

Whittier Alliance-Community Issues Committee- DRAFT MINUTES

Monday March 8, 2010 Whittier Elementary School

Attendees: Tom Bissen, Anthony Carchedi, Felino de la Pena, Erica Christ, Daphna Stromberg, Abu Amar Jr, Maja Smedberg, Jess Clark, Michael Garr, Scott Smith, Mary Cable, Linda Bernin, Jesse Oyervides, Lindsey Wallace, Jama Farah, Rosa Werthein, Jason Werthmann, Nimco Ahmed, Sean Gaw, Tod Skallerup, Jim Baker **Presenters:** Luis Caire & Isidro Perez (El Mariachi), George Pridmore (City of Minneapolis), Dave King (Center for Energy & Environment), Chelsea Adams (5th Precinct), Shaun Murphy (Minneapolis Public Works) **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Becky Neamy, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to order at 6:10 by Erica Christ, Board Chair, who is guest chairing this meeting, and who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A **motion** to approve the agenda was made and **carried**.

Announcements and Community Comments

Comments/Topics from Whittier Residents Can we have chickens in the n'hood? Yes, need a permit. Some people in the n'hood have them. Check with Tom George. **Annual Meeting – April 8- Board Candidates, Good N'bor/Biz** - The Whittier N'hood Annual Meeting will be Thursday, April 8th. We will recognize 3 good neighbors and 3 good businesses. We have 7 open seats on the WA Board of Directors, and nomination applications at the front. If you are interested in n'hood concerns and want to get more involved, please pick up an application and contact the WA. We'll also approve the budget and go over the business of the past year. **May Day Soiree-** May 6th will be our spring fundraiser. Tickets go on sale soon, and you will get your money's worth in food from n'hood restaurants, entertainment, and amazing live & silent auctions. It will be at the Blaisdell Manor. Come and bring your friends. Forms are available if you have items to donate. **Bike Lanes- Shaun Murphy**, City Non-Motorized Transportation Coordinator. Shaun is here to talk about proposed bike lanes on Blaisdell and 1st Ave heading from 15th St-40th St. There is a public meeting next week, and Shaun's been working with Lyndale and Kingfield neighborhoods, because the bike lane additions there will change parking. In Whittier there is one block with parking increased, but no parking lost. On 1st Avenue, bike lane will be going north, and the street is wide enough they can make it just by painting lines. On Blaisdell, they are going to widen the south headed bike lane by a foot. Changes are hoped to happen this summer; city open to questions and comments from residents. **Questions.** How difficult will it be to lose a lane on Blaisdell? This project is worked on by the city traffic coordinators. This will slow cars down, but not too dramatically to effect traffic. Winter biking? These will disappear in the winter from snow and ice, as do most city bike lanes. 1st Avenue already feels squeezed, how will this feel for bikers/drivers? These routes were picked about ten years ago. Shaun's not sure on all the history of why what was picked. Nicollet's center turn lane means there can't be bike lanes. These won't be for everyone, but will hopefully get more people out. MN Dot rules: 11 ft for each travel lane, and 2 feet reaction space for curb. We're within that. Any conversations in lowering the speed limit? Narrowing lanes and roads should slow drivers down. You can post down to 25mph on streets with bike lanes. They're doing that on other streets, but can't do that here without closer look at traffic lights. Many people double park on 1st Ave, contributes to the feeling of it being a narrow street; can there be increased patrol of that when these bike lanes start? Shaun made a note, and said to call in if you see that. Contact Shaun with any questions. Final decision will be up to the city council members who represent the areas, contact CM Lilligren with thoughts and feelings. **5th Precinct report – Safe Specialist Chelsea Adams-** 6-8, Wednesday April 28th, at precinct office, 3101 Nicollet, there will be a block leader training; more info will be sent out. Two community impact statement requests have

gone out recently: One for burglary conviction in Whittier and a recent one in Lowry Hill, can submit a statement until March 12th. Community Impact Statements: If a crime occurs in your n'hood, you can write a statement about how the crime or person has impacted your life, direct or indirect, and the statement will be read at court. FYI: Chelsea has noticed 2 recent incidents where people were robbed as they got out of their cars. Not a trend yet, but something to keep in mind. We have beat officers at Nicollet and Franklin and Lyndale & Lake **Questions**. Narcotics - let Chelsea know about chronic issues, she will get info to narcotics unit. Depends on the drug what they can do about it; with marijuana, a huge amount of info is needed to prosecute. A resident has noticed a squad car at Kmart on Lake. Might be off duty officers Sullivan's or Kmart has hired themselves. Or sometimes the beat officers will park their squad car and walk. Jesse's been noticing a lot of traffic violations around 29th and Blaisdell, more trespassing, more illegal turns. One of the Section 8 housing inspectors, told Jesse she doesn't like to come to this neighborhood because of gangs. Squad cars needed at Park Square. We're going to need to spend more money on security, because of Karmel Village; would be nice to have more beat officers there to help. Felino noted the challenges to the city police department coming from state funding issues; Erica notes that if the city is going to license Karmel Village for 96 units, then they have to make sure there is room for 96 units. What's happening with task force focusing on public drunkenness? That happens quarterly, there will be another meeting in spring. Beat officers in area are aware of that is an issue. Attendees were given time to review February CI minutes; **a motion to approve** the Feb 8, 2010 CI minutes was **carried**.

El Mariachi Lic. - Luis Caire & Isidro Perez. George Pridmore, licensing inspector. El Mariachi is moving from back of shopping center to front, and updating from Class E liquor license (background entertainment) to Class B : background entertainment plus live music, dancing, stand up comedian. Not theatrical, adult entertainment (Class A). Any upgrade requires public hearing. George will take notes to committee, who will decide up or down to approve, and that recommendation will go to City Council. George sends out invitations to property owners within the 600 foot radius of the proposed place, 90 people. Any of them here to speak first? No. Luis says El Mariachi used to be on west end, is now going to east end of the shopping strip. The front will be opened up, more windows. The square footage will be the same, so parking levels aren't affected. Seating area, stage for DJ, dance area. There will be live and dj musicians but not a "club" type environment . No cover, not a place to get drunk, still a family restaurant.

Attendees Comments and Questions: Parking? They have 71 spots, 19 grandfathered in, and 50 leased from Pho Tau Bay. Zoning found that El Mariachi has 16 more parking spots than required, even without Pho Tau Bay rental. How many Class B's are on Nicollet now? (Azia? Pancho Villa? Old Arizona? Committee is unsure about other licenses on Nicollet.) Jesse has been observing business for three weeks, has seen good service from staff, good conduct from owner, helpful security guard, will support request. Will El Mariachi Class B liquor license be transferable? No, this is a whole new license just for this business. Does this application cover anything outdoor? No. There can be outdoor events, but will have to apply for temporary permit just like other bars; no sidewalk application. Luis says that Isidro invests in building, remodeling. In a few months they will come back to apply for zoning change for the area, might eventually want to put a hotel on top. Can they sell food on street? That is a separate permit, which they haven't applied for.

CI Motion 1: The CI Committee moves to recommend approval for the application for the upgraded liquor license from Class E to Class B at El Mariachi, 2738 Nicollet Ave. **Motion Passes 12-0-1.**

Center for Energy & Environment – Jim Hasnik. CEE administers the Whittier n’hood loan programs. Passing around info sheet for owner occupied and non-owner occupied. Home Improvement Loan is for owner occupied, 1-4 unit, 4% loan program, min \$1,000, max \$25,000 mostly for outdoor improvements or plumbing, heat. There are no income limits. You apply, get approved, get 2 estimates. Once the loan is closed, CEE escrows funds, checks-in during the build. Loan covers roofing, siding, windows, cement work, heating, gutters, electric, with terms up to 15 years, and no pre-payment penalties. Would this cover a garage? No, other ineligible areas include: fences, decks and patios, gazebos, garages, non-permanent landscaping, recreational areas (ex. hot tubs). On top of the regular federal tax credit, 35% rebate back happening now, if you take out the MN Home Ownership Loan (from Minnesota Housing Energy Rebate Fund) which has an income cap of \$96,500/yr. Can you roll into mortgage? No. Must be for an upcoming project. How many dollars have we loaned out? Only a handful. Heat? Some things they’ll work with to do retroactively, if you need heat work done in an emergency. Over a million dollars have gone through the Home Improvement Loan, not sure how many loans that is, as it has been partnered with other loans. Tom points out that these have been 2 revolving loans, and we haven’t had any of them go bad, and there are no closing costs. What are other energy credits available now? Federal credit, 35% rebate, and others through utility company. The 3-R Loan Program (Rental Rehabilitation & Renewal Loan Program): 3.5% loan for 2+, owner absent building. For this loan, someone from n’hood goes out, meets with owner, helps prioritize how to use funds (Tom and other RPO’s in n’hood have done this). Owner can do the work, sweat equity basis, then funds will go to cover material costs, not labor. Everything will be inspected; 6 months to get work done. Some examples of what’s been done: Windows, lots of roofing, siding, heating systems. On rental properties, there is more leeway to cover interior work; n’hood rep will work with owner on acceptable usage. Tom wants to get money out, working in the n’hood. If you live in WFO historic district, necessary permits include approval from Heritage Preservation Commission. Anthony experienced fees up to \$500. Could that be rolled into the loan? Yes, if it is part of the project. CEE looks at credit, payment history, also looks at bigger picture (divorce, medical issues); don’t deny or accept just based on credit score, more lenient than a traditional bank. CEE will take second or third position in payment; if things are refinanced than they do need to be paid off.

Update on Status of N’hood Projects and Development Proposals You’ve heard about projects and properties over the years, Marian Biehn maintains a document on developments and properties in the n’hood and updates it occasionally. Complete document is on file and available at the WA office, contact for more info or additional properties. A brief recap: **221 W 28th St:** 3 townhomes are sold and owner occupied. **2807-09 Pillsbury:** County owns, development plans not satisfactory, so tried for community garden, didn’t work out. **111 E. Franklin** (Raymar Building): done. **2007 Stevens:** Narrow lot in limbo. Developer let it lapse back to bank. There’s been some nosing around; still vacant. **2701 1st Ave:** 6 row houses. Some have sold, not all. **2624 1st Ave S:** Lot went back to county, who is trying to sell it to adjacent owners. **110-130, W Lake:** Developer in jail. Part of Midtown Greenway Rezoning area. Nothing in works. **Nicollet and Lake:** reopening is in every possible plan for the city. On 12/27/09 Mary Cable saw an ad for Supervalu property for sale for 3 million. Nobody knows anything about it. Business and land of Supervalu controlled by one person? One person own land, Supervalu own building, Sullivan owns business. **113 East 26th Street:** Vacant lot, environmental issues. After issues with land, they’ve used newest remediation technology to clean it. Carbon filters are in for life, will eventually be capped. Has been cleared for development for 2.5 years. Existing plan is for 25

condos, 2 retail. Developers are open to other ideas. **2000 Nicollet Ave (Greenleaf Lofts):** done. Haven't heard much about retail space. **Icehouse:** MTN's situation too volatile to commit to that space. Hotel is dead. Property for sale. **Trader Joe's** project on Lyndale is dead, looking at another site (also happens to be within 500 feet of a liquor store.) **Butler Drug:** Building owned by Pawn America, not zoned for a pawn shop. WA working with MCAD students on project to do art in vacant windows, Butler Drug one potential. **2644 Nicollet.** Lot for sale. Michael Pham seems to be divesting himself of property on Nicollet. **2601 Lyndale (Rex Hardware):** reprieve on demolition for historic context study, HPC will weigh in. If anyone came along with any money to do anything there, owners would sell it, as it is a burden to maintain. **Salem Lutheran Church:** Still gathering finances. Some neighbors filed lawsuit against city regarding zoning process. Info available? Call city attorney's office. **2528-2534, 2548 & 2550 Nicollet Ave:** All for sale. Someone interested in perhaps leasing/buying what used to be Sinbad's. **1 28th St W, 11 28th St. W & 2815 Blaisdell:** HCMC site, scheduled for completion in fall 2010. **2201 1st Ave 1st** (Christian Church Resident Home & Community Center): Bought by MIA. Leased to church for 5 years. Asbestos issues. **MCAD** parking lot up and running, sculpture garden on the way in spring. N'hood vacant lots include: 2644 Nicolet, Lees' Laundry, 2614 1st Ave, 2900 Pillsbury, 2718 Stevens, Joe's Chicken Shack. Ly Bakery signage up and working out permit questions should be open in 30 days or so. Donuts, coffee, sandwiches. For more info on any projects, or info on additional locations in n'hood, contact WA.

Design Guidelines We brought these in Jan, people wanted time to go online and read. We've been working on them on and off for a year and a half, is now at 56 pages. This will be what we give to developers, to the city, and existing property owners, to show what we want and like. They are for commercial corridors (Nicollet, Lyndale, Franklin, Lake); cover some esoteric, some concrete things. We want to inspire interesting, creative, thoughtful development that brings positivity to the site and the surrounding area, to ask developer not just what this does for me, but what it does for the n'hood. Erica sees developers tell us what the n'hood is worth and can afford. They undersell, and we pay for it. The idea is to say, this might not be the n'hood you think it is, we're unique. We've given this in draft form to a few developers, have had varied responses. We added a transportation section, with the focus on reducing the need for parking. Clear that we're not into a big surface lots. MB shares the HCMC example: they came with a utilitarian look, through this document and conversations we got a more interesting building, underground parking, and built a good relationship with HCMC. Linda was impressed with the interplay btw buildings and people, accessibility, and the great page on transit. Anthony asks how this might change. We send it in pdf, so we can update; will come back to CI if there are substantive changes.

CI Motion 2: The CI Committee recommends approval and adoption of the Whittier Neighborhood Design Guidelines. **Motion Passes. 11-0-0.**

Old / New Business. Come to the Annual Meeting and the May Day Soiree, contact WA if you want to get involved in planning either.

Meeting adjourned: 8:21pm

Minutes submitted by: Jessica Rosenberg, Administrative Assistant, Whittier Alliance

Next meeting: Monday, April 12th, 6 pm, the Whittier Elementary School