

Whittier Alliance Business Association Committee- Draft Minutes
Wednesday, October 14, 2009 4-5:30 pm at Mpls College of Art.

Present: Rob Davis (MCAD), Jay Coogan (MCAD), Erica Christ (Black Forest), Felino de Pena (Felino's Academy), Lisa Vecoli (MIA), Jim Hubal (Edina Reality), Keith Covert & Stephanie Covert Meyerring (Electric Fetus), Beverly Dolva (Go Small Biz), Sharon Lund (Falls Agency)

Presenter: Bob Roscoe **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to Order at 4:15 by Erica Christ, BA Chair, followed by introductions. Erica recognized the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. The agenda was approved with no changes. The BA Committee Minutes of September 9, 2009 were reviewed and approved.

Spotlight on Business- Minneapolis College of Art & Design. Jay Coogan is the new president of MCAD. Jay is still in the process of formulating new plans for MCAD. One hallmark of that will be working with neighborhood and city partners (MIA, Children's Theater, etc). Jay's met with Allina, Uno Brands, and is thinking about students working with Hispanic business community members on storefront and advertising design. Jay will try to attend WA meetings and keep in touch. What is your biggest challenge? Jay is looking to increase the visibility of MCAD in the Cities: redoing the website, meeting people. Another challenge is raising funds for student scholarships, and building community partners in sustainable way: build the capacity of the college to work with community partners, and then grow them in a sustainable way. Can you give us an update on construction? MCAD is putting in a parking area for 100 cars, and new sculpture garden facing out on 26th street. The sculpture garden will have area for 10 sculptures, plantings, seating. Jay's been meeting with staff to plan and budget for sculpture; looking at a blended model of student, alumni, and area artist showing. Looking for small and large sponsors. What brought you here? Jay saw a great school in a great art city, wanted to be a head.

Historic Preservation & Restoration of Commercial Property – Bob Roscoe

Bob is a one person firm, Design for Preservation, and has served on the Mpls Historical Preservation committee. He has knowledge of historic preservation as it relates to architecture. The commercial districts in Mpls were primarily established 80-100 years ago, for horse and buggy and foot traffic. Many of them still rely on foot traffic. Bob's focus is adapting historic architecture to today's business needs, while respecting the character of the building. Bob gave a presentation of before and after, buildings and his sketches, showing how restoration and minimal changes to storefronts can make for more design congruency, business visibility, and welcoming neighborhoods (available at WA). Bob gave examples (Azia & Anemonie in Whittier) of stores in older buildings that have retained historic elements, and built in modern design, which helps with business visibility. He showed examples of aggressive awning, a common design mistake that attempts to be the biggest and brightest on the street, but really covers the historic building and obscures the business. Bob showed Galactic Pizza as an example of minimal, low-cost changes: small awning, bright, but not too bright paint, recessed opening, storefront big window. Bob wants to encourage business owners to use the historic architecture that's there, as an asset to you. **Questions & Discussion:** Is there a measurable response, more customers, if you "do [design] right"? Bob doesn't have an answer: if a business is doing well, is it the menu, or the architecture? Hard to measure. Is it sending the message, you're doing something right on the inside? Erica pointed out that some people, sometimes, are into new things; other times, retro is in. Felino believes that beauty attracts attention. Bob agrees. Marian has come to appreciate the eclectic architectural diversity of Nicollet. It would be nice to see it respected, so that people respect the buildings that are there now. Improvements are expensive, though; what is the legislative status of the preservation tax credit program? Preservation

Alliance and MN Historical Society have come very close to getting a Preservationist Tax Credit passed. They are looking to hire a lobbyist, because preservationists are not good politicians. How the credit would work: building owner would commit some preservation money in ratio to base worth of building, for exterior renovations. Changes would have to be done by local preservation review authority. It doesn't reduce declared income, but reduces property tax payments, possibly spread over 5 years. There is a federal tax credit, and many other states have it. Many people see tax credits as lost money. But intensely renovating historic buildings creates local jobs, and historic tourism. So a \$10,000 tax credit multiplies to become increased business, jobs, etc. Jay commends Bob for being open to changes, unlike other preservationists one might see. He's seen the positive impact of preservation tax credits in Rhode Island. He understands the legislative cut, but views it as short sighted. Bob's presentation was great. When buildings change hands, could there be a "soft pedaled" education presentation for new owners, to talk about façade change? Yes, there is the *Great Streets Façade* initiative, Nicollet is part of it. MB: Many of our neighborhood businesses are owned by minorities. Are they open to hearing this? Is it more or less expensive to do an historic renovation? It costs whatever level of renovation that the owner is willing to do. Bob worked on East 7th, with Historic St. Paul, which provided low-interest loans for renovations. Bob tries to focus limited dollars where it is going to count the most. Keith says remodeling historically costs a lot more. Interior rotting, new beams, even storefront money can't cover that. Overages aren't covered.

Marketing Initiative – Oct Event Plan – Sharon Lund

Sharon Lund was approached by HCMC (opening the family clinic at Nicollet & 28th in the spring), to promote restaurants and businesses in Whittier. First one, 29th & 30th of October, 5-10pm. Lots of enthusiasm from restaurants: 15 signed up. 2 suppliers signed up, still working with beverage suppliers, on legality of donating spirits. Facebook event is up, please Twitter. Some fashion and grocery involvement, possible DJ and/or band. Everyone is offering specials. Suppliers are wait and see, might get involved next time. But we're contacting them, starting conversations. And this will be ongoing? Yes. We'll work together as a group. We're looking to get people from Wells Fargo, Allina, Midtown Exchange to come to us, rather than passing by and going to Uptown or downtown. Is there an e-card? You'll get it. Part of this will be people with contacts spreading the word. You need a few key people who are the type of people who invite lots of people. The rest of the marketing initiative is on the back burner until this is done, until we see how this goes. Sounds like more communication between restaurant owners. Yes, WA, BA is working more on it. Language barriers falling, more buy-in.

New and Old Business-

Whittier Façade Improvement Grant: we have one! It includes some preservation eligibility. We did affordable, virtual façade improvements, then we did grant to go with it. The city took notice, and is now offering a similar grant (except for landscaping). 1:1 match on Nicollet. 2:1 on Lyndale. Bob's presentation is helpful in getting language around awnings. **Graffiti Removal** materials free in WA office. Offenders sometimes do removal. **Location for Nov & Dec meetings** – volunteers? **Whittier Business Calendar:** Out to 7500 mailboxes, 10,000 people. We've done visual, housing, and safety calendars. We're looking for 12 restaurants to give recipes, and other food places for sidebar and cameo shots. We're trying to do it in the next 2 weeks (photos, design, layout, mailed).

Meeting adjourned at 5:25. Minutes submitted by Jessica Rosenberg

Next meeting: Nov. 11, 2009