

Whittier Alliance Board Meeting Minutes

February 25, 2016 6-8:30 PM

Whittier Park

Present: David Bagley, Erica Christ, Andy Cohen, Ted Irgens, Laura Jean, Christina Le, Araceli Perez, Natascha Shawver, Erin Sjoquist, Daphna Stromberg, Brett Vandebussche

Absent: Jesse Oyervides, Kenya Weathers **Staff:** Ricardo McCurley, Lucy Lawson

Comments from the Chair

Erica Christ

Call to Order at 6:10 by Erica Christ, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed. New meeting procedure will involve putting agenda items in order of urgency, so the most important items come first. **Motion** to approve the February agenda, with the order of items rearranged, **Carried**.

Secretary's Report

Natascha Shawver

Minutes from January, were reviewed and a **Motion** to approve as written **Carried**. Attendance was reviewed. Daphna missed three meetings over the course of the last year and needs to be reinstated.

BD Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance board moves to reinstate Daphna Stromberg to the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors. **Carried**.

Acting Committee & Task Force Reports & Motions

Community Issues

Brett Vandebussche

Harriet Avenue Apartments Proposed Development (2905 Harriet Ave S) – Solhem Companies

Board members discussed the proposed development. Solhem are not currently managing any other buildings in Whittier. They have bought a number of parcels south of the Greenway. A lot of concern was expressed at the CI meeting around the height of the building, but Solhem has taken some measures to reduce shading of the Greenway. It was not clear that they had contacted people on nearby neighboring properties. They contacted the Midtown Greenway at the same time as they contacted WA. There is often a lot of resistance to height by the n'hood but the CUP passed with a majority.

The presenters said the n'hood's position of support was not necessary – they already had an application in with the City – but they would appreciate the support. WA staff have met with neighbors of the property. A big concern is traffic – with proposed Rana Village as well there will be over 200 new units in that corner of the n'hood. Kris and Cindy, residents of that area, are organizing a petition. Solhem is aware of it.

The Midtown Greenway is upset that the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the Greenway will be gated, and they also have a problem with the height, which will shade the Greenway 103 days a year – in the winter. The Greenway lost a fight on another development that shades the Greenway 110 days, and this development is deliberately underneath that threshold. The City has come back and asked the developers to include affordable housing in their plans.

Solhem says they are considering keeping the gates open, but they aren't putting anything in writing. Ben Somogyi doesn't know if City has authority to add that as a condition. Hennepin County has been hoping to get property owners to cooperate on keeping a pedestrian thoroughfare, and they have been able to – west of Lyndale. Solhem could also have a fenced area next to their building if they are concerned about ground floor entrances.

Board members discussed arguments in favour of the apartment complex: the developers' approach was off-putting, but the design is quite nice and it fits into what the City is asking for with development along the Greenway.

WA can assist neighboring residents by providing information about who to call, when the hearings

are, and where the information is online. Morgan Luzier, who with her brother owns the adjacent properties and used to own the site itself, sent an email of support before the meeting. However, having seen the final plans, they are now upset with the 15ft to 5 ft setback variance on the southern end of property, which was not discussed with property owners and with the 6 story height. She is planning a Wellness quadrant, likes the 'woonerf' idea, and wants to keep an E-W walkway by the Greenway. Solhem are asking for 9 variances and should make some concessions to the neighborhood in return – such as keeping the gates open.

Motion: The WA Board of Directors supports that the lots in question at 2905 Harriet Ave S, 2903 Harriet Ave S, 2907 Harriet Ave S, 2911 Harriet Ave S, 2900 Grand Ave S, 2904 Grand Ave S, 2910 Grand Ave S and 2912 Grand Ave S be rezoned from I1, R3 and R2B to R5 multi-family residential – on the condition that if any of the houses on the site are in habitable condition they be relocated at the expense of the developer to a suitable vacant lot in the Whittier neighborhood. **Motion carried: 9-1-0**

Motion: The WA Board of Directors supports the CUP to increase maximum height from the required 4 stories/56 feet to 6 stories/74 feet on the condition that the pedestrian walkway is not gated – in accordance with the Whittier Alliance design guidelines and the wishes of the Midtown Greenway Coalition – and that the adjacent property owners and the Greenway are not shaded for more than 109 days per year. **Motion carried: 7-2-2**

Finance Committee – Budget

Ricardo McCurley

Board reviewed the 2016 budget again – partly because of some new budget items. An opportunity has come up to participate in Open Streets Nicollet by using the Kmart parking lot, probably by getting Eat Street restaurants to operate food stalls in the parking lot. WA will share costs and share in the profits. The income will come from tabling fees, grants and Open Streets funding. We won't be cutting a check for \$5000 – it's a precautionary figure. Looking into creating a retirement package for the FT staff in lieu of raises this year. Also creating an intern position. The Midtown Greenway Coalition may contribute funds, and also can use NRP funds. A paid internship will get a better candidate. Also need a new computer for Camilla and/or the intern. Will send a bulk mailing annual meeting invitation to the n'hood this year to be more inclusive, increasing postage line item. We also need D&O insurance.

FC Motion 3: The Finance Committee recommends making the following changes to the WA 2016 Budget:

Add \$5000 in both Income and Expense line to support Open Streets Nicollet

Add \$1500 in Benefits line for a retirement plan for full time staff

Add \$3000 in Interns for paid intern positions

Add \$800 in New Computer for a new computer to create a true fourth work station

Add \$1800 in Postage and Printing for an Annual Meeting Bulk Mailing

Add \$1000 in D & O Insurance to cover supplemental plan costs

Motion Carried.

Annual Meeting

Erica Christ

Board candidate slate: Several board members met in the previous week to review the board candidate applications. Unfortunately one excellent candidate was not eligible because he became an eligible voting member only recently. There are 5 open seats and 7 candidates for the community at-large seats. Tim Lovett is a candidate who will be out of town for the Annual Meeting. We have had it happen before that a candidate couldn't attend the meeting, and his preparing a statement is very reasonable. We will encourage him to cover obvious topics in his statement. Daphna circulated a sign-up sheet for board members to volunteer at the Annual Meeting.

Motion: The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors moves to recommend the slate candidates for presentation to the neighborhood for election at the 2016 Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting.

Motion Carried.

Finance Committee

Andy Cohen

January 2016 Financial Statements: The financial report was presented. The balance sheet was reviewed. Board needs to move some CPP funds to staff expenses to pay out Marian's vacation time – she didn't take a lot. The 2016 Budget was just properly approved tonight so can't compare to budget, but nothing is particularly unusual in the January statements, except that pay-out and the printing of the calendars.

FC Motion 1: The WA Board accepts the Whittier Alliance January 2015 financial report.

Motion Carried.

FC Motion 2: The WA Board recommends the moving the following funds within the 2015 Community Participation Program budget:

From: Line 2: Occupancy \$1,063.27	To: Line 1: Staff Expenses \$1,063.27
From: Line 8: Development \$1,500.00	To: Line 1: Staff Expenses \$1,500.00
From: Line 6: Supplies & Materials \$500.00	To: Line 1: Staff Expenses \$500.00

Motion Carried

Staff Reports:

Ricardo McCurley

Ricardo will find a way to amalgamate stuff he's already doing into a staff report. Board members commented that 'digestible' is good.

Old & New Business:

2118 Blaisdell Historic Study – Ted Irgens

Meeting last month of the Heritage Preservation Commission extended making a decision on the property for 6 months. The study has to go to State Historic Preservation Office for review before HPC. The 6 month extension was unanimous, and the Commissioner who nominated it was positive. NuWay House is using the building for office work. It would be surprising if they don't use it for housing as well, but they might have code issues.

25th & Lyndale Traffic Safety – Natascha Shawver

Natascha posted a news article on Facebook about the recent accident where a pedestrian was killed by a car. Councilmember Lisa Bender and Commissioner Marion Greene jumped in and said a meeting about the issue would be good. The guy at the Loon Grocery has some horror stories. Lyndale Ave is a County Road, but Marion said in an email that she would try to push up in priority the redevelopment of Lyndale. There are many traffic calming measures that could be taken at that intersection – we will need to be thoughtful about what we advocate for.

Adjourned 8.40

Minutes submitted by Lucy Lawson.

Erica Christ, Board Chair

Natascha Shawver, Board Secretary