

**Community Issues Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, April 8th, 2019— 6:30--8:00pm — Whittier Park**

**Attendees:** Kevin Beaudin, Justin Kader, Michael Perez, Joanna Krause-Johnson, Cyndi Hovey, Jesse Oyervides, David Bagley, Scott Melamed, Greg Schmidt, Matt Barthelemy

**Staff:** Kaley Brown, Fartun Ismail, Marcus VanderSanden

**Presenter:** Ukasha Dakane

**Welcome**

Welcome at 6:35pm by Kaley Brown, Whittier Alliance Executive Director.

**Agenda & Standard of Conduct is reviewed.**

**Motion to Approve Agenda. Seconded. Approved.**

**Motion to approve March Minutes is tabled until next meeting.**

**Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion**

None

**Community Updates**

- Whittier Alliance
- Annual Meeting went great with over 100 people in attendance
- Approved new Strategic Plan and NRP funding allocations
- Planning for the Eat Street Festival is underway

**Whittier Park Updates**

- Earth Day Clean-up is Saturday April 20th, snack and small activities but for the most part just providing the tools to go out and pick up trash
- Arbor Day- May 11th from 9am-12pm Got County grant, will be planting trees in park and around school
- Spring programming registration is beginning
- Drop-in programming
- 3-on-3 Basketball tournament went well
- Saturday mornings adult open gym

**5th Precinct- Lt. Westermeyer**

- Information on block leader
  - Influential to have a block leader to increase communication with MPD
- Crime prevention specialist can help you - very hands on
- Security for apartments
  - Know you are letting in people who need to be in that building; it has been a problem
- Car theft prevention handout is available
- Package theft has also been a common issue
- There are some shake-ups at the precinct - Kathy Waite our Precinct Inspector may be moving up in the future; MPD will let people know any changes
- Crime Prevention Specialist can provide more specific crime statistics upon request

### Questions:

Have had some issues with loud noises what should we do?

- Shots fired calls are taken very seriously but often times fireworks are still prevalent despite their varied legality

Had a gentleman making a disturbance on his block who looked like he may be in need of treatment. Is there a way to track what happens on a call like that?

- That usually falls on the doctor
- If there is an arrest the process can be slow and difficult to track as well
- Also difficult to track due to HIPPA

Concern about a collection of needles on Nicollet and Lake

- It is tough to regulate drug use, use but they do their best

### Community Issues Chair Election

Kaley Brown

Over the last year there has been a lot of discussion to use this space to breakdown social silos and bring more engaging topics to the meeting in addition to our normal agendas. Any anyone who would like to run would be involved in setting agendas, planning meetings and community events, communicating with WA staff and other volunteers

Jen Kader nominates Justin Kader; **Justin accepts nomination.**

Jesse Oyervides nominates Scott Melamed; **Scott declines nomination.**

**Motion to elect Justin Kader as Community Issues Chairperson for 2019 by acclamation. Seconded. Motion passes.**

### Justin Kader introduction

- Lived in Whittier for 10 years
- Previously served as Community Issues chair in 2013-2014
- Exciting time to be a part of the Whittier Alliance, excited about CI changes and wants to help it grow
- Works in cultural competency in his professional life and can apply those skills to this position

### Questions:

- What would you do in Conflict of Interest?
  - Would refer to the by-laws and defer there and to the board
- In regard to the goals in the Strategic Plan- people express their ideas how do we find the balance between keeping momentum and burning people out?
  - Provides an example about students are often super excited about something but have so much on their plate.

- Can't be top down process- can't convince people have to let it happen organically
  - Have to be able to pivot in focus.
  - Start small and build from there.
  - Difference in how we are viewing community issues and how we can address them, previously was more rigid. Would be interested in exploring it further.
- How can he use his work in this space?
    - Working with folks to establish norms before engagement, and asking productive questions to have people feel empowered.
    - Seek clarifying answers before jumping to conclusions.

### **Best Practices in Engaging with Diverse Communities**

#### **Ukasha Dakane- Frayeo (Fortune Relief and Youth Empowerment Organization)**

Frayeo works with East African community primarily with youth and women assisting in Housing, Work, Health Insurance and other community needs. When he came to this country he thought everybody was the same as him, he came from Kenya, 90% of the people are people like him. Race and identity were very much thrown into of his life when he arrived here. Diversity is people of different backgrounds coming together; for there to be diversity people must be together. He began to think of "how can I end the narrative of we and they?" America is unique because people have retained their cultures and they live in conjunction with each other. He went to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. and was truly impressed by the people and potential to work together.

#### **Best Practices**

It is key to meet people where they are; in working with the Somali community, you have to work with their cultural and religious differences. There are limitations within these differences and people must be able to acknowledge them in their interactions to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

#### **Examples**

- Dogs while very common part of everyday life here, they are not culturally accepted
- Ramadan- During the observance of Ramadan the Muslim community is fasting during sunlight hours which effects many aspects of their life.

#### **System barriers:**

Sometimes there are factors of simply not knowing what to do in a different place and in different situations. Such as rent, school, tenants rights, and other societal norms.

- Cites example of elevator being broken and disabled child missing school due to not being able to get up and down the apartment stairs

Have to keep these things in mind in engagement and communication with these communities.

Representation, especially in hiring practices, is essential. Communities feel much safer and comfortable when they see people who look like them.

Language barriers are an issue. Needs need to be able to be communicated, and this includes interpretation and printed material.

Behavioral codes

- Handshake is a powerful tool in the Somali community
- Honesty is essential in communication
- Appreciate differences in community

“The people who fight will be closer together.” - Somali saying

### **Frayeo Programs**

Let It Go Program

- Anger management program in which youth become peace ambassadors.

Youth in Government

- Teaching public school youth that come from countries with lack of governmental structure the democratic process and getting them involved.

Teach Me Mom Program

- 3rd Cultural is a term Ukasha uses to describe East African youth who were either born in the US or came here very young and have a disconnect with some of the more traditional Somali culture. Frayeo organized a program in which younger community partners provide rides to older community members to exchange information and build relationships.

### **Questions**

How can this committee include the people you represent and how can we bring them?

Whittier Walkers- reached out some years ago and found it difficult to garner interest.

- Meet them where they are including but not limited to access, representation and meeting location.

What percentage of community is from Urban Areas and Rural Areas?

Difficult to know percentages but that is a divide even within Somali community; people come here from all types of backgrounds.

**Motion to Adjourn. Seconded. Approved.**

**Meeting adjourned 7:50pm.**

Minutes submitted by Marcus VanderSanden.

