

Whittier Alliance Board Meeting Minutes
June 23, 2016 6-8 PM
Whittier Park Community Center

Present: David Bagley, Erica Christ, Andy Cohen, Sarah Estey, Mary Gazca, Ted Irgens, Laura Jean, Christina Le, Marie Listopad, Michael Malone, Jesse Oyervides, Araceli Perez, Christine Popowski, Natascha Shawver, Daphna Stromberg, Brett Vandebussche, Kenya Weathers **Absent:** Fadumo Abdinur Anab, Osman Abo, Geri Jerez, Erin Sjoquist **Staff:** Lucy Lawson

Call to Order at 6:00pm by Erica Christ, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed. **Motion** to approve the April 28 agenda, with the addition of the Blaisdell Mansion under Old/New Business and 2605 1st Avenue as a potential office space, **Carried.**

Comments from the Chair

Erica Christ

Executive Director review: Please complete the survey if you haven't already. Ricardo is in Columbia this month.

Secretary's Report

Laura Jean (in Erin's absence)

Minutes from March 17, 2016 were reviewed and a **Motion** to approve as written **Carried.**

Resignation: Brett has been hunting for a property for about 6 months, he has found one and it is closing next week, so he is resigning as CI Chair. He will be moving to the NE on September 1st, and will attend both CI and board meetings the next two months (his last one will be in August). Someone who is already on the board can be the Chair if needed. He will make an announcement at the next CI.

E-vote read into the minutes: **Motion:** That the Board of the Whittier Alliance supports the Lake Street Energy Challenge. **Motion Carried: 16-0-1.** Motion received and filed.

Executive Committee

Affordable Housing Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) update -- Laura Jean

HUD is enforcing the VCA with St Paul and Minneapolis, which includes an advisory committee to help choose who does the new study into impediments to fair housing. It has been decided that the alternates can also sit on the committee, so Laura Jean is able to attend the meetings as well as Marian. The Cities gain through this agreement, in that they do not have to admit to any wrongdoing and avoid a lawsuit, but they will be required by HUD to make changes based on what is found in the impediments analysis. HUD is obligated to see that the housing is distributed equitably according to federal law. HUD controls the funds and if it finds that the MET council has violated the federal Fair Housing Act, it can withhold funding. The committee needs to have someone picked out soon because the study is meant to be completed within a year.

Sabri lawsuit update -- Erica Christ

The US Circuit of Appeals judges have 180 days to respond to the appeal. If the original ruling is upheld, we are allowed to sue for the legal costs associated with the appeal. If the appeal is denied, the case cannot be brought back again.

Front Stoop Placemaking project -- Erica Christ

The idea behind the project proposal involving the Musicant Group is to reach out to renters, improve some unattractive properties and try to create more community space with public-private land. The project will begin with some of the large buildings along Blaisdell, if the property managers are willing. The Exec Cttee had mixed feelings about the project, but it's not a lot of money.

Board members expressed a wide range of views about the project, including:

- Concern that there is no RFP process to allow other companies to apply for it.
- Support for the idea, which will allow property owners to come together to contribute to the community. The total cost to the organization is only \$3400.
- If a property management company wants to get good residents, this will help them brainstorm ideas.
- The project will yield information and data that can be reused.
- Concern that the risk of benefiting a private property owner is high and that without a matching contribution maintenance will be a problem.
- Liking for the parklets the Musicant Group comes up with and that the project has a public safety component.

- Confusion about project outcomes from the proposal.
- Preference to defer vote to next month.
- There is a time pressure because the Musicant Group won't do it this summer if it doesn't get funded at this meeting.
- Suggestion that the motion has stipulations that they don't release funds to the Musicant Group unless a couple of property owners sign up.
- Feeling that the proposal was very vague.
- Support for doing tangible specific thing to make the community more pleasant and livable during the summer, and it includes \$5000 of free work.
- It could be a nice initial investment, like the artists in storefront project.
- Concern that every budget item should be done properly, even if it is a small amount. Getting a quote from other companies is a good rule.
- While we should look at other companies in general, this proposal wasn't our idea in the first place, and doesn't hit the RFP threshold anyway.
- Max has been very publicly critical of the organization in the past, and it would be nice to know that he was genuine about mending those fences. It is also good for staff to bring forward projects to the board.
- Everybody has email addresses, and it would be good to have got a preview of this project.
- Perhaps Ricardo could send out a weekly email to board members about what is going on in the office.
- Curiosity about how it will benefit renters directly -- it's like offering carrots to a dog.
- Feeling that we don't do enough to proactively engage the community, and this could lead to some good ideas in the future, such as matching grants and other projects. It's congruent with the Artists in Storefronts project.

We will politely ask them to keep us updated, with more communication back and forth.

Motion: That the Board supports the Whittier front stoop placemaking project and moves forward to fund it.

Motion carried: 11-3-3

Finance Committee

Andy Cohen

May 2016 Financial Statements: The financial report was presented. The balance sheet was reviewed. Board members discussed budget items and forecasts and fundraising. The May Day Soiree is no longer. Exec. Cttee has started discussing other fundraising options. We never counted staff time contribution to May Day Soiree but it doubled as a community event. It was a lot of work for something that contributed perhaps 1% of the budget. The space and staff time was donated every year, plus music and food were usually donated. The space has been sold so is no longer available. It was a good event. Camilla and the bike cops are both appearing under the subcontract line item.

Motion: The Board accepts the Whittier Alliance May 2016 financial report. **Motion Carried.**

Acting Committee & Task Force Reports & Motions

Community Issues

Brett Vandebussche

The June CI meeting went well. Lisa Bender mentioned in her update that she will push for the City to purchase the land under Kmart for \$7.3m, and she would like help with selling it to the other Councilmembers. Sgt Brown from the bike patrol and Teresa from Serenity Place/Whittier Place also presented. At the last meeting the board deferred a motion from the May CI meeting regarding Clinton Ave street signs. The intersection always has pedestrians, even though it isn't heavily trafficked. Between Loaves & Fishes, the school and the bus stop, it should be a 4-way stop sign. The Blind Inc clientele use it as well.

Motion : The Board supports moving the no-parking signs on Clinton Ave to allow for more buses, adding a school zone sign to Clinton Ave and adding stop signs on the E/W corner of the intersection of 22nd & Clinton.

Motion carried: 16-0-1

Business Association

Andy Cohen

Securonet presented at the June BA meeting: they partner with the MPD in creating a network of exterior cameras owned by businesses who voluntarily provide access. Board members expressed some privacy concerns. Board member said Securonet links in with the Crime & Safety Task Force and gives the police an extra investigatory tool. It allows them to build relationships with businesses. Tourists are coming for the SuperBowl and they will come to Eat Street. Securonet doesn't add any cameras: it just links them with the MPD. Board members discussed trade offs between safety and surveillance. It merits a bigger discussion because of the violent crime trends in the n'hood. The Crime & Safety TF might put together a proposal for loans for small businesses for cameras.

Staff Reports:

Reports from Paul, Ricardo and Camilla are in the board packet.

Old & New Business:

2118 Blaisdell -- Ted Irgens

The Historic Preservation Committee unanimously approved giving the 28,500 sq ft mansion a historic designation. The Zoning & Planning Cttee unanimously approved the designation this morning, which will protect the public rooms and features of import. If Nuway decides to sell we should keep interested in developers in mind. The intention was to protect that building, not to harm Nuway in any way. We want to keep working with them. Board members congratulated Ted Irgens on his work on the designation.

2605 1st Ave -- Erica Christ

Question of buying a new WA office space has come up again. The property is a kind of ugly house but 130 years old. Has been used for some time. Basement is dank, similar to current basement. Has been on the market since October \$275,000. One apartment above, and a large space below. It is a peculiar space, but better than expected, with 10 or 12 parking spaces at the back. The main level has perhaps double the space of the current office. The apartment above is also peculiar but could fix it up and rent it in the \$1000-\$1200 range. Probably couldn't rent as a 2br because the layout is so strange. It's cheap but numbers might not add up in terms of rent, renovations and available funds. Being on Nicollet would be better for visibility. If the layout is weird, there is a risk of tenants coming in and out. Board member commented that providing rental housing is nicer than being constantly mistaken for the place where people pay rent.

A past task force looked at numbers to make moving offices sustainable. For an office in a duplex, it was around the \$200,000 range. Task force also looked at other options, including 4-plex unit, and a big unit in a commercial building, which turned out to be way over budget. Board member commented that two distinct conversations are being conflated: what we want out of an office space and making money. Will add a discussion of 'wants' for an office space to next month's meeting agenda.

Lake St Reconstruction Project -- Christina Le

The Reconstruction Task Force has agreed to going all the way with the upgrade -- all the enhancements. The initial RFP, the feds will pay 90%, the other 10% will be property owners on that street. A few big property owners are on board.

Parks Police on Bikes -- Kenya Weathers

Kenya asked that the Board support entertaining a conversation about bike officers being assigned to our parks. Board members agreed Kenya could get the numbers.

Adjourn 8:33 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson.

Meeting Minutes Approved on _____

Erica Christ, Board Chair

Erin Sjoquist, Board Secretary