

**Whittier Alliance – Community Issues Meeting**  
**Monday, April 9, 2007 – 6:30 PM**  
Whittier International Elementary School – 26<sup>th</sup> & Grand  
Draft MINUTES

**Members Present** – Colin King, Felino de la Pena, Mary Simpson, Jesse Oyervides, Jeffrey Thomson, Erica Christ, Stanley Clark, Nancy Railsback, Paul Railsback, Ted Redmond, Jim Roscoe, Eric Grumdahl, Destin Nygard, Mary Cable, Herb Frey, Paula Horan, Jim Walsh, Damon Nelson, Tom Bissen, Shanna Orr, David Schuster, Jeff Nelson, Robert Lilligren

**Speakers Present** – Herb Frey, Greg Langford

**Staff Present** – Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Eric James

The meeting was **called to order** at 6:38 PM CI Chair Ted Redmond; introductions were made and the Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policies were reviewed. The **agenda** was reviewed and **approved** as presented. The March 12, CI meeting **minutes** were reviewed and **approved**.

**Announcements, Community Concerns and Discussion**

**Election of Community Issues Chair**

Ted opened the floor for nominations and nominated Destin Nygard as Community Issues Chair and a 2<sup>nd</sup> was made. Felino asked if Ted were interested in being chair again. Ted declined. 3 calls were made for other nominations. A **motion** for unanimous ballot to elect Destin as a chair **passed 13 / 0 / 3** – Destin assumes chair role for the remainder of the meeting.

**Annual Meeting – Good Neighbor/Business Award Recipients, New Board Members**

Destin briefly reviewed the activity of the Annual Meeting. He introduced the newly elected board members: Alex Bauman, Eric Grumdahl, Larry Ludeman, Jesse Oyervides and Jim Walsh.

He also mentioned the 2007 Good Neighbor awarded to: Lisa and Brock Dubbels, Scott Smith and Toni Ives. And the 2007 Good Businesses awards to: Old Arizona: Darcy Knight and Elizabeth Trumble, Los Amigos: Jim Coury, Black Forest Inn: Erich and Joanne Christ. Thanks to our volunteers from 2006.

**May Day Soiree Annual Whittier Alliance Benefit for the Neighborhood with Live & Silent Auction**

May Day Soiree annual benefit is May 1<sup>st</sup> 5:30PM at Blaisdell Manor at 2322 Blaisdell Ave. Entertainment by Lori Dokken and a special auction item of guest Al Franken voicemail recording on your home machine. Food will be provided by Black Forest, Christos, Pancho Villa, D'Amico. Azia, Peninsula Malaysian and Blaisdell Manor. Robert Lilligren and Barb Lickness will emcee. Other questions about the event were asked.

**Nicollet-Franklin Pedestrian Overlay**

No new updates.

**Comments/Topics from Whittier residents**

There were no topics or issues brought forward. Marian suggested that residents identify issues of common interest or concern. The neighborhood works on crime and safety issues a lot but there are other things that define the neighborhood and could be common projects. Youth, community gardening, block and apartment clubs, environmental issues or projects, etc. You're encouraged to bring your comments or interests to this meeting or to the WA office. There are ways to continue to build a more connected neighborhood and the WA wants to hear ideas from residents.

A resident voiced concern about increased traffic and parking at Karmel Square due to a nearby mosque closing. Councilmember Lilligren is putting together a task force to mitigate the traffic problems. Jim voiced concern about Karmel storing cooking oil on a public sidewalk near the Greenway. A clarification was requested on how the area is zoned and whether a congregation area is an approved use. CM Lilligren doesn't have the exact variances with him but Inspections is working closely with those emerging business owners. His opinion is they are in compliance but not sure. Marian said the prayer area was built-in for the vendors but a congregating type mosque was not approved. Karmel Plaza was approved as a "farmers market" as in fruits and vegetables but its actual current use is shopping mall. With the possibility Karmel is not in compliance with the original City contract, Jim wonders if public money should be returned for the industrial site cleanup. CM Lilligren said there's

not much public money involved. Jim said NRP money was used in the cleanup and Whittier CDC was a partner in the industrial component. CM Lilligren said assembly areas are C-2. The site is zoned to C-1 from Industrial 1.

Councilman Lilligren took the floor and responded to questions. A resident asked about the Nicollet/Lake reopening. CM Lilligren said internally the Sears and K-Mart organizations merged a year ago. He gave a brief background about the Sears/Kmart merger and how it set discussions about opening Nicollet back. The current management at Sears/Kmart is now showing signs of interest in redeveloping the site again. There is expressed interest in reconfiguring the store, participating in the process and considering new concepts for the site such as multi-use. The company also owns Lands End. They assigned an internal project manager to this site. The city will have a follow-up meeting in June to start talking about the new configured store. The Sherman work is being used as an example to expand their thinking. They have a corporate vision and the City wants a more encompassing project. Please stay tuned, the Council has put capital dollars 4-5 years out in the city's budget to leverage dollars from other resources. An adopted City Plan shows opening up Nicollet as a priority. The community partnership of Wells Fargo/Allina, etc is also making it a priority.

CM Lilligren briefed proposed changes to 35W. He confirmed the Nicollet/Lake reopening is separate and has no tie-in with Crosstown project since that project ends at 46<sup>th</sup> Street. However, the 35W access project does relate. Access project has been expanded on Lake Street to Blaisdell Ave. It is a \$450 million dollar project. Per the Federal gov't -- a project at that magnitude is not going to happen. On a similar note, there is interest in toll roads and MN-Dot would like to get more transit on 35W with bus-rapid transit and tolling. Again, the complication is that the Crosstown project improvements end at 46<sup>th</sup>. For now, the City is working with an urban partnership initiative out of Federal DOT for more sensible ideas to 35W changes and improvements.

The access project proposes to reconfigure ramps at Lake St & 35W which includes a northbound 35W ramp and a fly over ramp. Motivation for the project are the employers who want to circumvent the Lake St area and put cars into their headquarters. Hennepin County wants to go forward with the access project, and they're holding the city hostage to it. The City instead wants to move forward on Lake St instead of waiting for an uncertain project. The infrastructure changes also include moving the exit lane to 38<sup>th</sup> St for a new entrance ramp to meet Federal requirements.

Also, the Lake St reconstruction will be starting soon. CM Lilligren said if you know businesses or organizations that could be affected, let him know. Karmel Square for example had no idea Lake St reconstruction was going to happen.

A resident voiced concerned about Nicollet Ave street lane lines almost gone and need to be repainted.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Report –**

Representatives from the 5th Precinct could not attend the CI meeting. Josie reports we have a new sector lieutenant, Eddie Frizell. Sarah Mahmud remains our Crime Prevention Specialists. Crime maps were handed out. If you have any questions, email [sarah.sexton-mahmud@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:sarah.sexton-mahmud@ci.minneapolis.mn.us). Police have caught a prolific business robber who had been targeting Uptown in the past two weeks. They've also noticed an increase in home burglaries and laundry machines getting broken into. We ask residents to close your garage, lock doors, etc now. Sarah also has Block Leader training coming up, contact her about it.

Josie notes she has been getting crime data from City Hall and tracking chronic offenders. She is watching to make sure they don't fall through the cracks. She has been meeting with the City Attorney, neighborhood information officers, beat cops, the Stevens Square organizer and other officials to go through the list of folks we're worried about. Josie is measuring success by drawing attention to offenders and letting the officers know that the offender has an open warrant, the attorney confirms a warrant, and then the beat cop can go pick up the perpetrator. Some chronic offenders get "trespassed out" of an area. Inspector Arneson has said beat cops are top priorities. The Whittier Alliance is advocating for beat cops all around major roads. A resident asks if there are offenders rummaging through people's mailboxes. Always, call 911 and report anything suspicious.

### **2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S – 8-Plex – Alliance Housing**

**Request for letter of support for HUD funds for low income rehab and re-designation to affordable housing**

Herb Frey introduced Alliance Housing. They already maintain affordable housing in Whittier and some scattered site properties in South Minneapolis. They're applying for government and private money to rehabilitate. The proposed 2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S is within the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District and was converted into an 8-plex 40 years ago. Alliance bought it in 1994 for \$10 as part of a deal with the ROTC with the stipulation that it remain low-income. Alliance is looking to put about \$200,000 of rehabilitation into the place. Improvements are listed in the documentation. Estimated costs for improvements were done by a maintenance tech. Alliance is asking for a letter of support to Hennepin County and likely later with the City of Minneapolis and State of Minnesota to complete this project and 12 others in Minneapolis. Rehab needed to be done includes site work in replacing the back alley garage and removing an old rear awning. Exterior improvements include front steps and putting in fire-doors. All new windows on property are needed and the style is dictated by HPC. Inside, a new kitchen, baths, and doors. Frey noted the properties don't make much money and it's difficult to get enough money to do improvements to the property. Various improvements have been made over time. The residents are very stable with two-three residents living there since Alliance purchased it. Turnover is every year or two. Alliance Housing offices are out of St Stevens school and their mission is to house homeless people and most people living in 2103 are very low-income.

Paula asked about re-designation to Affordable Housing. Frey said it's always been AH, which was part of the agreement when it was purchased with the proposal approved by Whittier Alliance in 1995. The covenant designation will likely be 30 years from Federal gov't if Hennepin County funds are not approved. The County is asking to hear support from the neighborhood. More money is being raised from a variety of private sources too.

Current rents are \$310 efficiency to \$480 for one-bedroom. There is no mortgage on it. The rough shape of the building is attributed to a lot of improvements that should've been done a long time ago but there wasn't enough money. A question was raised about where the rental income is going. The property management can speak to the income but was not present. Tom says there is not enough information for us to make a decision and that maintenance is not being kept up it appears. Frey said most Alliance rents are \$300-350 so it's very difficult to operate and do improvements over properties almost 100 years old. We're trying to raise almost \$2 million dollars and then get private sector and foundations. Tom suggests with no first mortgage and moderate rents, that the project is asking for a lot. He'd like to see the building.

**CI 1 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to delay approval of the proposed rehabilitation at 2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S until more information is offered and residents can tour the property. Motion prevails 11 / 6 / 0.**

**Discussion:** A nearby resident said that Alliance has improved housing nearby his house very well. They are good neighbors. A resident suggests that sending a letter simply supports the proposed renovation and increases the likelihood funds are made available to do improvements. Ted sees this as a low-impact project from low-income to affordable since it's already designated AH and sees it as a good thing. Another resident is more in mind with Tom that we have a lot of affordable housing letter of supports and is concerned Whittier is becoming dense with AH; the neighborhood should not support something without seeing more financials or detail. The resident continued: Whittier supported the previous requests and nobody is being irrational in trying to keep out AH. There should be some sensitivity for Whittier to become a dumping ground for affordable housing. Other residents noted with such a large asking cost for public money, it's not too much to ask to come back and give more information.

Frey notes they're willing to do anything to gain support. Alliance is only asking for a letter of support to Hennepin County and possibly to the City and State to fix up a property. Acquiring the funds enables them to do the project quickly. Alliance has maintained the property for over 10 years. Tom would like a tour again to give neighbors a chance to look at the building. He said it's not important that AH money is spent in Whittier but spent where its best used. The covenant question was raised again and Frey said the current 30-year and 40-year covenant on the property is concurrent. The property can be sold and converted into a private home. If sold, all public money would have to be returned to their sources. CI asks Alliance to return with more information on financials and include details on parking and alley access. Names were collected to tour the property.

### **2624 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S – Greg Langford**

#### **Review of site plan for new build duplex / Variance for width reduction to 19'8"**

Marian recapped this project. A two-thirds of a former full lot was to be annexed the apartment complex to the south but through a series of problems, the non-conforming lot ended up on auction block of Hennepin County

and Greg bought it in October 2005. The proposed tri-plex and variances was not supported by the community or the Board in August 2006. It passed at the City but was appealed by the Railsback (family property to the north) and the appeal prevailed. Greg came back with a plan for a duplex with the same setbacks and it passed in Whittier and at the City but an appeal prevailed again. Recently, an ordinance has come forward that allows a narrower width and Greg is back again.

Mr. Langford introduced his proposal. With the new ordinance, he is requesting a conceptual site plan review similar to before but the width of the building reduced to 19 feet 8 inches. The floor plan hasn't been fully developed.

The proposal would be an owner occupied building. Building height is 26 feet. Building lot area is 1800 square feet, about 49 percent of the lot. Both units will be 3800 sq ft total. Garage will have 400 sq ft and may be a little larger. Storm-water issues are being worked out. There is planning for a rain garden and three trees in the front. There will be a number of rain barrels on the site to reduce storm-water run-off. The driveway will have permeable groundcover. Exterior will be a combination of brick and cement siding; brick structure on front, brick tone in center. Between the brick is Hardie board siding at 4 by 10 sheets. The square footage price points are \$200-225 sq ft. 1250 sq ft. lower level, 2400 sq. ft. on top. Tom asks about doing more equal units: Challenges are in the stairway to do that. Each unit has 3 bedrooms. The building will have a shared front door to look more like a single-family home.

The Railsbacks voiced opposition to the building because it's too big and bulky, is 2-3 times of what might currently allow. The Railsbacks suggested to wait for the Planning Commission's in-fill housing proposal change pass and then the design be adjusted accordingly. Langford said the proposal is well under current requirements since the volume for each unit is 2500 sq ft. The committee was confused over how the footage requirements were determined. Suggestions were: Paula thought it was a total net per unit for a duplex. If you have 3700 sq ft and the FAR is 0.5 then it should allow you only 1800 sq ft – divided by two for a duplex equaling only 900 sq ft per unit. CM Lilligren doesn't know, he believes it's footprint of the building. A resident affirmed its square footage of the total building. If you have two units you have to do it by two. The Railsbacks noted options to build a detached garage and increase the basement to give the necessary square footage have not been tried; the current plan is the same plan only revised to meet the zoning requirements as it changes. Langford prefers an attached garage and assures residents the project is not going over Minneapolis requirements. CM Lilligren noted when you talk about this project, we're not sure where this will fit in because its R-5 zoned and it's a duplex. Greg said he's conservative in this project and trying to go under that – covering only 49 percent of the lot. There are no other variances needed because the request is to reduce the width to 19'8" -- no side-yard variances are needed. No height variances are needed either, the building is 26 feet and R-5 zoning has up to 49 feet.

Tom noted the last effort was approved and then appealed, how Langford anticipate this current concept having addressed some appeals but not all of them. Langford believes he will get through the Board of Adjustment with a smaller proposal and that the council members will be very rational. He should be given an opportunity to build his house. Langford notes if he runs into too many challenges, a lawsuit might be filed but doesn't believe it will go that way. The building is 18 feet from the apartment building and 27 feet from the building to the north.

**CI 2 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to support the variance for width reduction to 19 feet 18 inches at 2624 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S. Motion prevails 8 / 5 / 3.**

The Whittier Alliance CI requests Greg to come back with a new site plan proposal. No vote on the site plan is taken.

### **Old/New Business**

Thanks to a fantastic new chair. Pick up litter.

The meeting was **adjourned** at 8:13 PM. Minutes submitted by Eric James.