

**Whittier Alliance Board Meeting Minutes - For approval at 9.24.20 meeting
Sept 2, 2020 6-8:30 PM (Reschedule of 8.27.20 meeting)
Zoom Meeting**

Present: Stephanie Brown, Shinjan Sengupta, Daniel Perez, Cyndi Hovey, Nate B., Nate R., Erin Sjoquist, Katie Heimer, Brigid, Abigail Speller

Absent: Aldona Martinka, Jen Kader

Guests: George Rishmawi, Nick Hutchinson, Crystal Myslajek, Amber Klein, Kameron Brodie

Staff: Kaley Brown, Julie Strand

Call to Order at 6:07 pm by Cyndi.

Cyndi thanked the board for being flexible and shifting the meeting from the 27th.

Cyndi called for suggested edits to the agenda. Seeing none, **Motion** to approve agenda. **Seconded.** Motion **Carries.**

The group was centered by reviewing the [Anti-Racism and Discrimination policy](#), [The Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policies](#), and the [Board Community Agreements](#). Cyndi asked for feedback on the agreements. The board discussed removing or rewording three of the bullet points. The board agreed to continue evaluating the agreements.

The board went through a round of introductions with the question “what have you done for self care lately,” checked in on commitments, and expressed current project interests.

Park Dedication Fees Program & Greenway ADA Ramp Opportunity, Discussion

Crystal Myslajek provided an overview of the Midtown Greenway. She explained that the Hennepin Regional Railroad Authority is the owner of the midtown corridor. The City of Minneapolis has a permit to operate the trail that runs through there and maintain the space in conjunction with Hennepin Regional Railroad. In addition the Parks Board owns the parks or green space along the trail.

Midtown Community Works started a program in the 90s with area stakeholders to develop the economic viability of the Greenway. This program and its budget is closing out. With Hennepin County Community Works’ limited budget and limited time remaining to spend the funds they would like to improve access to trail. This is one of the unfulfilled goals stated in the 2015-2016 study on the Greenway. The study revealed a need to improve signage, traffic safety, trail crossing improvements, public space, bikeway connections to connect the network, and ADA compliance. There is only one entrance to the Greenway in Whittier (Nicollet Ave). It is not ADA-compliant.

The nearest ADA compliant access is over a mile away in each direction. No design has been done at this early stage. Feasibility has only been looked into. If needed, stakeholders including Whittier Alliance could okay the preliminary design; a final design would be approved by 2022 with project delivery being 2023. There needs to be 1 to 1 federal funding received for the ADA compliant access & the Hennepin County Community Works program would close out their project with funding this access. There is a \$370,000 funding gap that needs to be filled. There is \$700,000 in the Whittier neighborhood park dedication fees “bank”. Hennepin County is asking WA to give their initial impressions on the process for accessing those funds for this project.

Board: Thank you Crystal for presenting and expressed interest in creating ADA-compliant access. It was stated that the slope between Harriet and Grand Aves does have a dirt path. How/why was this location selected rather than another section of the Greenway? Has this been discussed with reps of the Soo Line Garden yet?

CM: the rail authority does not allow construction on the south side of the trail because they are preserving it for future transit rail. This location is one of the only remaining points on the other side. She added that they did talk to the board of Soo Line two years ago. The concept would cut through the gardens, but their Board thought this project would essentially be a good thing if planned in consultation with them.

Board: Will the new entrance (by Lake & 35W) be accessible? When does Hennepin County need to have a decision from WA to move forward?

CM: Lake Street will be compliant, but it won't be easy to reach with the street network. They would like to have a decision soon because there is pressure from County Commissioners to close out the project somehow and to use the federal funds the project would have to start this year. Ideally, they would know by October. Later than that would make approval difficult.

WA can influence the decision not ultimately decide. Adam Arvidson can help the Board understand how to shape and influence the decision in further conversations and board members can email Crystal with questions. crystal.myslajek@hennepin.us.

Secretary's Report

Board meeting attendance: 13-0, 1-1, 1-2, 0-3, 0-4, 0-5, Reinstated-0, Resigned-0, Terminated-0, Vacancies-8, Total Seats-23

Michael, Christine, and Justin (community issues chair) have resigned from the board this term. Sam has not been able to engage so has been terminated based on absences. 8 seats are vacant.

Seeing no questions or changes for the July meeting minutes. **Motion** to approve the July meeting minutes. **Seconded**. All in favor. No abstentions. **Motion Carries**.

Treasurer's Report

Review & Accept June & July 2020 financials

The treasurer reviewed the July numbers adding that the ledger looked good. Emergency fund distribution is going as planned. There is still money left, but WA has helped a lot of folks with accessing needed funds. We have almost \$27,000 distributed. \$33,000 has been allocated in total excluding fundraised money to supplement. The emergency food distribution site support could come from this fund. Donations have been collected as well. Should WA continue to distribute the emergency fund checks? WA should strategize more on other ways to reach those in need.

A board member asked what the staff thinks the answer is. Should WA continue on the path? Reduce? Etc? The staff responded that the results so far have been great. We have seen a lot of need and the opportunity so far has introduced 51 applicants to us, almost all brand new relationships. A lot of people have been coming to the office

that haven't been before. The amount of need is still overwhelming. It does take a fair amount of staff time to administer. Right now the application is closed until the board decides what we should do and application/language access is further addressed.

Concern is shared about the amount of staff time required to implement the program. Also it is drawing down our reserves that might be needed at some point, risking WA's sustainability. Could we focus our efforts on redirecting people in need to the Hennepin County Rental Assistance program which can be applied for more than once? All you need is a lease, so undocumented neighbors can also apply. That might benefit everyone more as they have deeper pockets, and we should support the systems at play. Perhaps we should take a step back to assess the systems and programs available like the rental assistance program, identify gaps in them, and focus the funding to fill those gaps.

A counter was offered that if WA can raise money for this, we should implement that money now, as it is still evidently needed. WA should reopen and give that fundraised money out freely. If we identify any part of the community that is *missed* by other programs (e.g., undocumented neighbors) and therefore even more stranded than most, then it might be worth a targeted fund to address that.

Motion to spend what has been allocated plus any dedicated funds raised for it. Seconded. Motion passes.

Brigid and Kaley will come up with options in the meantime for the board to consider next month.

Other Financial Business

The Treasurer is gathering feedback from the board for a 101 on accounting training. Anyone who would like to share their interests and questions should direct them to him. Staff and the Treasurer are going to make one final pass at the fiscal policies draft and then aim to share key changes at the next meeting.

Motion to accept June and July financials. Seconded. Motion passes.

HOME Line VISTA

Discussion on whether WA should supplement the modest stipend given to WA's HOME Line VISTA in 2021. It will be a one year full-time commitment from this person. At minimum WA is required to contribute \$5,000 to HOME Line the organizing entity. We can add more for the person's housing stipend, bus card, etc. It is basically their pay.

Pros and cons of providing different levels of income are discussed. The program often attracts people who have the privilege to afford the ability to be a part of the program. Many members expressed being in the middle of the proposed housing stipend supplement cost options.

The Treasurer stated that WA can afford to support an increase to the housing stipend and that WA should pick a line item that would allow this person to live and work in this neighborhood. Was the internship fund (\$10,000) used already? No, that was budgeted for an Eat Street Fest event intern, and the event did not take place due to Covid.

Motion to roll over the funds and provide a wage cost add of \$5.07 in total \$15,545.60 for the VISTA. Seconded. All in favor. Motion carries.

Neighborhoods 2020 Campaign Letter to the City

Are there any questions about the letter provided in the board packet? Seeing none, **Motion to support this project with the letter in the board packed. Seconded. Motion Carries.**

Food/Supplies Distribution site fiscal sponsorship

MCAD, Pimento, & Provision are merging operations and forming one entity called CANMN. The CANMN group is looking for a new location. WA asked the group to draft a site a needs list for WA to consider. CANMN's goal is to begin serving the Whittier community together as soon as possible. This group has applied for one grant and are interested in others. They are an informal group so do not have 501c3 status. The board was asked if WA would be willing to serve as their fiscal sponsor. Context on their group structure and operations is provided.

Q: Are we are clear on whether our current insurance would cover their operations, or whether additional insurance would be needed?

A: If they work out of our office our insurance holds. We can add another address to our insurance, but it depends on the circumstances. A member stated the need to really focus on the insurance liability when building in the fiscal agent fee. The partner makes all the difference.

It is WA's understanding at this time that fiscal agency does not mean we are doing any of the programming. Also it may not mean that WA's insurance needs to change, but we would want to have confidence in how we are protecting ourselves against an unexpected issue. The length of the agreement is not yet clear.

Staff worked through the idea of fiscal agency with our accountant when thinking about this in regards to Whittier School families. WA would have to set up a disbursement process that would be time efficient. Reviewing the agreement with someone who has a legal background is recommended.

Q: Is their intent is to flow all their funds through WA?

A: No, but a fiscal sponsorship may require it. The Treasurer is willing to offer his time to research and set up a process that works for WA.

Board consensus: If the fiduciary and legal obligations can be clarified further and make sense, we would want to do it. This supports community efforts that support neighbors. While they are trying to figure out a site we can go over this with legal experts and create a terms sheet/contract draft to react to for the next Exec meeting.

Acting Committees Asks or Discussions

The HI committee asked for a board endorsement for a letter of support for St. Stevens as they seek funding for their new development. No questions. **Motion to approve. Seconded. Motion carries.**

Ongoing Projects, Board Projects List

The board reviewed the document and reviewed our goal of becoming a working board. Projects included are short term and long term. Board members should take at least one project. Those of who already signed up are thanked; others are asked to send staff an email with what project(s) they'd like to help with.

Festival: It was added that WA needs to repurpose the MRAC grant and that the great streets grant RFP was released this week. It still fits the festival for 2021. Staff are reaching out to businesses to get a feel for commitments and plans

to participate for next year if we can proceed with it. The grant deadline is in a couple of weeks and staff is looking for board feedback. Board members expressed interest despite the grey area.

Census and Voter Registration: Will be a focus in Sept and Oct. Flyering and tabling opportunities especially in the SE pocket of Whittier need support as the Census deadline is now cut to Sept 30.

Bylaw Review 2.0 is well underway; Cyndi is going to send out a brief google survey about the mission and vision statement to consider as we finalize the proposal. Board members were asked to complete that by next Tuesday.

Special Meeting: It will be a virtual Zoom meeting. WA would need 50 people minimum to participate as voters to reach quorum and amend the Bylaws. WA needs to send a save the date out neighborhood-wide and set up other communications plans, so we will evaluate what steps remain in the process to then decide on a date. The HI chair offered to cancel that month's HI meeting so there aren't two meetings back to back.

Announcements, next steps

National Night Out is September 15. National night out is organized with Minneapolis Police. It does help build important connections with neighbors. An alternative for that night is National Night In which is being organized by Black Visions Collective. Additionally, alternative block events are being organized by neighbors for a date in October. A member asked, how do we use this night to unpack racist practices in our neighborhood and beyond? He suggested Dr. Bettina Love as a potential speaker for a training.

Next Board Meeting: Thurs. Sept, 24th, 2020, 6:00-8:30pm (Zoom)

Motion to adjourn. Seconded. Motion carries.

Adjourn 8:15 PM | Minutes respectfully submitted by Julie Strand.