

**Whittier Alliance Board Meeting Minutes**  
**July 27, 2017 6-8:30 PM**  
**Whittier Rec. Center**

**Present:** Andrew Nordick, Chafoxey Mitchner, Christina Le, Christine Popowski, Daphna Stromberg, David Bagley, Erin Sjoquist, Geri Jerez, Jesse Oyervides, Kaley Brown, Kenya Weathers, Laura Jean, Martha Nemesi, Scott Melamed

**Absent:** Carrie McCabe-Johnston, Jennifer Kader, Michael Malone

**Late:** Mary Gazca

**Staff:** Ricardo McCurley, Dan Stanton

**Call to Order** at 6:06 PM by David Bagley, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed.

Comments regarding new approach to financials: Christina will provide financials with summary prior to board meeting.

**Motion** to approve agenda. Seconded. **Motion Carries.**

**Comments from the Chair**

David Bagley

N/A

**Secretary's Report**

Erin Sjoquist

**Review** of June 27th, 2017 Board Meeting Minutes. **Motion** to approve minutes **Carries**

Discussion related to absence policy + office error regarding meeting date/times:

- There was a typo in the May agenda concerning the July board meeting.
- If there is an office mistake regarding board meeting scheduling, there shouldn't be a penalty towards board members for being absent.
- Absence policy:
  - there aren't excused absences
  - there is a lenient policy
    - One is permitted 3 absences
    - Beyond that, one must ask for reinstatement
    - If the following meeting is missed after reinstatement, one can ask for permission to come back
    - However, if the 5th meeting is missed, one cannot be reinstated.
    - **Summary: one cannot miss more than 4 meetings**
- Vacations can't be rescheduled in the event that there is an office mistake → there shouldn't be a penalty in this case.
- The meeting is the 4th thursday of the month

- WA will send board members calendar reminders for when board meetings are scheduled

#### June Meeting Minutes Corrections:

- The minutes state that the board meeting began before reaching quorum. This needs to be changed; the meeting began once we received quorum -- during Aria Fine's comments.

**Motion** to approve minutes with above changes. Motion **seconded**. Motion **Approved**.

---

Next Board Meeting:

**August 24th, 2017**

---

Ricardo introduces mapping projects:

- These maps delve deeper into specifics of data that was previously collected, specifically related to housing.
- Made in January for Affordable Housing Complaint.
- How should we move forward?

#### Affordability Maps

- Gross median rent
  - Affordability defined: fed gov. says rent or mortgage is affordable if it's less than 33% of income
  - Map denotes Whittier and surrounding areas
  - The second map adds income data
  - Two bottom maps in 2x2 grid:
    - Lower left map: looks at average yearly income + rent (correlation)
    - Dots denote average income
    - West side of neighborhood has green space with large square in it
      - People in this neighborhood make more money and they're paying 20-25% of that towards living expenses
    - Lower right map: dots refer to average rent in that area
      - Looks at how expensive rent is in that area
      - Rents are relatively high: anywhere from 900-1100\$
      - Southwest corner of neighborhood: rents are high
      - Average income is under \$20,000
  - These maps tell us where to focus
    - South Side of Whittier seems to be have notable issues with affordability
- Ricardo shared all these maps, in addition to other mapping resources via email/drive
  - In folder, there is a sheet that references all the sources: MN Compass, Hennepin County, CURA
- Utilized most recent data
  - Data related to affordability
    - Average income
    - Average rents
    - Property owners provided their rent prices
    - Census data that included rent
- How is rent data unified?

- South Whittier has the highest rent
- We don't know the unit sizes for most of the data
  - Didn't have enough data on unit sizes to add in
  - These could be 3-4 bedroom apartments w/ higher rent
  - Rental companies use data from craigslist, zillow, etc to compile data
    - How credible is this?

Discussion:

- This data does not consider subsidized rent
  - In the southwest quad, one of the largest apartments is Karmel Square - subsidized
  - take this data with a grain of salt
- How granular can this data be? - it can be very granular
- The conclusions that the data alludes to fits in with impressions of each section of the neighborhood
- Possible to keep going with a new round of interns in September
- But what is the end result? What can we accomplish with this data
- The findings reinforce concerns already associated with these areas
- The next step could be going towards a smaller level and actually talking to the people that live here, to dig in and ask questions of what the actual concerns are
- Map #2
  - Looks at owner occupied homes, condos and apartments
  - This is essentially just three maps individually, then combined in the bottom right quadrant
  - Whittier housing numbers:
    - Condos - 450
    - Apartments - 5000
    - Tri - 262
    - Single - 365
    - Duplex - 320
    - Caveat: some of these have four units and above, some have over 400
  - Census tract zones are sectioned off by population
    - Scaled relative to certain amounts of people
  - Lower right map - affordability
    - Northeast quad - 2 bigger sections
      - This is because of Washburn Fair Oaks, MCAD and MIA → density of people is lower
      - But if you move west, there is a higher concentration of people so the squares are longer
  - Next page: summary by CURA with all affordable housing data that was collected in January
    - Gives a sense of what people told us
    - We had some of the most diverse data
    - People were using affordable housing because they had disability support vs just income-related affordable vouchers
      - Not just low-income; some are using it for disability
    - Are Somali/Muslim separate or are they individual categories?

- This was added by grad students at CURA
- How many people participated?
  - 3 focus groups of 30 people each
    - (a) 1 specifically with Somali population
    - (b) 1 at Whittier Apartments
    - (c) 1 at Whittier Place

Whittier, Housing and its relation to transitioning from apartment to home owning:

- Median Housing Prices
  - Minneapolis Median is \$260,000, going up and up, home prices are skyrocketing
  - Lyndale median is at \$269,000
  - Wedge is \$440,000
  - **Whittier is \$334,000**
- What is considered “Affordable”?
  - Entry level for a house is 3x one’s annual salary
  - Minneapolis has been ranked 9th + 3rd in most affordable places to live by various surveys
- Diversity is a healthy thing
  - No diversity in terms of types of units
  - not enough properties to own, as well
- For people that want to stay in the neighborhood, they don’t have options for larger living spaces and don't have options to own
  - what do we have control over?
- These pushes for density and highrises → limits ownership
- going to lose four more houses in whittier
- Unfair to not allow people that option
- everyone should be allowed the option
- These housing/affordability concerns should be discussed in tandem with Strategic Plan

**Executive Committee**

David Bagley

**Financial Committee**

**Christina Le**

Christina went over June Financials:

- There are a number of CPP-4 funds that will be reimbursed -- most likely by mid-September
  - This is why June’s main checking account appeared to be a little low
  - Hopefully these numbers will be much higher come September
- Why did it look like we lost \$5000 in assets?
  - We are paying for facade improvements with unrestricted funds
    - These funds will go down until we get the facade grant money back
- Profit + loss budget performance:
  - There have been ideas to compare last year's spending to this year’s

- Stacey has said that it's not an apples to apples comparison. Each year, efforts are different, especially compared between efforts under different EDs.
  - This means it wouldn't necessarily be beneficial to compare
- Profit & Loss by class: why are all these net zero?
  - Unrestricted funds do not fluctuate very often
  - We look at the classes because we are a nonprofit: we've already spent the money before asking for reimburse
- Question regarding facade improvements:
  - It is a \$5000 grant for commercial properties to improve their facade
    - Ex: Pimento Kitchen used one through the City and WA

**Motion** to Approve financials. **Seconded**. Motion **Carries**.

### Acting Committee & Task Force Reports & Motions

#### Community Issues

Scott Melamed

Scott recaps June CI Meeting:

- Attendance was decent: 21 attendees
- 7-8 presenters about opportunities, events
- Becky Lewis from Whittier park
- Jeff Cowmeadow talked about Farmers Market
- TigerLlon Arts spoke about upcoming play going on in Fair Oaks
- Lyndsey Wallace talked about K-Mart acquisition
- No Development projects
- At the end, a number of questions were presented to the group:
  - what is the greatest challenge to the neighborhood?
  - what is the greatest hope for the neighborhood?
  - What is the greatest asset of the neighborhood?
  - What is the greatest change to the neighborhood?
- Next two meetings will be unconventional:
  - Neighborhood-wide end of celebration at Whittier Park on the day of CI
    - There will be things to do, food to eat
    - This will be combined with past Ice Cream Social event
    - MIA will bring art activities
    - There will be things for families to do
    - Big Ideas Grant finalists will be tabling
      - There will be a ballot box for voting
    - Scott has reached out to different restaurants in the neighborhood
      - Pimento will be offering free samples
    - Geri will help with restaurant aspect
    - Araceli said that they will bring horchata

- Becky Lewis, Whittier Park Director, is excited about the idea
- One concern:
  - We need to diversify where events are held
    - Clinton Field Park
    - Important to be hitting all areas with social events
- Second concern:
  - David met with Dylan Thomas, Southwest Journal Editor
    - Thomas said that the board isn't really a legitimate voice in the neighborhood
  - How do we build our case/legitimacy?
    - This event is a powerful tool for this

## Business Association

Andrew Nordick

BA meeting focused on 35W construction:

- Quickly determined that conversation required more time
- Made sub groups, which is not officially a task force yet
- Need to talk to experts
- Talking to Zeus Jones + MCAD Marketing Professors
- Need to have discussion outside of meeting regarding 35W
  
- Inclusiveness discussion
  - Andrew + Ricardo working on plan
  - Work in with mobile office idea - going to be piloting at Learning in Style
    - Staff or interns go to business or business node, advertise on social media
    - Interact with people in that business and patrons, employees
    - Use that information to better influence what we do
  
- Inclusiveness and language barriers
  - 2-3 meetings a year there are people with some type of language barrier?
  - can we have meetings where they are only in a different language?
    - For ex: all spanish CI, all somali BA?

## Environment

Christine Popowski

Kaley is going to take over Paul's setting up ESC meeting setup

- Whittier Green Corps came out of committee
  - People that are willing to do training and public service to different gardens
  - Volunteer garden where people can learn and share expertise with others
  - Willow is contact person for that
  - There is a flier going around to join Whittier Green Corps
  - There are wait-lists for most of the community gardens in the neighborhood
    - The idea is to provide accessibility for those that don't have access
    - Get kids incorporated, too

- **Make copies of flier to pass out at next meeting, hand out at NNO**

#### Whittier Alliance Placemaking Project

- WA has all materials to do a placemaking project
- This winter we can do another push for placemaking - didn't have enough takers for previous attempt
- Do we know why there weren't more takers
  - People felt ambivalent about it
  - Property owners confused about it
  - Whittier Friendly Fronts - project last year
    - Goal: create more inviting front space in apartment buildings
    - Up and down blaisdell, we had five locations, provided lawn furniture and lighting

#### Staff Reports:

##### Strategic Plan Update:

- See: page 38 in July Board Packet
  - Information regarding upcoming Board Retreat
- Goal of September Retreat:
  - Internally, look at current strat. Plan
  - Ask what do we like, what has been completed, what is still relevant, do each of the priorities match the values of the neighborhood at the moment.
- Two potential dates: Sept 16 and Sept 30th
- Currently, there isn't a budget for food, but we will try to get donated food
- Pot luck style?
- Robert Thompson and Aria Fine (NCR) have agreed to come facilitate this process
- Who should attend?
  - Board only?
  - Board + staff?
  - Include other community members like Willow?
    - She has experience
      - Contributed to her University's Strategic Plan, worked in nonprofit administration consulting
    - Dan could be included in capacity of notetaking and event organization
    - Ricardo would facilitate the event, not necessarily dictate
    - It could be confusing to have outside voices at the first meeting
    - There is the option of including people that have contributed to previous plans
      - Erica Christ
- Strategic Plan is up on Whittier Alliance's website
- As we move forward, Ricardo will send out packets of info with periodic homework assignments
  - That way, we'll all be ready to have conversation come September

- Everyone needs to be comfortable with the Strategic Plan in order for these meetings to work efficiently + effectively
- **September 30th, 2017 is selected tentatively as Board Retreat date**
  - The banquet hall at Black Forest is a potential meeting location
  - Learning in Style is volunteered as another option by Martha

Staff Changes:

- Camilla is going to grad school at end of August
- Paul is going to be Executive Director of Wedge neighborhood
- Dan has accepted full-time position as Office Coordinator
- Board Packet contains Paul's job description with edits by Paul and Ricardo
- Camilla's position is a contract position w/ Lyndale
  - This position will not be renewed. Her main job now is to help find Paul's replacement
- Main focus for Community Organizer:
  - Bilingual in either Spanish or Somali
  - Background understanding both Western and another prevalent culture in Whittier community
- Help from the board is needed in searching for a candidate

**Recommendation that physical requirement is removed:**

- could be used to discriminate
- do community organizers need cars?
- strike need of car from application

2116 Nicollet Development:

- 3 story, mixed use
- 1 bedrooms, studios
- 2 Commercial-use on 1st floor
- 14-units
- No parking -- not large enough for underground parking
- Seeking a fitness company to operate a fitness public fitness studio
- This most likely will not be taken to the planning commission until late September
  - They have been welcomed to come table at Ice Cream Social/CI
- Have they looked at our design guidelines?
  - Extensively -- they have added brick features
- Who is the developer?
  - They own the land already

Friday Office Closures:

- Simply put, June, July + August, the office is closed to the public on Fridays
- Staff can work in office, work remotely or work extra hours during the week to make up for no Fridays
- Idea taken from other orgs that offer similar types of models
- Offers more flexibility in summer
- Goal: after it's done to talk to everyone to see if it impeded anything

National Night Out - Tuesday, August 1st:

- There is a lot of things to publicize
  - Backpack giveaway
  - Big Ideas Grant
  - Cl/Ice Cream Social
- Board is encouraged to go to NNO events
  - Stop by office to grab materials to hand out

### Old & New Business:

2449 Lyndale Development:

- Neighbors complaining about height
- They got a variance for square footage but not setback, which gives them the height
- If we can get neighbors around the property, this has much more weight than the board
- Cited housing concerns about losing housing at meeting, but they did not address them
- They had ten days to appeal the variance
  - The result is not known yet

Rex 26/Aldi:

- There aren't city owned vacant lots in Whittier to move the potentially displaced homes to
  - In the past, this is what they did
  - We want to encourage development, but not at the cost of losing homes

Whittier Farmers Market

- Call for volunteers

Park Square is going to have a National Night Out Party

- Jesse asking for volunteers and/or participants
  - He encourages everyone to explore that part of Whittier

**Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Carries.**

**Adjourn 8:12 PM**

**Minutes submitted by Dan Stanton.**

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

---

David Bagley, Board Chair

---

Erin Sjoquist, Board Secretary

