

Whittier Alliance -- Business Association
Blaisdell Manor
2322 Blaisdell Avenue
Wednesday, March 14, 2007 – 4:00-5:30 PM

MINUTES

Members Present -- Erica Christ, Andrew G. Church, Nicole Gruber, Elizabeth Grzechowiak, Paul Jablonsky, Karen Johnson, Aaron McCallum, Tamra Nelson, Marcy Tollefson,

Speakers Present -- Stephen Buck, Jason Krumm, Hassan Warsame

Staff Present -- Marian Biehn, Eric James

The meeting was **called to order** at 4:07 p.m. by BA Chair Erica Christ. Introductions were made and the Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policies were reviewed. The **agenda** was reviewed and **approved**. The **minutes** from the February 14th, 2007 BA meeting were reviewed and **approved**.

Spotlight on Business: Aaron McCallum (Threes Sons Signature Kitchen, Blaisdell Manor)

Three Sons is a friends and family-run business specializing in catering weddings for over seven years. Their location at historic Blaisdell Manor has one of the largest ballrooms in the area with a full-size kitchen. On average they serve 800 people a day which included box lunches. They also have an event center at River Place and do catering and special wine tastings. The catering service develops their own budget and designs the menus with the Aaron's brother as executive chef. He expects to grow, hiring production managers to assume aspects of the business. They also have an in house event planning company with wedding planners. One member expressed positive feedback on their services. Aaron has said they try hard to maintain a low profile in residential areas after experience working at nearby Carlson Manor on Pillsbury. Event parking is leased from nearby Waldorf School. Members commented they were surprised and pleased at the business' low impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Aaron expressed dismay over the manor's historic walls being tagged by graffiti. He is also concerned over the rebuilding of Nicollet Ave which may divert traffic flow to Blaisdell Ave and push away potential clients.

5th Precinct Police Report: Marian Biehn, Whittier Alliance

Marian informed the board that Lt. Amelia Huffman is being placed in charge of Public Relations for Minneapolis Police and is moving downtown. The replacement will be Lt. Eddie Frazell. Marian has known him since he was rookie cop and believes he is a good replacement for Lt. Huffman. Sarah Mahmud remains as CPS safe person. She is currently away, working on a graffiti detail in Loring Park.

Crime bulletin: Businesses with deliveries should be warned, delivery trucks are being targeted with theft, tell your drivers to stay alert, protect themselves and not leave the vehicle running.

Overall though, robberies are down. Precinct Inspector Chris Arneson said overall crime is down in Whittier. However they can't guarantee a stable beat cop likely due to officer shuffling for the upcoming Republican Convention. A member asked if there will be increased police presence. New graduates from the police may grab some for our area, but most are going to north side.

Paul asked if graffiti was increasing in the neighborhood. The chair responded some places are increasing. One resident said pre-adolescent kids were seen tagging garages in his alley. Marian emphasized to continue reporting graffiti. There are BA and NRP funds to help pay for removal or for abatement such as anti-paint coating, growing vines, or establishing murals. One resident reported the new mural on the rear of K-Mart is being tagged over.

Paul suggested starting an advertising campaign (i.e. respect others, "keep Whittier livable.") The committee should see if school systems can do a citizenship type program to teach kids that graffiti is not appropriate. Potentially ask MCAD to create a poster campaign, put up around Whittier to make an impact. Erica suggested there are two problems, the gang graffiti versus the graffiti artists. A member suggested exploring cameras since it is a low priority issue for police. A member expressed they would rather spend more hours doing preventative work than cleaning. Marian suggested collecting data as to whether the crimes are being done by Whittier residents or outside of the neighborhood (ie: suburbs).

BP Petroleum – 3rd Ave & Franklin Expansion Information: Hassan Warsame

The project has no need for variances or approvals but was invited to present and inform the neighborhoods on BP's changes. Gas has been served there since 1904. The current BP station/ownership has been running since 1998 and has been through a lot of difficult situations. Hassan leased it from BP in April 2006 and later that year purchased the land from BP. He realized that if you don't own the place you can't do anything. The new proposed changes will help the business and improve safety for everyone.

The first step was the difficult process to remove the phone booth. He had to go to lawyers and the city to finally disconnect it. The next step is to invest into the store, clean the area, and get new pumps. Future steps are to put up a metal fence in the rear. Hassan emphasized he is looking towards a long-term investment in the area.

The proposal includes expanding the existing building five feet in the west and north directions. The new rear (west side) of the building will be a cooler area to sell more food and water items.

Discussion: A visitor identified himself as the homeowner to the west of BP and voiced concern about the removal of two trees. Hassan explained the high cost of trimming maintenance on the trees and the need for expansion for their removal. The homeowner asked for plans to replace the trees elsewhere. He will talk to the landscaper to put trees elsewhere.

A member asked about changing traffic patterns in the area. He responded, nothing will change to the alleyway and noted the project was just a corner expansion to unused space of the lot. Regarding getting new pumps, the same number of pumps will go in. A member asked about changes to hours. He is unlikely to do 24 hours. The current hours operating hours of 5:45 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. will remain the same. Pay at the pump after hours will be available.

The previous homeowner applauded Hassan for working with staff to improve safety in the area. Hassan has been cooperative and patient with the community needs and requests. Hassan added he has always thought of the community. A member asked if the BP had a lot of crime. Hassan replied, they have some crime but it's general. Everyone knows that corner was bad since the day they started the business. He has improved it to be much better. There is livable crime with solutions and their staff always calls the police. Erica commented the removal of public phones has dramatically improved the area.

A member asks why there was no site plan review for this. Erica explained when there are no variances required then there is no site plan review, no change of use, and no zoning. The project just needs a permit to do the building. If BP were to switch to 24 hours, then that would need a conditional use change.

Marian commented on BP being in a HPC district. The BP sign is fairly high and wonders if there is any option to make the sign smaller. Previously the city has said the sign was fine. The sign has been present for 86 years with no plans to change it.

Bob's Java Hut – 2651 Lyndale: Stephen Buck & Architect Jason Krumm, DPS Properties

Stephen is proposing an additional 3800 sq. ft. to the property. This doubles the size of existing footage of businesses Moxie Hair Salon, Bob's Java Hut and Uptown Tattoo. Jason presented the project. Moxie initially needed more space so a second-story addition above it was proposed. This addition can operate separately from the main floor. Looking at the plan, they also saw the rear parking lot was not efficient use at a busy Lyndale Ave. location. They proposed another addition to the east on the parking lot as new retail or boutique space. The occupancy will not allow high-density or volume of people such as a restaurant. The rear addition will incorporate currently exposed mechanical services and unify the businesses internally.

For exterior treatments, along the north side of the second-story addition will be a glazing to emphasize an anchor presence to the building. They think it will enhance neighborhood. Along the back of the rear addition will be four parking spaces, one being handicapped and covered by a green roof to fulfill landscaping requirements since they are building the entire lot out. They suggest it will be a view improvement for nearby residents.

Stephen is seeking several variances. They need setback changes of the front yard from neighbor to the north (24'6" to 0 feet). The side yard setback needs to change from 7 feet to 0 feet. Also a parking variance for reduction of 9 spaces and maneuvering variance for entering the spaces from the alley since the turn radius is less than what is required.

Discussion: A member asked why a setback variance was needed. The chair said the neighboring building has different zoning because it is mostly residential and increasing the height requires a set back from the adjacent building even though it will be the same setback as the 1st floor. Stephen noted they will be adding minor curb space but need a parking reduction because of the addition taking up previous parking space. A member asked if most clients for Bob's Java Hut were on foot or bicycle. The owner present said most walk. The square footage of the new commercial space was said to be 900 feet of lease-able space on the second story. For accessibility concerns, an elevator was not needed because the addition serves below 1300 people. Marian asked how many more people would be served by Moxie. Moxie's goal is to double the size of their business. They are not sure how many more chairs will be added-have 5 currently.

A member asked about the maintenance of green roof. The architect said there are options between an intensive or extensive green roof depending on soil depth and plants. Their roof will have a light-weight growing medium and the planting must be able to withstand dry conditions. It does need to be mowed and has good access being one story up,

accessible by ladder. The green roof does reduce run-off fees from the city. They have plans to have the entire roof drain onto the green roof and will be designed upon project approval. A member commented it maximizes taxing because it's taking run-off off the storm assessment.

The rear exterior will continue a stucco or synthetic stucco treatment. The rear addition is zoned for C1 and cannot be mercantile or food services, only retail or offices. Paul asked what if Bob's wanted to expand into the space. Stephen and the owner said there are no plans right now nor was it discussed yet. The units would not be connected and would have to be rezoned if so. Parking is also an issue for an expansion. There is currently no proposed tenant for the rear space. Marian asked is there a basement in the new addition. There is a basement and will be used for storage and mechanical.

Regarding the neighbor to the north, that property was said to be R6 zoned and multi-unit residential. The Community Issues Committee requested a public statement from the north owner on disclosure of plans. Stephen said he spoke to the owner once but had not shown him plans. He said a tenant in that building was in favor of the project.

BA 1 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to approve a variance at 2651 Lyndale Ave for a front yard set back from 24 feet 6 inches to 0 feet. **Motion carried**

Discussion: They are improving view for north tenants. No windows can be on that side of building because of fire code.

BA 2 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to approve a variance at 2651 Lyndale Ave for a side yard set back from 7 feet to 0 feet. **Motion carried**

BA 3 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to approve a parking variance at 2651 Lyndale Ave for a reduction of 9 parking spaces (30 spaces to 21 spaces). **Motion carried**

Discussion: Will be using alley as maneuvering space-yes. Need variance because current law requires any parking maneuvering to be contained within the private lot. The alley will be used for backing out of parking place.

BA 4 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to approve a parking variance at 2651 Lyndale Ave for a reduction in required maneuvering space. **Motion carried**

BA 5 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to approve the site plan review at 2651 Lyndale Ave. **Motion carried**

Discussion on 2651 Lyndale Ave history and exterior change continued. The corner building was done in 1917 with the first-story addition (Moxie) in 1923. The architect noted the new additions will correlate lines and massing with the original buildings. Additions will have all new window frames. They will not duplicate the original style but will reference it. Moxie's exterior face will be redone to be continuous.

Marian asked will the overall building style be a whole piece or be distinct personalities? Architect said the Lyndale front will have distinct styles. The south elevation instead will have more continuity. Moxie addition will have clerestory lighting. The north side is at lot line. It was recommended they plant ivy to cover a potential graffiti wall and a massive windowless surface. Elizabeth asked about businesses having to close. Moxie will need to and phasing is being discussed. The back volume could be completed first to let Moxie operate temporarily. Stephen noted it is desirable to keep Moxie in business and the hair salon has their support.

Old & New Business

BA CPED Grant Fund

Of the \$6000 BA-CPED, very little has been spent so there are funds for graffiti abatement. Currently they are seeking to do computer enhancement of building faces to promote improvement. The pedestrian overlay will bring zoning tools into force. A few businesses have stepped up to have their buildings represented including Mai Salon (2 story brick building from 1900s), the old Palm Brothers restaurant supply building in the rear of Quang's parking lot, and Mena's Records (mansion-style office). A design company in Whittier is requesting \$1,000 a building to have pictures made. The board discussed which funds from the budget are to be used and whether the project can be bargained. Elizabeth stressed the importance to get nice visuals to people so that more participation will come. The committee agreed it was important to get the visuals to help spur excitement and ideas about Nicollet and possible building improvements. The price seems a bit high and it was suggested that the architect be asked to do it for less, or get another estimate. It was also stated that we are always trying to get things done for cheap and if this architect is willing and able to do it we should go ahead. It will be worth it.

Nicollet – Franklin Overlay Report vision for Nicollet

Erica reminded everyone on the development moratorium for the pedestrian overlay process. Even though we have a year to do the overlay, the city still needs 3-5 months to do internal process. Now we need a draft of the overlay report. Currently we're finalizing the report and need to speed up on design guidelines. City people reluctant to put materials in

there that will need to be explained. One issue is landscaping, can we up requirement to 30 percent. They didn't want to do that because they could just put it in the rear but then site plan review. Public art will not go in.

We will get maximum linear feet of business (storefront max of 120 feet, third of a block). Floor area ratio minimum of 1.1 (ground to square foot of building). Which pushes all new development into two stories. Everything on Nicollet is grandfathered until someone builds something new or rebuilds. Some limitations on renovation. Nicollet is now being considered an activity center so they want everything to be rezoned C3A for mixed use.

Erica reiterated this is all zoning code, they have not yet gone through design guidelines. Some base zoning code rules included are zero lot line, window fenestrations and limited parking.

Someone asks about banks and drive-throughs. There are options off of other side streets and variances are available.

**Volunteers for future meeting locations please contact Erica.
Be Neighborly – pick up debris & remove graffiti**

Next meeting: Wed. April 11, 2007 Old Arizona

The meeting **adjourned** at 5:45 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Eric James, Whittier Alliance.