



WA Community Issues Meeting Minutes

Whittier Park

Monday, November 14, 2016

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Attendees: Peri Jo McKay, Mike McKay, Robb Larson, Felino De La Pena, Kara Bennett, Dave La Violette, Madeleine Asher, Marie E. Listopad, Frank L. Emerson, Joanna Krause-Johner, Adam Paul Biel, Lauren Back, Brooke Erickson, Brian Foster, Sam Courtright, Jeff Nelson, Kristine Martinson, Greg Schmidt, Mary Gazca, Emanuel Tekle, Erica Christ, Irene P. Fahss, Leslie Modrack, David W. Schroth

WA Staff: Ricardo McCurley, Paul Shanafelt, Camilla Fartun Jamal, Joey Whitesman

Presenters: Ron Harris, Ward 10 Legislative Aide
Ricardo McCurley, Executive Director Whittier Alliance
Jessica Mikkelson, Housing Attorney with HOME Line
Michael Malone, CI Chair

Welcome/Call to Order -

Welcome at 6:07 by Michael Malone. Agenda was reviewed, Introductions are made. Standard of conduct policy was reviewed. **Motion** to approve the Agenda **Carried**. Minutes from 10-10-2016 CI meeting were reviewed. **Motion** to approve 10-10-2016 CI meeting minutes **Carried**.

Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion

Mary Gazca- The Soo line gardens want to work more closely with Whittier

Ricardo McCurley- Invitation to BA mixer December 2nd, 5:30 to 7:30 and Board Meeting this Thursday

Peri Jo McKay- Chroma opens November 21st- 70 units total with 10 already leased (concern with parking lot lights from Brian Foster, information exchanged)

David La Violette- Mentioned 2040 CPED in process

Joey Whitesman- Announced public launch of Whittier Wheels on Friday

Wesley Andrews opening Friday

10th Ward Update –Ward 10 Legislative Aide Ron Harris

Ron introduces himself. He discusses changes at the city level due to national election results as well as budget proposal and priorities for Council Member Lisa Bender :

- 1.) Reactions to election: Minneapolis is a sanctuary city, meaning it does not leverage city resources to deport people and will continue this policy despite policies proposed at federal level.

- 2.) A Panel discussion occurred last week on intersection of goals of the Minneapolis Police Department and Public Safety. It featured a group called Communities Organizing for Change.
- 3.) There is a proposed increase to the police department's budget focusing on community input. This came in part as a result of Jamar Clark's shooting. One program outlined will pair officers with mental health professionals and integrate areas of policing and public health.
- 4.) Violence prevention work and proposals are coming out of the public health department. Question about funding sources- Revenue is coming from city resources and grant funds (at least for the year).

The Budget hearings for these proposals will be at:
6:05 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2016, Room 317, City Hall
6:05 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2016, Room 317, City Hall

Ron states that several other representatives are not interested in these policing/ public health proposals but Lisa Bender is in support. Marie Listopad mentions city of Duluth having similar programs and it is mentioned that Governor Dayton supports for these policies. There is a question about tree planting in the budget and Ron and others refer to the Park Board, Lisa Bender's office, and to the tree trust for answers. There is discussion of problems at the 27th street and Pleasant Ave intersection (Marie believes it should be a 4-way stop instead of 2). Paul discusses already recorded engineering deficiencies on the 27th street corridor especially at that spot- the busiest crosswalk for the elementary school. Ron says he will bring it to our council member's attention.

Apartment Shop Notice of Revocation- Ricardo McCurley- Executive Director Whittier Alliance

Ricardo introduces recent developments concerning Apartment Shop and notices of revocation from the city. On November 3rd the city informed Apartment shop (rental apartment company owned by Steve Frenz) that they had out of date rental licenses. There are 1500 units owned by Apartment Shop- Spiros Zorbalas is the former owner. There is also a lawsuit against apartment shop which has triggered all of apartment shop's properties to be out of compliance. Notice of revocation has caused concerns among tenants. City responded that 2-3 years is when earliest action could take place. However, more immediate options are possible- the properties could be sold as part of a city deal. Many apartments under Apartment Shop are not subsidized but are below average market value and affordable. They could easily be bought up, rents increased, and many people displaced. Four of the buildings in question are in Whittier. As an organization Whittier wants to help in this transition process and help tenants stay in place. Class action lawsuit had begun against Steve Frenz and Apartment Shop.

Jessica Mikkelson, Housing Attorney with HOME Line introduces herself and discusses the issue. She states that Frenz still has his license but the city is in process of revoking it. "You still have rights and responsibilities, and must pay your rent." HOME Line is a free service regardless of income that will assist you in understanding and executing your rights as a tenant. Homeline also partners with other landlords and agencies to get buildings repaired and provide you with an affordable place to live. Jessica offers to stay after to answer any other questions.

Brief Discussion follows:

Ricardo- Contact apartment shop if you have concerns. We are here to give you the information.

Jessica- There is no judgement against Apartment Shop yet. Spanish and Somali interpreters are available. We are non-profit law firm and we are not part of the lawsuit. Goal is to make sure everyone is doing the right thing. We staff the hotline to serve tenants

Erica Christ- The Process with the city and lawsuit could go in different directions. Important to have all information.

Ricardo- city is pursuing revocation of license while lawsuit is pursuing receivership. There is a Tier system for the buildings and their condition (Tier 3 being in the worst shape) Roughly 60 building are in Tier 1, 10 in Tier 2 and one in Tier 3.

Jessica- The landlord will have revocation of all buildings owned if just 2 have issues.

Zorbalas is not part of management but he is part-owner and could be receiving profits.

Ricardo- Four properties are in Whittier are all Tier 1. Tier 2 are mostly in Corcoran. Mr. Frenz said he does not plan to sell the Whittier buildings.

For more information you can call HOME Line through the renter hotline: 612-728-5767. Homeline is on the Whittier Alliance renter page. The City's 311 hotline is also a resource.

Discussion on Future of Community Issues Meeting- Michael Malone- CI Chair

Michael introduces himself and purpose of the exercise- In the context of upcoming strategic planning and as a way for the organization to improve engagement at the CI and in general, he has provided an activity and questions for CI attendees. Central idea is what can we do better? And how do we create more accessible format? What is missing? etc.

Goals of conversations listed on flipchart: **Share & Outline Strengths/ Weaknesses** Rules:

- 1.) Speak Only for yourself
- 2.) Stay realistic but unafraid of dreams and goals
- 3.) Look for truth in everything (Respect)

Attendees participate in Icebreaker: To line up silently by birthday

Attendees then split up into five different groups and asked the following questions (with about five minutes to answer on post-its provided):

1. As a Whittier Resident are you proud to live and work here?
2. What makes your community great and what needs the most work?
3. In your eyes is Whittier lacking anything?
4. What would it take to get you more involved?
5. What ideas/topics/suggestions stood out in this conversation
6. What would you do if you had unlimited resources to benefit your community?

Michael- This is a start of a process to develop engagement strategies and figure out what matters to you and how to improve engagement and involvement in CI meetings and with the Whittier Alliance. Post-its are collected by staff for follow up processing- including finding commonalities and making a general survey for the neighborhood

Answers to Question 6- "What would you do if you had unlimited resources to benefit your community?" are shared to room and written on the flipchart. Solar panels/ Improved walkability and bikeability in the neighborhood /More trees/ Creating an Urban Forest/ Community farms/ A Taste of Whittier event and Community Food Events/ More parties and activities/ Livestreaming meetings for people who can't make them/ Getting the city to support the neighborhood rather than using it as a "dumping ground" for social services/ Buying the Kmart site, opening the street up, and providing more jobs were all mentioned

Mike Thanks everyone for coming and for their participation.

Meeting adjourns at 7:45p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Joey Whitesman