

**Whittier Alliance Board**  
**June 25, 2015 6-8:30 PM**  
**Whittier Park**

**Present:** Erica Christ, Andy Cohen, David Bagley, Ted Irgens, Laura Jean, Jesse Oyervides, Natascha Shawver, Erin Sjoquist, Daphna Stromberg, Brett Vandenbussche, Joan Vorderbruggen, Kenya Weathers

**Absent:** Grayson Carr, Christina Le, Araceli Perez, Charles Nguyen, Mike O'Dell **Staff:** Marian Biehn

**Call to Order** at 6:15 by Erica Christ, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed. A **Motion** to approve the June 25 agenda with the addition of the parking ordinance, bike carousel and the stronger communication with City Depts added to old and new businesses **Carried**.

**Comments from the Chair:** Erica announced that Tammy Wong's of Rainbow Chinese Restaurant son had committed suicide a few weeks ago. A card will go around to be signed along with a contribution to Face It Foundation a mental health organization that assists young men.

**Secretary's Report-**Natascha Shawver

Minutes: The minutes from May 28, 2015 were reviewed and a **Motion** to approve as written **Carried**.

Attendance: Natascha reviewed the attendance and noted the resignations. Tom was a surprised resignation- he was very brief in his statement. He was absent from the April and May Bd meetings. Since Tom was the treasurer, we need to elect a treasurer. He had been on the board for about 15 years and had served as the treasurer. His term expires in 2016. A question was presented about how vacancies are filled. Per the by-laws, the board can appoint an at-large member or the seat can go unfilled until the next election. Diane Moe had a 1 year term and was a non-profit rep so her seat would be replaced by someone from the BA.

Election of Treasurer: A call for nominations was made. Laura Jean nominated Andy Cohen. Andy accepted the nomination. A 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> call were made. No further nominations came forward.

**Bd Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Board elects Andy Cohen as the treasurer for the Whittier Alliance. **Motion Carried 11-0-1**

**Executive Committee-** Erica Christ

**Blue Print for Equitable Engagement:** The timeframe for comment on this document has been extended to August. Marian has been in conversation with the other n'hood Exec. Directors who also are not enthused about the proposed policy. The board stated a preference that we get as many n'hoods as possible to speak in a united voice. The response could be a joint response with final approval of the document by the board at the July meeting. No one argues with the principle of the document. What is the model they are using to ask for equity and what measures are using for success? The City measures participation differently than how neighborhoods achieve participation. Attending meeting and voting is the City criteria but that isn't the only measure in the neighborhood dynamic. The city needs to be "equitable in their zoning and policy". The WA board is diverse but they don't see it as diverse. Andy and Laura Jean have offered to help draft a response.

**Board Training:** Kenya and Araceli attended. Kenya was very pleased with the training gave a summary: covered lots of topics but board structure and responsibility were highlighted. The importance of the ED and speaking as a collective voice. The pay and reward is the growth of the n'hood. It was enriching and gave an outline of what is expected and what you should do. Kenya suggested that others attend. The next board training dates were announced.

**Shelter Ordinance-Ted Irgens:** Marian and a few other Whittier residents attended. There were about 40-50 people there long with CMs Bender, Warsame, Cano, Gordon and CPED staffer Shana Sether. Shana gave an outline of the current shelter ordinance and one of the shelter providers gave a profile of the homeless population and a review of the current shelters, their location and who they take. No questions were taken by the councilmembers to talk about why the change is being considered. Currently shelters need to be associated with a house of worship. No rationale behind why churches became the shelter sites but that happened in the late 70s. Other cities don't require the tie between church and homeless shelters. There is an exception for the downtown shelters. The council members were assigned to each of the 4 groups. Ted sat with Steven Horsefield of Simpson housing who promised he would not use 2100 Pillsbury (Simpson's current

admin offices) as a shelter. There were 3 questions posed to each of the groups for discussion. The same questions will be asked at the next public meeting which is in July. Each of the groups summarized their discussion of the 3 questions: Outcome: if revising code, a provision has to be put in that deconcentrates the shelters, also have to take into consideration the other supportive/transitional facilities in the same area; the underlying zoning needs to be considered; Churches thought out the city should be stepping up but aren't; other underutilized areas or bldg's should be considered as shelters like industrial builds, hospitals; there should be staff at shelters who can help with mental or chemical problems. Will the fair housing act come into play with the shelters? No but 80% of the homeless are mentally or chemically disabled. That problem is going untreated. CM Gordon and Bender are the authors of the change in the ordinance and have not stated what their plan is but that is not believed. Need a plan that prevents future concentration. The shelters will be decoupled from churches: should have social services with the shelter, have longer hours,. Likely that a for profit will come in and run the shelters. Need to look at how many beds per neighborhood. In its early years Heading home Hennepin shifted the resources from maintaining shelter to preventing homelessness. But the funding was cut and the linking of people in need to the services has failed so more people are homeless. The next meeting is July 27 and everyone needs to attend.

Mikel Beckman the former St Stephens director can address some of the question but the zoning has to be addressed. Only 3% of the city can accept the larger housing

**Executive Director Review:** This has been done on line but can be done on paper as well. It will be distributed via email. Erin will send it out to current board members

**US District Court Complaint – Sabri et al vs WA:** Nothing to report at this time. It has been 5 weeks and the hope that it will be dismissed with prejudice. "with prejudice" would mean that it could not be refiled in a different court. Check to see if the plaintiff would have to pay for legal fees if they lose.

EXEC Session re the legal matter:

**Affordable Housing Complaint:** There isn't anything new on the Whittier complaint. However the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Texas claim against HUD and the fair housing act. This is a similar claim as was made by the n'hoods and MICHA

**Finance Committee-Andy Cohen**

**May 2015 Financial Statements:** The May financial report was presented. The balance sheet was reviewed. The total assets/liabilities are \$549771. The assets are higher than usual due to the house sale. Profit & Loss: Income is over budget for the month of May due to the Soiree income. We would be \$20k over budget even without house sale. There is an entry for \$3814 for a community meetings expense-looks like fundraising expenses got coded to community meeting unless it is an entry for the in-kind use of the Soiree facility. We are still ahead of budget for the year.

**FC Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Board accepts the May 2015 financial report for the Whittier Alliance.

**Motion Carried**

David asked that a chart be provided on what the balances are in each of the contracts. A discussion followed about how to track the contract fund --how many loans have gone out. Spent vs available funds. Maybe have Bob Cooper come in and go over fund balances. Get loans marketed. Target bad rental properties to take out loan. The funds are fluid and reimbursed on a quarterly basis so a monthly report won't be accurate. Marian brought the most recent reports for NRP contracts 22203=\$581k, 23503=\$173k and CPP = \$133k. The funds need to be spent in the way they are dedicated in each contract such as housing, safety, commercial corridors, youth etc. The CPP funds go mostly for operations. The NRP funds go to more specific programs but there are some \$\$s for operations.

**NRP Funding Draft for Comment:** The City Council directed NCR to explore why n'hoods have unspent NRP money. Marian has prepared a draft response to the NRP fund balance proposal. It was reviewed with the suggestion to add more data of the work, investments, leveraging that has been accomplished by the WA with NRP funds and how they are still working-- add more measures. Defend ourselves without being defensive. Andy offered to help shape the response which is due on Fri. June 26.

**2014 Audit:** A full audit is being scheduled for the WA. Barry Rogers has sent a letter of engagement outlining the work he will do for the audit. We get an audit every year -mostly it's a policy and procedure audit. About

every 5 -6 years we get a full audit. NCR will pay for the audit. We are scrupulous with our funds, tracking and reporting. The city is on a cycle of audits and we are on the full audit. With the rehab and sale of the houses in 2014, it is good to get the audit and b

**FC Motion 2:** The Whittier Alliance Board approves engaging the services of Barry Rogers Accounting for a full financial audit of the Whittier Alliance for 2014. Motion Carried

### **Acting Committee Reports & Motions**

**Community Issues:** The City property inspectors were at the meeting to talk about the environmental cleanup and Mpls sweep. The Cuningham group presented a good plan to do a visioning for the Kmart site--Create a community generated plan to help influence the city on the development of the site. They use a design process that is community driven with live digital build. There were some questions about the urgency at the CI meeting, but the city is close to making an offer on both the Kmart site and the Sullivan supermarket site. If the city's offer is accepted by Kmart and all, it will be a lot of \$\$ and the city will have to move quickly in order not to have carrying charges for too long. The city doesn't want us to do any planning so we need broad support for anything we do: developers or possible tenants signed on and a good plan. Cuningham has an incentive to do this because of the potential for their businesses. They have a couple of potential tenants lined up to be part of the development. and also adding the Supervalu site. The Walmart agreement to buy is losing momentum. Lyndale n'hood will not participate do to another big project but the Greenway might. US INternet should be involved. Need to check out what "additional services" might be and the possible fees.

**CI Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors accept the Cuningham Group as a the consultant to help prepare a neighborhood vision for the Kmart site. **Motion Carried: 12-0-0**

**Bd Motion 2:** The Whittier Alliance moves to allocate NRP funds from Business & Local Economy NRP 23503 D.1.1.3 **Motion Carried 12-0-0**

### **Business Assn-Andy Cohen:**

Change info re presenter on the BA minutes. Really liked GYST as a location. The food was good. Duc Loi has been purchased by Zeus Jones. The parking lot is still under question. Tasks Unlimited has retained part of the parking lot on the north.

**BA Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Business Assoc. recommends the Cuningham Group as a the consultant to prepare a neighborhood vision for the Kmart site. **Motion Carried: received and file**

### **Strategic Plan Ted Irgens & Laura Jean**

**2118 Blaisdell Historic Designation Study:** The WA is applying for a legacy grant with the MN State Historic Soc. due July 1. Marian has prepared the 1<sup>st</sup> draft and Design by Preservation will assist (for a fee) with adding the historic language and details needed for the grant.

**Organizational Sustainability- Fund Development:** The earned income is group is meeting on June 29, the other 2 groups are "talking" but nothing is scheduled.

**Midtown Greenway Energy Challenge:** This is an initiative that parallels Whittier's environmental part of the strategic plan. The Energy Challenge has done the work of getting Excel on board to do the baseline measurements and that we need to get our plan going. We need to let the MGW know if we are on board with the challenge. They are engaging all the n'hoods along the greenway. This might be an initiative that some of the young adults in the n'hood can get behind. Brett will do some asking. The Greenway challenge needs to be done alongside the goals of our Environmental plan.

**Staff Reports:** Reports from Marian and Camilla for May and June are in the board packet. Please ask them if you need more information about any of their work

**Old & New Business:** Michael McLaughlin called and asked if the Lyn-Lake Assn could use some of Whittier's utility box wraps along the Whittier Side of Lake ST. They want pre vetted wraps rather than going through the city approval process. He has also asked for Lyndale's wraps. The boards okayed the idea with the

recommendation of asking for a “user fee.” **Ice Cream social:** It will be in Clinton Field Park, July 24 4-6pm. It is scheduled for after Ramadan. People bring picnic and we provided activities, games and ice cream.

**Parking Reduction Proposal:** CM Bender talked about this a bit at CI. The proposal is to go to a 0 parking requirement for new build especially in the transit corridors. The City doesn’t want to be in the business of dictating parking. They feel developers will want parking so that they can market their building and that banks will require parking as part of the financing. But the thought is also that if there is no parking the cost to build is less so rents will be less. The proposal passed the Planning Commission and the Z & P. The hope is that it will also create more transit and bike use. It was proposed that a does staged reduction would be a better approach to see how effective parking reductions are, if they work and how they work in different neighborhood.

**Bd Motion 3:** The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors requests that the Whittier neighborhood be exempt from the proposed parking reduction until more informative outreach is done and the impacts of the parking reduction can be measured and evaluated. **Motion Carried 14-0-0**

**Bike Carousel:** Brett has been contacted by an individual who wants to install a bike carousel. The guy is trying to get a group of people together to buy a bike carousel to fit in a parking place on Lyndale Ave in the LHENA neighborhood. The cost is \$700 but we are asked to contribute \$142.50 It is a rack that holds many bikes. It is a summer installation only Brett did not know if the businesses in the area had been contacted. It was recommended that the topic go to CI.

**WA Communication with City Depts.** Kenya wants to assure that the ED has full permission to bridge the communication and interact directly with the City depts. in order to get things completed in the neighborhood. Street lights, problem areas etc. If we don't have direct access to the dept and our Council person wants things directed to the Council office and she isn’t cooperative with us, we can sit with problems for a long time. Ted suggested that 311 be called to get things done. 311 by law creates an official report that the department have to take care of. Sometimes you can get directly to the departments through 311. Kenya stressed the need to have board members advocate more. The board members have been elected by the people so we need to have some effectiveness. If a Whittier constituent asks for something and the board member doesn't come through, we look ineffective. We need to talk with the dept. more directly. Public works/or excel needs to be more responsive. Social media was also suggested as a way to get things done.

**S. Whittier Flier:** The flier promotes splitting Whittier at 26<sup>th</sup> St. It is not going to happen via a petition --the city decides if a neighborhood would be divided and it is not an easy process. Erica gave an example of when Philips was divided. There is no mechanism to recognize another n'hood group. Dividing the n’hood is the stated reason for the flier but the real goal is to malign the Whittier Alliance. This flier is causing alarm among people who know an support the WA. What do we do about it? It is again a defamation of character of ED and the board. We have to respond in same measure. There is value in not overreacting but damage is being done. Need to go to an attny. Craft our own flier and address the false statement and who the WA is , what we do. Need to go door to door and discredit the flier and promote the WA. It was posted on Next Door and positive things are being said about the WA. It was decided to send the flier to the attny and ask for advice on how to respond and find out if the flier violates the current legal issue that is pending.

**Adjourn**

**8:45**

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Marian Biehn, ED.**

Meeting Minutes Approved on \_\_\_\_\_

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Erica Christ, Board Chair

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Natascha Shawver, Board Secretary