

**Whittier Alliance-Joint Community Issues & Business Assn Meetings-**  
Monday, January 10, 2011  
Whittier Elementary School  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Attendees:** Ben Ptacek, Charles Hansen, Andrew Cox, Mary Cable, Jim Hubal, Robert Lilligren, Maurice Battle, Bruce Lundeen, Lisa Vecoli, Laura Jean, Rachel Lewis, Christina Le, David Schroth, Felino de la Pena, Erica Christ, Tom Bissen, Jen Wendland

**Presenters:** Chelsea Adams (5<sup>th</sup> Precinct), Sarah Schrantz, Danielle DePietto, Patty Whalen, Erin Bowley, Carol Becker

**Staff:** Marian Biehn

Call to order at 6:20 by Maurice Battle, CI Committee Chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A **motion** to approve the agenda was made, and **carried**. **Motions** to approve the November and December CI minutes respectively **carried**. A **motion** to approve the December 8, 2010 BA Minutes **carried**.

**Announcements and Community Comments**

Welcome to Jen who is the new Community Organizer for the Whittier Alliance.

**5<sup>th</sup> Precinct report & 2011 Neighborhood Policing Plan– Safe Specialist Chelsea Adams:** Just got the year end stats for crime. 100 less crimes reported in 2010 than in previous year. Continued trend in decreasing crime rate however auto theft is up and aggravated assaults were up. We have expanded the beat officers in Whittier, as has been discussed in previous meetings. There are beat officers all through the week at times that see higher crime rates.

Question: What exactly is aggravated assault? Answer: Something that requires medical attention, something including a weapon that may not include injury, or where there is injury. Domestic assault is also considered aggravated assault. Question: Certain occurrences have added to the number of aggravated assault. Will these areas where problems are happening going to be focused on? Answer: A lot of the time, it is police physical presence that deters crime, but the crimes happen when the physical presence is not there. But phone calls would help stop this and, if there are more problems, an email or request sent to Chelsea would increase the frequency of police or beat cop presence. The police will come and stand around if that will help stop the crime or problems. Comment: To the business owners, if you have a chronic shop lifter or problem causer, send Chelsea an email with their name, description, date of birth, or anything else and she will let the beat officers know. Question: Is there an update or apprehension for the shooting on NYE at 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and 26<sup>th</sup>—victims were not cooperative. More info to come on this later. Comment: CVS security: There is a new landlord in the building who is more dedicated to protecting the store and the customers. In the past, security has been lax, but hopefully things will be improving. Camera project for the intersection is going forward, and many people are involved with the discussion on how to make the intersection safer. Question: Crime is up in two critical categories in the year end report. Where are we down and how do we compare to other neighborhoods? Answer: Down in rape, robbery, burglary, theft and arson. Homicide zero for both years. Question: Is this a nationwide trend? Answer: Haven't looked at this. For the area, the trend is similar. Auto theft tends to trend differently. All these numbers can be posted on the website.

**Center for Energy & Environment—City Energy Service Seminar —March 22: Marian Biehn**

CEE received a grant from the state and the org will do home evaluations. For a \$30 co-pay, homeowners can have a home energy audit and a variety of energy products installed which will increase efficiency. Owner occupied duplexes can participate but they are more difficult, but can participate if the tenant agrees. A mailing will be going out about it, but put it on your calendar. The seminar will be held in the park rec portion of this complex.

**Annual Meeting—April 7, 2011** is the date for the Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting. It will be in the Multipurpose room. There will be resource tables, board elections and awards will be given to good neighbors and businesses-- three of each. We have nomination forms available tonight and online. If you know someone, nominate them. The deadline for all nominations is March 17<sup>th</sup>. If you nominated someone last year and they didn't win, feel free to submit again. We also will elect 5 board members. The Board makes decisions and keeps the neighborhood moving forward.

### **Muddy Waters—2933 Lyndale Sarah Schrantz, Patty Whelan, and Danielle DePietto**

The presenters distributed a handout that is an overview of the floor and management plan. There are two different plans for the layout. A correction to the level of liquor license was made to a Class E -- not Class C. This is a huge difference.

The application for the license is being submitted on Thursday. The goal and requirement is for 60% food sales and 40% liquor which will decrease the party scene and increase the food options. They are focusing on pairing good food with craft beer, though the ultimate focus is food. They are trying to deter the “bar” and boisterous crowd. It is a focus on responsibility. The draft towers will be dropped down below the sight line so the relationship with the bartender will be more staff and customer. In addition to the large kitchen, there will be the coffee area in the front opening at 7am. It will still be a coffee house as it is currently known, just expanded. Coffee shop will serve light breakfast with the kitchen itself opening for lunch. The bar will not be open until later 11am. The coffee bar will close around 6pm. There will be two bartenders always and a bar manager on at all times when the bar is open. The staff will go through liquor awareness training—even the baristas in the morning—will go through it. Looking to create a pub culture - don’t want the craziness of a bar. Our security staff will have a minimum of two years of experience and all incidents will be written up for any violent outbreak in the bar.

We are looking for the Class E license and to expand our bar by an additional six stools to allow for people to talk to the bartender about the craft beers.

Question: Where will the parking be provided? Answer: The municipal lot which is adjacent to the restaurant, It is a paid lot and Lyndale Tap and the other businesses use it as well. We are hoping to get a section of 15 minute parking spaces for the coffee customers in the morning.

Question: Will there be problems with available spaces with the other restaurants sharing the same space? Answer: We don’t know the threshold, but we are confident that the space will work.

Question: Between 2am and 5am, will there be someone to help decrease the disruption on the streets as young drunks are walking down the street? Answer: We are not catering to the party bus crowd. We are hoping to not send out to many loud drunks, but I can’t promise that there won’t be customers loudly walking home.

Question: Sunday sale’s permit—everyone has one. Not unusual. However, the additional six seats may cause some hesitation. What are the possible arguments against the six seats?

Answer: The idea of the limit was to combat degenerate drinking where people sit at their one bar stool at the bar from 8-2 when they get kicked out. We don’t want that and are aiming to do something else.

**CI Motion 1:** The Community Issues/Businesses Assn. move to approve the Sunday sales permit, extended hours, and Class E liquor license for Muddy Waters at 2933 Lyndale Ave S.. **Motion carries 12-0-0.**

**CI Motion 2:** The Community Issues/Businesses Assn. move to approve an the additional six seats at the bar for Muddy Waters at 2933 Lyndale Ave S. **Motion carries 12-0-0.**

**CI Motion 3:** The Community Issues/Businesses Assn. move to approve the site plan including the 6 additional bar seats for 2933 Lyndale Ave S. **Motion carries 12-0-0.**

### **Whittier Strategic Planning—Erin Bowley**

The WA is in the process of creating a new 3-5 year plan this spring. There is a committee of the board working on this. One step in the process is to gather feedback from residents, business owners, and all folks for whom Whittier is important before the task goes before the board for final development. Two ways to gather this feedback—online and print versions of a survey and then focus groups with a facilitator and note taker (these sessions will be about 90 min). Topics: Job preservation, housing, environmental sustainability, business corridor. The bulk of focus groups will be on Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at the Black Forest Banquet Room. Specifics will be going out later. If you want to be a part of this meeting, please sign up or let WA know. BA—you will have yet another opportunity to offer feedback. The goal is to have a finalized strategic plan ready for presentation at the annual meeting.

Comment/Additional Background: We are in the 11 year of our last ten year plan, as this is the final year of the NRP plan. Neighborhood Revitalization Plan has become Neighborhood and Community Relations, a city department. We now have the task of creating a strategic plan to keep the neighborhood on track with considerably less money funding the goals (NRP funds have stopped). We need to have a clear course.

What are our priorities? We also need to increase engagement. Through this process, we are hoping to draw

more people into the conversation and, then, into a continued conversation with the WA.

Comment: A resident called in to make sure she could be included in the focus group because she has seen, through NRP Phase I and II, the difference that a strategic plan can make for the neighborhood. She has been in the neighborhood since the 1970s and has seen a large improvement achieved by having a plan and funding. We are also hoping to get and will ask for more involvement from communities that do not participate on a regular basis.

Question: 2011 City budget that was approved grabbed 50% of the uncontracted funds from the neighborhoods. Why did that happen and what will happen next? Answer: Councilmen Lilligren: The intent of the original proposal at City Council was to freeze NRP funding immediately in an effort to reduce the hardship from property tax hikes. Instead, anything contracted and in place will still be funded but it caps neighborhoods that have not contracted up to 50% of the funds at 50%. Some council people tried to ease the pain. The budget actions that actually passed for the 2011 budget: 50% cap, NCR communication about how projects and plans will be implemented moving forward. Additionally, there are issues with non-compliance with the state statute governing this. There is a need for clarification on this and there are a lot of questions that need to be answered. In general, the process has been accelerated and, as a result, is a bit more hostile than it should have been. We don't know what the program is going to look like moving forward. CM Lilligren doesn't think this is a good time to do this sort of action—a lot of neighborhoods that have not already allocated their Phase II funds are going to become very vulnerable and at risk.

Comment: There are no other departments taking a 75% budget cut. The amount total is less than 25% of the City budget. Why were the neighborhood groups targeted and taking most of the burden?

Answer: I'm not sure why, but to speculate, we are in a cutting environment. We don't have excess anywhere. There was some pressure to use the NRP funds. Additionally, the funding was ending so this would reduce the need to make room in other budgets.

Question: If this legislation doesn't go anywhere, where do the funds go? Answer: The assets have always been under the city's control. There are ways that the funds are being spent. An unresolved question was how this would change at the end of 2011. Unfortunately, we don't have a much time to answer that question—it has been placed on the fast track.

Question: Is there any danger of legal action against the city? Answer: If we had the original timeline, there may have been enough time to get enough people on board. Now, there may be a higher chance of seeing some sort of legal action.

Question: Neighborhoods are expected to share the pain. Is this going to be expected on the white elephants, too (Target Center, etc.)? Answer: The white elephants do cost us a lot—tens of millions of dollars per year. We want a global solution and need to have this burden lifted from the taxpayers. We're looking for relief and this decision will come later in the session.

### **Board of Estimate and Taxation—Carol Becker**

How property taxes work: There is a really simple formula. On one side of the formula, you have the money collected. On the other, the value of the property. You pay the money based on a percentage of the value of your property. That money is the money collected. This works at both a macro and micro level. The amount of money collected from property taxes is going up about 8% a year. Local gov't aid is a check written to the city to reduce the amount of money that needs to be collected, and this amount has been going down on an annual basis. Additionally, pensions are going to be an issue. In the 30s and 40s, pensions were promised but no funds were set aside. Starting in the 70s, money has been set aside for these pensions and invested in the stock market. Pensions were closed in '78. Things were on track and not looking too bad until the stock market crashed. Now, we have huge holes. As a result, there is going to be a huge increase in the amount of money going to the pension fund. On top of this, people are living longer than originally forecasted or the pension intended to fund.

As far as the taxes go, there are other places that the funding needs to go. For example a 17% increase in taxes paid, 7.5% on the increase will go to the city where as the rest of it goes to pay for other programs, such as NRP and the Target Center.

We've cut number of employees, library system, road maintenance, and many other areas. In all, 5000 employees at the turn of the century, and we are at 4000 now. Then, this means that we have been raising intake and decreasing services, which doesn't make much sense.

We have seen changes in the money coming into the city and where the money is going. But we have also seen the circumstances for individuals change. In 1996, homeowners were paying 35% of the budget and businesses 65%. In 2010, homeowners were paying 60% while businesses were paying 40%. So we have changes in the tax system. The Tax Classification Rate dictates that different properties pay more taxes. Businesses have seen a decrease in the amount that they are paying, which means that homeowners have seen an increase. After the shift, there was also a housing bubble 02-04 and a rise in property value, meaning a higher percent paid for interest and a higher value. Then the bubble burst. Both saw a decrease in value, but the business value went down faster, meaning more homeowners were given a larger share of the burden. These are general terms. Some areas may deviate from this. The shift from businesses to homeowners is a policy choice at the state level. The state chooses how the burden is divided and the city determines the amount collected.

As value was going up, the legislature created a thing called limited market value. This means that no matter how much the value goes up, there is a cap on the amount that the taxes will go up. However, even after the value stops going up, the taxes increase until you reach the amount that the new value specifies. Either the value drops to the limited or taxes increase to the value—they need to meet up at some point. Whittier was hit hard by this, as home values increased dramatically during that time frame.

Question: The market has recovered a lot. What is the long term pension forecast?

Answer: It depends on where the funds have been invested. Unfortunately, what is not recovered will need to be paid by taxpayers. Some pensions were turned over to the state before the stock market crash but some came back in need of more money.

Question: How many people are in this pool and what is the average check?

Answer: I don't have any current numbers off the top of my head. I can tell you that they are a good amount.

Question: How did we get into this position where pensions are such a huge budget item?

Answer: #1: People are living longer. #2: There were additional agreements beyond the original structure. #3: There were miscalculations.

Question: What do you recommend to reform revenue collection?

Answer: Property taxes were not made to handle bubbles and speculation. Slow and steady is ideal. So, part of it is that we need to stop the speculation. However, this will always be a limited tool because it is not linked to income, making it the least fair of the taxes. Also, if you are poor, you are paying ~12% of you income in state and local taxes. If you are rich, you are paying ~10% of your income in the same taxes. If that difference was included, we wouldn't be having budget issues. Over the last few years, there has been an effort to shift the tax burden further off the rich. Here is the lesson you need to take from this discussion: if your taxes are going up, who has taxes that are going down?

### **Old / New Business.**

Be neighborly! Please pick up litter and remember to shovel your walk!

**Meeting adjourned:** 8:23pm

**Minutes submitted by:** Jen Wendland, Whittier Alliance Community Organizer

**Next meeting:** Monday, February 14th, Whittier Elementary School