

Whittier Alliance Board
July 23, 2015 6-8:30 PM
Whittier Park

Present: David Bagley, Erica Christ, Andy Cohen, Ted Irgens, Laura Jean, Christina Le, Charles Nguyen, Jesse Oyervides, Araceli Perez, Erin Sjoquist, Daphna Stromberg, Brett Vandebussche, Kenya Weathers **Absent:** Natascha Shawver, Joan Vorderbruggen **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Lucy Lawson **Guest:** Stacey Petersen, Petersen Paquin WA Accountant

Call to Order at 6:45pm by Erica Christ, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed. A **Motion** to approve the July 23 agenda **Carried**. The Finance Committee report was moved ahead in the agenda to accommodate the finance report guest.

Finance Committee – Andy Cohen/Stacey Peterson

June 2015 Financial Statements: The June financial report was presented. The balance sheet was reviewed. Stacey Peterson of Peterson Paquin accounting firm briefed board members on WA procedures and financial reports, and answered questions. Aspects of WA financial reporting in the board pack were discussed, such as:

- The balance sheet shows how much money WA has and what it is earmarked for – for example, with the NRP contracts, the City provides the money in advance and thus it shows up as a negative.
- The budget performance sheet is a good comparison of how we are tracking with the budget – in the current month and year to date. Some months there will be a discrepancy with the estimate because the budget for the year is just divided by 12, plus budgets are just estimates.
- The WA fiscal year is the calendar year.
- The '\$ over budget' column shows money that is still to be spent. Not much was spent during June in general, because although there were several events they were not our own events, and several staff positions were unfilled. There have been other months when a lot has been spent, such as when working on the houses.
- The 'Profit and loss by class' sheet is broken down by contract. Money in the 'fundraising' column can be spent in an unrestricted way, as can money in the 'unrestricted' column.
- The preservation expenses will come under NRP so they will not be a new class but they will be a new expense line. If we receive a legacy grant from MNHS, the grant would be its own class.
- If WA starts getting grants, will have to decide whether to break down funds by individual grant or just have a 'grants' class.
- Looking at accounts receivable, reimbursement from City is quarterly, so we let small amounts sit. Last year there was a hold-up with payment from the City due to changed annual reporting, and the payment was not till May. Another year there was a mistake with the payment amount.
- Looking at P&L Budget Performance, if wondering why spending is below what was expected, then explanations may be that the money is for a project later in the year (e.g. printing the calendar), or fewer staff employed than planned.
- Personal expenditures such as mileage expenses and food/beverage expenses are all very low.
- Keep an eye on unrestricted funds, because it is 'our' money. Historically WA has kept that spending low. Fundraising goes into unrestricted.
- The Finance Committee (FC) keeps an eye on all the financial activity. The accountants also ask questions if something jumps out as a possible mistake. The FC is a good check and balance for a small organization.
- There are no checkbooks in the office, and each invoice is coded as to where the money will come from. In financial practices audits one of the things they look for is how many eyes are on the financials, including the FC and the board. Having two executive committee members sign off on the checks and so on is part of the financial practices that help pass audits.

- The recent departure of the treasurer is not likely to have much impact on the accounting, although different questions may arise as the new person gains experience in the role.
- The June financial report was reviewed and questions were answered

FC Motion 1: That the Whittier Alliance Board accepts the June 2015 financial report for the Whittier Alliance.

Motion Carried

Stacey Peterson departed meeting, and board members discussed finances further.

Funding Sources and Current Balances

- Marian prepared a summary report of the current NRP contracts and funds, the CPP contract and unrestricted funds. The funds are close estimates but not firm due to reimbursements and spending.
- The WA is in a good financial position, with soft total of \$1,860,000, not including the home loan fund and preservation funds. The WA is still receiving income from loans it made in the mid-90s, plus the NRP phase I and II plans were ambitious, and asked for and received a lot of money. Unrestricted funds in May 2004 (when Marian started) were around \$36,000, and are now at around \$500,000. All WA money is under contract except unrestricted funds.
- Board members discussed tracking CPP funds. It would be great to get more of the housing money working in the community, but need people to apply for the loans and it takes time. Youth grants and safety spending is on a regular basis. Individual condos, depending on the condo association rules, are now eligible for these loans. Shifting marketing of the loans was raised. The housing loans are only 20% of the total figure, and much of the money, around \$1 million, has been spent and then returned, sometimes several times.
- The NRP taskforce will be looking at strategies and implementing them – for example, with safety, in previous years the WA has paid for beat cops and lighting. Some of the NRP strategies are specific and some are not. Some rules are odd, e.g. cannot pay a stipend or pay for food or fun.
- To some extent, have been using CPP money rather than NRP money because CPP is a three-year contract that expires 2016, and will need NRP money more then.

Secretary's Report – Natascha Shawver

Secretary was absent so Erica presented in lieu of Natascha.

Minutes: The minutes from June 25, 2015 board meeting were reviewed. No changes or additions. **Motion** to approve as written was **Carried**.

Attendance: Meeting attendance was tallied before Grayson resigned. The board can appoint someone to empty board seats but doesn't have to. Discussion of board seat appointments will be in secretary's report next month. Board members discussed pros and cons of appointing candidates rather than leaving board seats open. Typically two to four people resign each year. Time will be allocated on next month's board meeting agenda to discuss.

Executive Committee – Erica Christ

Blueprint for Equitable Engagement: Neighborhoods need to respond to blueprint proposal by August 14. Executive Directors of other n'hoods will be responding – no-one is very enthused about the document, which puts City goals on Neighborhood Organizations (NOs). It will be difficult for the city to measure equitably, considering differences between neighborhoods, such as minority and renter populations. Hope to have several EDs sign the one letter. NOs are already under NRP and state guidelines, and the City is overstepping its guidelines. Marian will contact the Attorney General about legal aspects. The City's measurement methods seem vague, and some of the language makes it seem as though NOs are a city department.

Board Training: MAP training for Non-Profits will be held Aug 11 and Sep 15; advanced training Aug 5. Board training is ongoing. Marian will check for future Basic and Advanced Boot Camp board training.

Shelter Ordinance Meeting (Monday, July 27) – Ted Irgens:

Marian and Ted went to the last meeting and all board members are encouraged to go to the upcoming one. At the previous meeting no questions were taken. A staffer presented some history, but they didn't have a

proposal yet. They framed it as a chance for people to consult. Several people at the previous meeting expressed the view that shelters shouldn't be concentrated. Questions about uncoupling shelters with Religious Organizations were raised. Whittier has 3 homeless shelters out of 13 in Hennepin County. Steven Horsefield of Simpson Housing – which has 2 shelters in Whittier – suggested they would want to build to the south. The context is that Simpson parish has almost no parishioners left, so the church is closing, and asked the Councilmember to change the ordinance so the shelter could be kept open. The Councilmember agreed. Board members discussed homelessness policy further, such as providing shelters versus more support.

Executive Director Review: Delayed till next meeting. Erin needs to reload the document and will then distribute it to the board.

US District Court Complaint – Sabri et al vs WA: The decision is late in being issued. We expected to hear from court last week but did not. Apparently the court does not have abide with the 60 day ruling date as announced.

Acting Committee Reports & Motions

Community Issues:

26th St and Stevens Ave proposal

- The debate at the CI meeting about the proposal was very lively. Architect and developer proposed a multi-use development. Some people found the design very bland, and Bill Blanski (owner of Joe's Chicken Shack) raised concerns about the height and shadowing of his property and sidewalk. DJR Architects said they would take that into consideration and revise their design.
- Marian met with DJR yesterday, and Bill Blanski was there also. Part of the discussion was around height and shadowing. They may try to create more 'wow' factor for the bland exterior, and reduce the number of units from 64. They will only be going up in size to larger 2BR units, no 3BR. The parking plan will be maintained – they will not do underground parking. They also said they won't do townhouse entries off of Stevens, which had been raised as an opportunity. Making parking spaces available for non-residents has not been put forward. The ground level parking on the Stevens Avenue side will be a camouflage. Board members raised the possibility of a mural on the parking vent opening/windows. Marian suggested that the balconies on the proposed units be artistic and take direction from the MCAD sculpture garden. MCAD extending its sculpture garden to the vacant gravel lot on the SE corner was suggested.
- It is a former Superfund site. Remediation work has been done, and site has a shack containing a pump system with a carbon filter. Builders say they can't dig down for underground parking or have livable space on the ground floor.
- The proposal needs a Conditional Use Permit, height clearance and floor area ratio, so they will be back at CI meeting in August. Board members encouraged to attend to put questions. One of contentious issues at last meeting was lack of preparation for questions put to them.

Bike Corral – Lyn-Lake Cameron Conway asked that WA help fund bike parking in front of LynLake Brewery. This is a partnership between the brewery and the City. The City will house the corral over winter, opening up a car parking space. LynLake NO is in favor of the project. It is a one-time fee to the WA and other n'hoods. The City will build and essentially operate it. Board members raised whether local businesses had been consulted, but the LynLake BA and other n'hood organizations are pitching in money, and so presumably local businesses are in favor. Some board members raised concerns about the safety of the bike corral's placement on a high-traffic street.

CI Motion 1: That the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors support the installation of a bike corral in LynLake and contribute a one-time payment of up to \$200 towards it. **Carried: 10-3-1**

Business Association – Andy Cohen / Erica Christ

Hennepin County Community Works have decided the Nicollet entrance from the Greenway is not great, and are concepting some new temporary signage playing on the 'Eat Street' theme. They want to measure whether it has any effect on cyclists behavior, then there might be some permanent changes to the Nicollet entrance. End of summer will have installed something and measured its effect. Want businesses to partner with them either by installing a bike rack, providing a survey or inviting people into businesses to talk about bikes. HCCW presented this at the BA meeting. Board members were generally very positive about the idea.

Strategic Plan – Laura Jean

2118 Blaisdell Historic Designation Grant: Grant was submitted July 10, and will hear if we get it at the beginning of August.

Organizational Sustainability – Fund Development: Michael O'Dell has been working on contact management – has talked to WA staff about requirements and will present for approval to the taskforce.

The Grants Taskforce has not had a meeting yet but will discuss grantwriting. St Thomas program has training if members are interested. The taskforce can identify grants that might match up with WA.

The Earned Income Taskforce had its first meeting. Discussed looking for residential or commercial properties for a 5-6% return, purely financial gain, or seeking out problem properties, and making money but also improving neighborhood. May have conflict of interests with members who own businesses or properties. Marian will talk to other neighborhoods to see what they do for fundraising/earned income. Playing with numbers of maximum \$600,000 investment, although that may change, and taskforce will look at relative profits of different strategies.

Midtown Greenway Energy Challenge:

New Community Engagement Paul Shanafelt has been given this, and will report in next few months on what this will mean. Midtown Greenway would like neighborhoods to support the idea of taking on the challenge, and commit to the resolution they have formulated. Will reconvene the Envir. Taskforce and assess how the Energy Challenge will fit with our Strategic Plan Environmental Sustainability.

Staff Reports:

Marian and Paul attended a meeting about the affordable housing complaint with the regional director of HUD and attorney Prof. Myron Orfield. Designated affordable housing is subsidized, and often those landlords get more money than those who charge the market rate. The reason for the complaint is that the City concentrates where they put that housing. Affordable Housing Funds are awarded based on an application that is rated by points. For a long time applicants got more points for putting affordable housing in a poorer neighborhood. Argument is that it's better not to concentrate people living in poverty. Some of landlords are double dipping, they get funds, do not maintain the property, then come back for additional funds or tax credits to do the repairs. Landlords often turn away good potential residents because they can get more rent from a Section 8 renter or a subsidized renter. Whittier area is still affordable compared to rest of the city.

Old/New Business:

Upcoming Ice-cream Social and Field Day events are a great opportunity for board members to attend/volunteer and do outreach.

Adjourned 8:35PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson.

Meeting Minutes Approved on _____

Erica Christ, Board Chair

Natascha Shawver, Board Secretary