

**Whittier Alliance Board Meeting**  
**Feb. 26, 2015 6-8:30pm**  
**Whittier Park**

**Attendees:** Andy Cohen, Daphna Stromberg, Erica Christ, Erin Sjoquist, Grayson Carr, Laura Jean, Mike O'Dell, Ted Irgens, Diane Moe, Tom Bissen, Christina Le, Joan Vorderbruggen, David Bagley **Absent:** Natascha Shawver **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Rita Stodolka

**Call to Order** The Board meeting was called to order by Board Chair **Erica Christ at 6:07** with the establishment of a quorum. Standard of Conduct/Conflict of Interest policy was noted. The February agenda was reviewed and a **Motion** to approve **Carried** with the addition of St. Stephen's Task Force, Reopen Nicollet Task Force.

**Secretary's Report, Erica Christ**

Board minutes from January 2014 were reviewed. **Motion** to approve **Carried** with corrections: Christina was absent, typos. Attendance was read. Reminder that being late (missing more than 1/3 of the meeting) is considered an absence. If you've been absent twice, try not to be absent for the March meeting as reinstatement becomes difficult with Annual Meeting. March Board meeting is early – March 19 – due to Annual Meeting.

**By-Laws Correction**

As discussed last month, a correction was needed to the By-Laws so they would more accurately reflect the original intention of the board. Marian consulted NCR lawyer to confirm the correction could be made at the board level or if it would need to be taken to the membership. Her legal opinion is in the board packet. Since the content to change isn't specific to eligibility or member rights the change can be made. Therefore, article 3 section 4 can be altered to reflect the intent that if a resident voting member is on the master list only needs a photo ID at a meeting to vote.

**EC Motion 1:** The Executive Committee recommends that the language in the Whittier By-Laws Article III Section 4 be altered to reflect the intent of the board at the Dec. 18 Board of Directors meeting and per the legal opinion given by McVeigh and Bernstein to read: *A resident voting member who is on the master list they only needs to bring their photo ID containing their Whittier address to a meeting.* **Carried 13-0-0**

**Annual meeting, Daphna Stromberg:**

The Annual Meeting is March 26. The resource room will be in the lunch room and the meeting will be in the multi-purpose room (as it's been in the past). The lunch room is available earlier, which will make setting up resource tables easier. More Good Neighbor and Good Business nominations are needed (due by March 6). It's okay for board members to nominate people. All board members need to help – Daphna sent around a sign-up and will contact everyone to confirm assignments. If you have any information for the Annual Report, get it to Marian ASAP.

**Board Candidates:** The Board members who are running for the board (Erin, Laura Jean & Mike) were asked to leave the room during discussion and establishing the slate of candidates. The Nominations Committee – Andy Cohen, Rhonda Myers and Daphna Stromberg – met to review the 5 candidate applications: Erin Sjoquist, Mike O'Dell, Jesse Oyervides, and Kenya Weathers and Laura Jean. The eligibility of the incumbents was confirmed as a group (IDs verified, meet the other requirements). Jesse is also eligible to run (ID verified, has been active in the neighborhood and with the Whittier Alliance). The Committee also determined that Kenya is eligible, although they needed to obtain a different document to verify address as the photo ID did not match the address placed on the application and he initially provided a voter registration card as proof (not one of the items allowed per By-Laws). The applications were passed to the group. Daphna noted that she has minutes from the committee meeting which she will give to Marian. After discussion, it was decided to approve the candidates as a slate.

**BD Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors moves to recommend the slate candidates for presentation to the neighborhood for election at the 2015 Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting. **10-0-3**

**Board Candidate Meet and Greet:** Candidates should plan to attend the March CI meeting so attendees have an opportunity to meet them in advance of the Annual Meeting.

**Finance, Tom Bissen:**

Tom went over the finance report, noting that the 2015 budget numbers weren't entered yet because there was some speculation that there would be added fund from CPP for inflation. That didn't happen; the budget numbers will be entered before the next board meeting. The unrestricted funds balance is higher than it's ever been; Tom researched banking options to get a higher interest and didn't find anything worth putting the money in and making it unavailable for a year. If someone has any ideas about that you can let Tom know. The amount is higher mostly due to income from the Stevens Ave houses. Income and expense are within the norms of the WA monthly operations.

**FC Motion 1:** The Finance Committee accepts the Whittier Alliance January 2015 financial report pending insertion of the updated 2015 budget. **Motion Carried**

**NRP Reallocation:** The NRP Reallocation Task Force met to go over the amount of funds to be distributed and the NRP strategies to fund. The Task Force was a mixed group with lots of good input. Tom explained the Reallocation Task

Force recommendations. The funds come from program income. The funds are being placed in strategies already outlined in the NRP Plan. To understand fully, it is best to read the full NRP Action Plan and become familiar with the NRP strategies. A handout was distributed that showed all funding allocations to the various strategies. One area that is being funded that wasn't funded previously is historic preservation. This will be a loan fund, probably administered by GMHC, that could be borrowed for specifically restoring/maintaining historical features. Interior/exterior; wouldn't have to be in an historic district. The loan program still needs to be written.

Youth programming is also getting additional amounts. Areas of focus have changed over the years; in the past, safety was a big issue so had more funding. Now it's youth. It was suggested we need more in community engagement. Community engagement is built into every strategy-safety, housing outreach, youth. A lot of the community outreach is covered in staff time and the funding comes from various areas. Keep in mind that NRP has a lot of rules regarding how funds are allocated, so we have to work within those parameters. For example, they require 70% of the entire funded plan to be in housing. There are some remaining funds from the closing of the CEE contracts that need to stay in housing and assigned to a strategy, but through a displacement action approximately \$91k can be moved out of housing into other strategies and still keep the plan at the required 70% in housing. Since most of the funds are coming from Phase 1 Business & Local Economy, a larger portion is going back into Business and Local Economy.

The reallocation recommendations need to go to the membership for approval. This will happen at the annual meeting. If you get questions about this in advance of the annual meeting, direct them to the office. A housekeeping policy motion is needed to get all the funds in place for reallocation.

**FC Motion 2:** Due to the action of the City in Dec. 2010 deeming \$91,331.00 of Whittier NRP Phase II funds unavailable or frozen, the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors creates a policy to move the total amount to the Phase II Housing strategy A.1.1.1. **Motion Carried**

The NRP funds being reallocated come from:  
Phase 1 Business & Local Economy \$324,149.64  
Phase II Housing Program income \$ 50,054.05  
Phase II Housing programs \$ 91,331.00

**TF Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Board recommends the reallocation of \$115,137.05 in the housing strategy and distribution of an additional \$465,564.69 in program income to various Phase II strategies as outlined in the attached document dated 2-17-15. **Motion Carried**

The housing loan program was discussed: condo owners could be eligible for the loan for interior portions; the condo association cannot obtain the loan because there isn't one owner that could be identified for the loan. Over the years, 100% of residential loans have been repaid; 95% on business loans.

**Stevens Ave Houses:** the income & expense report is almost complete. We are expecting a reimbursement of insurance. We anticipated having a loss at the end, but we came ahead slightly. One house needed more work, so we lost on one and made on the other. Even though one house was sold in 2015, it was agreed to show the whole report for the annual meeting so attendees would have a complete picture.

**Healthcare plan for employees:** We are exploring new health care options to align with IRS rules. A new way of paying for employee health care was adopted after the health care law passed, however, the method of paying for the plan isn't allowed. There won't be a penalty, but need to get a new option in place.

#### **Community Issues Committee Meeting:**

**Prairie Dogs** restaurant is opening on Lake Street in the former Gray House location between It's Greek to Me and Fuji Ya. They opened without their liquor license. They will have beer and wine only, no liquor. They might try a carry out window in the summer.

**CI Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to support the application for a Class E Liquor License by Prairie Dogs located at 612 Lake Street. **Carried 10-0-1**

**Street Cars:** The Nicollet Street Car project is moving forward. They need to complete the historical study to get Federal funding. They need to know and document the impacts, if any, to historical structures. And, they can then decide how to navigate around, through or under as needed. There are options to keep historic structures intact – Dallas is an example where they changed implementation in a specific section to protect the historic structure. Studies were done as part of the light rail project, but they are required again. In order for us to have a seat at the table, we need to formally request participation in what is called section 106. It's unknown what this requires for time commitment.

**CI Motion 2:** The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to write a letter to Anna Flintoft to request Section 106 Consulting Party status. **Motion Carried**

**MCAD building rehab:** a building on campus, circa 1970, on 3rd Ave between a parking lot and an old stone bldg. The envelope and exterior are run down and have structural problems. MCAD presented their designs for redoing the building. It's entirely an exterior project to repair and upgrade to prevent future water damage, etc. There are varied opinions of the new look – one side doesn't care for the look, minimalist and cheap; some think it looks better than existing. MCAD thinks it aligns with their brand. It's pretty clear their plan is final, so input on design at this stage will unlikely result in any changes.

This is student housing; rents will not go up as a result. Work will be completed in 2016 so as to not disrupt classes. MCAD indicated they have a long list of projects, including two vacant buildings that were brought up; they are working through their list as they can. They did a CBA and determined that the 1 million or so to rehab was better than tearing down – they believe the structure is sound.

This building is not a contributing structure in the Historic District. Therefore, their presentation to HPC is just a formality. If HPC approves, this will be the final design. Although, they may discover a need for variances or other permits at which time they would go back to the neighborhood.

There was discussion about submitting a substitute motion that includes a condition that the public art feature is actually installed. The motion letter will include information from the discussion - including concerns, criticisms

**CI Motion 3:** The Community Issues Committee Moves to support MCADs application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for renovations to 2540 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. **Carried 10-1-2**

**Business Association Meeting:** We are applying for a business district support grant. We're asking for \$18,000 but will probably get \$10,000. The grant request is for updating the business guide and for sale-for rent online directories. There is a larger conversation going on about our websites, social media, etc. Craig Baillie from Brave New Media gave Marian a proposal for updating the business guide and other online work. They are located in the neighborhood and he has spent some time with the BA marketing task force. The plan is to incorporate whittierbusiness.org and whittieralliance.org more seamlessly, more interactive, etc. The estimate is \$10,500. A copy of the proposal is available for review. We should know about the grant in April – receive funds in June. Marian will send out more info about prior work completed by Brave New Media – links to websites they have developed.

**NuWay:** The appeal to the Board of Adjustments to deny the Reasonable Accommodation and supported by more than 280 petitioners was denied by the city. We can appeal that decision. There were several people from the recovery community testifying on behalf of NuWay – Hazeldon, some local, a woman from St. Paul interested in opening two recovery homes for women in Whittier. Their main argument for passing NuWay's request was the fair housing act – their interpretation being that to deny the housing request would be discriminatory. They believe, from CPED on down, they must grant the accommodation so as to not violate FHA. They are afraid of getting sued by NuWay. However, the board discussed how there are others, including Myron Orfield and another lawyer, that say it's discriminatory to cluster the recovery facilities in one area. This is the angle we will take with another appeal. There was a lot of discussion about enlisting a law firm, which could get expensive. Ted contacted a lawyer that worked on a similar case – Lydia House – years ago. Other arguments we will use in the next phase include housing code being discriminatory with their 1.7% rule – making it nearly impossible for recovery housing to be located anywhere else. A major problem is that NuWay is trying to create a campus – which will be like a revolving door going from rehab to recovery housing to the drug dealers across the street back to rehab, etc.

There are a lot of statistics showing concentration of recovery housing and services is more a detriment to recovery. And, 9/10 people in recovery typically fall back off. The concentration doesn't give them as many opportunities to entrench in the non-recovery community. This issue isn't about one building – it's about the zoning practices allowing for a campus-like environment for the recovery businesses. And, about concentrating them in one location – someone tried to map other n'hoods and their recovery housing and couldn't – they don't have any. Let Marian or Ted know if you can participate on a Task Force.

There are resources and lawyers out there we can enlist to help frame our argument for the city. We will get a pro bono attorney if we can, maybe a grad student. But, housing law is very specific, so we want someone fully versed, which isn't a large pool. Getting pro bono will be difficult. We would like to have city council support on this issue, but there is apparent unwillingness from Councilmember Bender's office as this falls into development – as noted by Strib reporter Eric Roper. It's still worth the appeal – and \$400 to file it – because it's a bigger issue and it will finally get the attention it needs. Since Ted lives within the required notification area, he is the only one on the board able to file the appeal. But, this time the plan is to have a lot more signatures. We need to go on record, get other n'hoods involved and show that the zoning is discriminatory. The argument has to be made carefully or it can look as if we are against recovery. Our n'hood is 54% making under \$35,000. Research supports that recovery housing is better absorbed/has better results if placed in wealthier communities. All the lobbying groups for disabled people say if there is clustering, the city has an obligation to do something. We can hire the lawyer as expert opinion, advice on any letter, etc. This is a n'hood issue.

Another element being considered is historic preservation. NuWay's plans for the main structure would strip it of its history. The building was nominated for historic preservation, which could help us with our case. The building has been vacant for quite some time due to code violations, which NuWay hasn't started to look into. They may determine sooner than later that the code updates wouldn't be worth the cost.

The WA has engaged someone for PR behind the scenes. Not much has happened yet, but he is ready to get the story out – need to just give him the assignment. Haven't seen any drafts, so not sure what we'll get yet. It would be good to have some people that have been affected by the issue to have for our PR and case. Would be good if we could get the city attorney on our side, but it's unlikely as they are the ones that wrote the speech for Joe Giant from the last hearing. Ted identified a conflict of interest.

**Bd Motion 2:** The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors supports filing an appeal to the Board of Adjustment decision to allow NuWay to move forward with their recovery housing at 2118 Blaisdell Ave S. **Carried 10-0-2**

**Staff Report:** Marian sent hers out via email. Let her know if you have questions. **Hiring:** Marian has been at Lyndale interviewing for Somali organizers. Very shallow pool – one person today that looked hopeful. One more tomorrow. Marian has about 20 resumes to review for the WA Community Organizer. **May Day Soirée:** May 7, Old Arizona - please get donations for silent auction. **Artists in Storefronts:** This has been difficult to get started, so will put the project on hold; will try to work on grants and fundraising first, then look at a fall or later implementation. **Ash trees:** A map was included in the board packet showing which streets have ash trees slated for removal over the next years. They will be replanting 8,000 trees per year Anita Tabb and Paul Sefert will be at the CI to discuss. **Reopen Nicollet Work Group:** The City has taken back the south half of the Whittier clinic block. The City always had that option. HCMC won't be expanding south. It could become part of the development plan for reopening Nicollet. The City is still trying to get the stars to align with the Kmart site, possibly Kmart is waiting for the going away price. The City is not pleased with the Walgreens purchase of the SuperValu site since they lose site control there. **St. Stephens Task Force:** The last meeting was attended by representatives St Stephens Human Services, Loaves & Fishes, Stevens Square, 5<sup>th</sup> precinct and City Council Ben Somogyi. This is the first time the church is acting on feedback from the neighborhood. They're taking shifts walking the few blocks stemming from the shelter and know there are people sleeping off site, like the alleys, and leaving their belongings. It's a small portion of the population that is causing most of the problems. This is an ongoing conversation.

**Simpson Church** is losing parishioners, making it likely they will need to close the church. Current zoning requires homeless shelters be run from churches. If the church closes, the shelter would close. Whittier has 3 homeless shelters. Lisa Bender is working on changing the zoning law so shelters wouldn't have to be in churches. Some think it would be better to grant an exception for this one situation rather than change the zoning for the whole city. Churches might not like the idea because they might make money from the shelters.

**Motion to adjourn:** 8:45

Meeting Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Rita Stodolka

Approved:

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Erica Christ, Board Chair

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Natascha Shawver, Board Secretary