a number of laundry room burglaries; an uptake in crime in residences where there is no air conditioning and people open their windows instead (please brace them so they can't open more than 6"); put your valuables in your trunk before arriving at your destination; a scam involving phone calls late at night, claiming to be fraud protection from your credit card company and asking for the card numbers for verification; people asking to use the restrooms or phone at a small business and using that as a way to gain access behind the desks and steal wallets/purses (please send them to a nearby public restroom).

**May Day Soiree update** (Marian): Thanks to everyone who could attend and special thanks to all the businesses who donated their time and goods. The event netted about \$12.5k, which will be added to the WA's reserve funds.

**MEDITERRANEAN MARKET AT 2551 LYNDALE AVE SOUTH: REQUEST TO EXTEND HOURS OF OPERATION (THABT MOHAMED)** The Mediterranean Market/Lyndale Deli & Grocery has been open 4 years, serving Mediterranean food and operating a small grocery. Their current hours of operation are from 10am to 11pm Sunday through Thursday, and until midnight on Friday and Saturday nights. In the summers, they have been staying open until 3 am to serve the crowds exiting nearby bars and other businesses. They recently received a letter from the city notifying them they were in violation of their permitted hours of operation which includes an 11pm/midnight close. The Market is now applying for a conditional use permit to extend their hours of operation to 10am to 3am, 7 days a week. The Market's employees have collected over 200 signatures from neighbors in support of the extended hours. They feel staying open later hours does a service for the community, as it provides an alcohol-free environment which is open late, and a nearby place to stop for late night grocery needs. They have applied with the city to extend the hours.

**Attendee comments:** is great small business that is pro-community; is one of only 2-3 small businesses on Lyndale that are open late at night; live close by—is comfort to know that one can get food and groceries late at night without leaving the neighborhood; if the bars and clubs are open late at night (and the SuperAmerica), why not the

Market?; enjoy having them as neighbors; adds to the street culture of the area; concern over noise from patio seating [it was noted they have not had any noise complaints, and that outdoor seating/sidewalk permit falls under a different set of hours and would likely end at midnight]. Felino **moved** in support of the request for extended hours, and it was seconded.

**CI Motion 1:** The Community Issues Committee moves in support of the request for a Conditional Use Permit for extended hours at the Mediterranean Market at 2551 Lyndale Ave South, for hours of operation from 10am to 3am.

**Motion Carried:** 17- 0-0.

**139 E 27<sup>TH</sup> STREET: REQUEST TO REMOVE RESIDENCE FROM CONDEMNED STATUS AND FROM CITY DEMOLITION LIST (CHRIS CARROW)** Chris is a realtor who lives in the neighborhood. He represents a buyer who has a purchase agreement for the property, which has a city demolition order. The buyer's intent is to rehab the property and market it as a residence for purchase. Previously, the residence was a rental that had a grease fire in the kitchen and now needs some interior work (for example, some ceiling joists need to be replaced). It is boarded, went through foreclosure, and is a bank owned property. It sits in a row of 3 similar houses. Chris has talked to one set of neighbors (the boarding house) who were in favor of a rehab. There is no interior woodwork and the foundation is stable. **Attendee comments:** after a demo, the lot would be vacant indefinitely; the lot is undersized and it would be difficult to build new on it, the cost of the demo would be assessed back to the neighborhood—to have an interested buyer seems like a better deal; with relatively few houses in the neighborhood already, maintaining a single-family residence is an asset to the overall stability. Lilligren noted that as a rule, if there is an active purchase agreement, the demo is stayed (but neighborhood comment might be useful). Eric G. **moved** in support of removing the house from the city demo list and from condemned status, and it was seconded.

**CI Motion 2:** The Community Issues Committee moves in support of removing the property at 139 East 27<sup>th</sup> Street from the City of Minneapolis demolition list and from condemned status. **Motion Carried:** 20-0-0.

**CITY TAX ASSESSOR (PATRICK TODD) & HENNEPIN COUNTY TAXPAYER SERVICES (KEN ROWE)** Patrick Todd: Evaluation notices were sent by the city tax system in January to the owners of single family homes, duplexes, and triplexes. The remaining property tax evaluations were sent in late February/March. Property owners should receive 3 notices per year: an evaluation notice, a property tax assessment, and then a truth in taxation report in November with the following year's proposed tax rates. If property owners feel their property has been assessed incorrectly, they need to question their evaluation as soon as possible by contacting the city tax assessor office (the contact information is listed on the evaluation). Each assessor is responsible for evaluating over 9,000 homes so mistakes are possible. As a property owner, you are responsible for knowing the approximate value of your home and bringing evaluation mistakes to the attention of the city.

There are various ways to appeal your value if you think it is incorrect. First, appeal by phone to the appraiser directly and try to set up an appointment to see your property (and evaluate any changes that have taken place). The next step is to go to the local board of appeal, in which property owners present to an informed local panel who then offer an opinion of the situation. A next step is to appeal to the county board—a panel of 6 appointees. It is often helpful to have a market analysis done by a professional. A final recourse is to appeal at the state level, although there is a fee when you reach that level. Property owners have until April of the following year to appeal the values for the prior tax year (approximately 16 months from the January notice).

Ken Rowe gave an overview of different types of taxation including a comparison of sales tax/fixed rate taxes versus fluctuating tax/property tax like Mpls currently has. One thing to remember is that within a community, the value of every property within the community is what's important. Since the rate for property taxes isn't fixed, the tax each individual pays is impacted by the value of the homes in the community. Each property is given an apportionment of the total collected from the area, which can be confusing for people as their taxes fluctuate. Prior to 1988, a mill rate was established and used for tax apportionment. However, under that system there was implied pressure on the assessors to keep property values going up. Under the current system, there assessors are under no pressure to inflate values.

**Attendee questions and comments:** market value; distress sales and their impact on property value [foreclosure sales aren't taken into consideration]; people who do appeal often get satisfaction at some level; the importance of contacting your assessor if you do not feel it is accurate; property tax as a dependable source of city funding [but not the only one]; the classification rates of different types of properties; percentage of city/county budgets coming from property taxes [28% city; 38% county]; what tax revenues pay for; concern that tax rates have tripled along Nicollet; if assessments are negotiable and at what stage; untaxed property within the county and the philosophy behind having untaxed organizations/properties; the shift to fee-based services in St. Paul and if that is efficient; taxation of the new Twins stadium; theories of taxation (good/bad for business), taxation of non-profits at variable or progressive rates depending on

their service/profits; taxation of government, schools, religious buildings. Patrick noted there is a program is income-based under which some homeowners can get a percentage of their property taxes refunded. It is an underused service available for those with lower incomes.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS Rex Hardware Building** (2601 Lyndale): There is a hearing regarding the demo of the building with the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Tuesday May 12 at 4:30pm at City Hall. Michelle Norling is the current owner. A demolition permit has been pulled; the adjoining house to the south has already been demolished. The Rex building was operated as a hardware store for 91 years and was designed by a Minneapolis architect. Following the sale of the building in 2005, the building has sat vacant. There was a proposal for a mixed use development at that time (which included ground-floor commercial and 16 condos) which was approved but didn't secure financing. Those approvals have since expired. The intent seems to be to demo the building and then propose a mixed-use development. There may be some push to demolish the building rather than pay for needed rehabilitation, or for its upkeep. (There is graffiti and vagrants have been living in the accessory garage in the back; many/most windows are broken, etc).

The Rex building has gone through an evaluation for historic value. The facts in favor of saving the building include that it was designed by a local architect, and the recognition of the property's integrity (of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association). Factors against designating the building as historic include the claims about the condition of the building made in the request for demo (that the foundation is compromised, the floor is in need of replacement, the roof is compromised with holes and softspots, the windows are gone or beyond repair, and the exterior has outlived its useful life). The application states that the cost of bringing the building up to code exceeds its value. The HPC staff report is mixed, although it does recommend demolition. An attendee noted that he had recent pictures of the roof and it appeared to be intact. Those who cannot attend the meeting may also enter their comments into the public record through the city's website. Look under CPED/agendas/HPC. Eric G. **moved** that the CI urge the city to verify the claims of the collapsed roof, and it was seconded.

**CI Motion 3:** The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee requests the city verify the claims of the condition of the property at 2601 Lyndale Ave S (the former Rex Hardware building), including—but not limited to—the claims of a collapsed roof, when considering the demolition application for the building. **Motion Carried:** 13-0-1.

**Additional Public Comments:** Volunteers are working with the Lyndale and Calhoun neighborhood associations to start up an open air market on west 29<sup>th</sup> Street between DuPont and Lyndale along the Greenway. Whittier resident Shaun Laden noted the Uptown Market is in the city permit process. They would like to have between 40-80 vendors the third Sunday of each month, June through September. Vendors will include local arts and crafts, prepared food, and more. If the market is successful, they would eventually like to be open weekly (which would require a zoning change). Go to their website, [uptownmarket.org](http://uptownmarket.org), for more information.

**Meeting adjourned** at 8:20pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

**Next meeting:** Monday, June 8, 6pm; Whittier International Elementary School.