

**Whittier Alliance – Community Issues Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

May 14, 2007 – 6:30PM - 9:00PM

Whittier International Elementary School, 315 West 26 Street

**Present** – Marshall Allen, Aaron Barr, Victor Barr, Alex Bauman, Oscar Benz, A Calhopp, Anna Canning, Erica Christ, Stanley Clark, Kirby Cross, Wendy Darst, Felino de la Pena, Janelle Eberhard, Rita Foster, James Glasgow, Verne Greenlee, Eric Grumdahl, Brian Hoffman, Colin King, Char Madigan, Linda Martin, Jeff Nelson, Ryan Prins, Nancy Pomplun, Nancy Railsback, Paul Railsback, Jim Roscoe, Scott Smith, Michelle Steffen, Jim Walsh

**Speakers Present** – Michael Boe, Nimco Ahmed, George Pridmore, Le Truong, Lt. Eddie Frizell, CPS Sarah Sexton-Mahmud, Herb Frey, Bob Bono, Greg Langford

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

The meeting was **called to order** at 6:35 PM by CI Chair Destin Nygard; 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 April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007 CI meeting were reviewed and **approved**.

**Announcements, Community Comments & Discussion**

Jim Roscoe reported the oil storage tank at Karmel Square was removed.

**Walker Library – Programs and Services Overview – Michael Boe**

Mr. Boe introduced the Walker Library to the CI. The Walker has several outreach programs for the public. There is also a museum pass that allows people to check out museums and libraries for one week. Every library in the city has relatively the same hours five days a week. This year a new reading program is aimed at Preschoolers.

A resident asked if the Central Library opening affected the attendance at Walker. Boe noted a slight drop but significant change would've come from the change in library hours. They were also forced to eliminate 25% of staff. Jim noted that he regularly visits the downtown library and uses Walker for simple checkout or pickup. The Railsback suggested they could eliminate book fines. Boe reported the Walker did eliminate junior teen book fines. Destin inquired about a partnership with the blind. That is more a suggestion than a discussion at this time. Destin inquired about the Hennepin County--Minneapolis libraries merger but details were not available. Boe believes part of the merger conditions is to reopen shuttered libraries.

**Don Willenbring 2720 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S – Informational: duplex new build, no approvals needed**

Not present

**Councilman Robert Lilligren – Proposal for additional voting precinct in Whittier**

Nimco Ahmed, aid to CM Lilligren, spoke on behalf of CM Lilligren. The current City election precincts and proposed voting precinct map were handed out. The CM's office is trying to establish more voting precincts into Whittier. Fewer precincts mean more waiting time and less voter turnout. Since 2008 is not an active election year, it would be a good time to test out the new proposal. Also Whittier has one of the lowest voter turnouts and change is needed to address this. If residents have suggestions on possible polling locations contact the CM's office. Locations must be a public place and wheelchair accessible such as a school, library, church, etc. Suggestions included: Art Institute, Old Arizona, K-Mart, and condominiums.

**Liquor License Hearing at 2 East 26<sup>th</sup> St – Jasmine 26 Restaurant – George Pridmore**

A liquor license hearing was moved up on the agenda with no opposition. George Pridmore, a City of Minneapolis liquor license staff person conducted the hearing. Ordinance requires public input for liquor licenses. Jasmine 26 Restaurant is requesting a Class E Liquor License. He asked for questions from neighbors.

Class E was clarified as ambient music only. -If the restaurant wants an event they have to make a special application for live entertainment. The Railsbacks asked about parking requirements. The owner was given six spaces and a parking variance was granted last year. The owner has contracted with a local grocery store for extra parking. There are 84 seats with a bar area. However it is not a bar and must not exceed 10% of total restaurant space. In Minneapolis, establishments which serve alcohol served out of the downtown area must operate as a restaurant. This means 60% of sales must be in food sales which are reported yearly to the City. A resident commented they enjoyed Jasmine Deli and hope they continue in the neighborhood for a long time.

Destin asked about the restaurant concept and owner Le Truong was given the floor. Jasmine Deli has been in the neighborhood for eight years. Some years ago the security of the neighborhood wasn't good. Now Truong is more confident with the improvements in the area and would like to open up a fine dining establishment. With recent concerns that the building where Jasmine Deli is located may undergo major improvements by the landlord, they decided to expand their business to maintain their clientele.

The proposal will go in front of the Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee on Wednesday. Inspections is recommending approval of the liquor license. The full Council and Mayor will need to approve it after that. If so, at the end of May, Jasmine 26 will open. Jim asked about security at night for patrons. Truong noted a night beat officer is offering more support to their establishment since they are opening past 8:00pm. If security becomes an issue, she will hire security. Truong is acquiring more parking very soon and in talks with a valet service. Erica noted all restaurants that open in this area need to find parking for their establishment to survive and smart owners will take steps to solve it.

**CI 1 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to recommend approval of a Class E Liquor License at 2 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Jasmine 26 Restaurant. Motion carried 18 / 0 / 0**

### **Comments & Topics from Whittier Residents**

Marian introduced the Walk/Bike to Work Day on Friday. There is a party at City Hall after work. [www.tcbikewalktowork.org](http://www.tcbikewalktowork.org). The next topic introduced was the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Wine Tasting Event sponsored by Campiello's in Uptown and Hennepin Lakes Liquor. All the ticket sales go back to the neighborhood the ticket is sold. Whittier being one of the neighborhoods hopes residents will join us. Tickets are \$25 and the event is on Wednesday, June 13.

Josie introduced the Monarch Butterfly Festival. Jim Roscoe is proposing a butterfly garden at Los Amigos. They are looking for volunteers to plan the event. Also, Whittier Alliance has adopted a section of the Greenway and the celebration details are forthcoming.

A resident, James Glasgow, inquired about more information in doing outdoor events. The CI applauded his efforts to start a regular block party and network with neighbors.

### **Fifth Precinct Report – Lt. Frizell and Sarah Mahmud-Sexton**

Lt. Frizell introduced himself and noted Lt. Huffman now doing community liaison work for MPD. He applauded regular residents at meetings who are working to improve Whittier. Because of this many serial criminals have been identified and nabbed. Sarah noted crime is down about 25% percent. Robberies are a high concern at this time however the stats indicate it is fairly down. A resident asked about five rape cases. Sarah said she cannot address them specifically but you can email or call her directly about it. She noted one case at the Black Forest, which Erica clarified as a sexual assault. The victim was able to fend him off noting security cameras and the perpetrator was eventually caught. Sarah encouraged residents to subscribe to the [CPC-SAFE1@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:CPC-SAFE1@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) listserv to get more info.

CODE 4: Lt. Frizell said every crime in Minneapolis is placed into a database and mapped out. Then officers go in and examine specific details and find patterns & trends in crime. The Inspector then goes in front of the Deputy Chief and reports how they are going to address and solve crime patterns. From there crime alerts are sent out. For example, robberies are more likely to happen at night. Sarah noted theft can be reported at 311 if an officer is not needed right away.

Jim noted increasingly worse traffic at 28<sup>th</sup> and Pleasant. Lt. Frizell said they have met with the Karmel Square Business Association. Parking was one of the largest problems identified. K-Mart has allowed parking at their lot during the day and a shuttle bus option is being looked at. The Karmel BA reported Karmel Square attracts roughly 8,000-10,000 visitors a month.

### **2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S – Alliance Housing – Herb Frey**

At the last CI meeting, Alliance was asked to return with more details. Herb Frey gave a general overview of the building. 2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S is a brown brick building built in 1912 as a single family home and converted to an 8-plex in the 1960s. There is a nursing home across the street, offices on the block and a nearby apartment complex. Alliance rents out this building to low-income people. Half of the people in the building earn less than \$16,000 and the other half earn under \$30,000. A full estimate on the rehabilitations will occur when funds are acquired. Bob Bono, the property manager reviewed the improvements. The driveway is one of the biggest projects. The overall plan includes general capital improvement items of worn out exterior and interior structures. The exterior includes a deteriorating retaining wall, steps and garage. Basement windows, entry doors, and fireplaces will be refurbished.

Bono has discussed appropriate materials with HPC. Very little is being changed outside. Major interior changes are bathrooms, kitchens and floor coverings. The garage is accessed from the alley and has six stalls with another two stalls being used as storage. The driveway off of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue will remain.

Frey introduced costs of the project and estimated breakdowns, which amounted to \$213,000. If funds are not acquired then capital improvements will be done by priority. The contractor estimates were also given. Soft costs include environmental assessment, legal fees, etc. Replacement reserves will also be budgeted in. Projected funding sources include Hennepin County, CPED, and the State of Minnesota. All loans are deferred as long as the property operates for 30 years of affordable housing.

Frey responded to why rent income cannot cover expenses. Alliance Housing budgets were presented. Income includes about \$35,000 in rent, however expenses are rising including gas. Part of the budget is also allocated costs including salaries, operation funds, etc. Since rents are very low, expenses cannot be fully covered. Contributions and fundraising cover the rest of the operating budget. Rents can be increased gradually each year however expenses exceed that income.

Destin addressed questions raised from the previous CI.

In terms of property covenants or clauses: Alliance purchased the building for \$10. Their sales covenant was to do affordable housing. The City and Housing Finance Agency (Federal Home Loan Bank) loans indicated 30-40 years of affordable housing. The question of conversion to non-affordable housing goes against the funding criteria and likely the funding sources would remove Alliance Housing from operation. The affordable housing covenants are concurrent.

Would Alliance convert it to market-rate housing: As an organization, Alliance wants to preserve the property as low-income housing and bought it under that agreement. Should Alliance do this, the state or federal level would require Alliance to do replacement affordable housing elsewhere with costs up to \$25,000 per unit.

A resident asked how long the work would be expected to last. Bono thought six months for sure. If funding was acquired improvements wouldn't occur until Spring. Relocation would need to happen for current residents. A resident asked about improvements to this property. During their ownership, they've replaced the roof, removed an old oil tank & other capital improvements. For the building to stand, the improvements are needed.

Marian asked about 2011 Pillsbury Ave's work not starting yet. A lot of work is yet to be done on that property including plan review and drawings finalized. An architect was needed to start that project and then bids will be put out. Money for that project wasn't raised until January and financing still needs to be finalized.

Linda who went through the walkthrough noted the improvements are needed. She suggested a dingy look on the interior and the work would alleviate this. She believes Alliance was doing as much as they could in keeping the property up. Low-income deserves better maintenance and cleanliness and comparable living standards to the neighborhood.

Felino hopes Alliance will do a good job and ensure Whittier is a good place to live. Bob noted they do month-to-month leases in order to take care of issues and problem clients quickly. The residents do conform to neighborhood standards and respect the area. There have been 7 police calls on the property, which mostly included parking problems and a check on welfare status. A resident noted the tenants have been very good neighbors, friendly. She believes they are doing a good job.

**CI 2 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Meeting moves to recommend support of the proposed rehabilitation at 2103 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S. Motion carried 15 / 2 / 1**

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

Langford reviewed his plan square footage. The overall property is 1780 sq ft, covering about 47.3% of the lot. The lower level has a stairwell up to the garage space on the main floor. The main floor has a similar layout to the basement. The upper level has a master bedroom, office and terrace. Exteriors for the front and rear of the building will be pre-cast limestone. Overall height of the building is 24 feet -- with parapet about 27 feet. Elevations were reviewed. Landscaping will include a rain garden, permeable drive surface. Illustrations were presented to the CI which included materials resembling a brownstone house. The CI focused on building exterior materials. Destin reiterated we should be looking at the overall project's site plan review and the larger issues of the space around the building.

A resident asked if Langford was planning to live at this unit. He says he is. The Railsbacks asked about another property Langford purchased in which he claimed to the City he would plan to live at. Langford responded at that time of purchase, his decision was to plan to live at the aforementioned property (near the 26<sup>th</sup> Street bridge).

Marian asked if the side view esthetics of the building could be improved since its very linear and the building materials & windows are not very distinctive. The cement board material doesn't reflect quality and the illustrated brick trim does not do much to improve the side view of the building. The attached garage also makes the side appear long. Langford mentioned his architect did a rendering of the side façade. He prefers the cement board because it has a smoother look. His use of brick trim along the sides will tie the building look together. Linda noted the street front view is unique. One front entrance door will make it appear to be a single-family home.

**CI 3 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to deny approval of the site plan review at 2624 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S. Motion failed 5 / 7 / 2**

**Discussion on motion:** It was noted the City of Minneapolis recently passed a requirement that allowed sub-standard lots to be constructed on. Nancy said the City is proposing an in-fill housing proposal which might affect Langford's project. Jim suggested Langford should fine-tune the building façade because the neighbor to the north is so close and they deserve a better looking building to face. Linda said the terraced front doesn't do justice to the block. She believes the plans need to be fleshed out a little more.

- Alex spoke against the motion. He said while the site plan is not very complete, he would like to see concerns addressed with a replacement motion supporting the concept of the site plan but giving more direction. If CI is proposing to micro-manage the site plan details then more specific details need to be made. Most of the major aspects of the plan have been addressed by CI and approved. To make a motion against this project negates all previous motions.

- Langford noted design standards are not yet available in Whittier and so the project has moved forth very slowly. The project can be redesigned but if the approval does not happen then the initial effort will be wasted. Linda noted the site plan elevations change frequently.

- A resident speaking against the motion, said more curb appeal could be done but the overall project should be approved.

**CI 4 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to support the conceptual site plan review at 2624 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S. Motion failed 3 / 10 / 1**

Eric noted more discussion can happen to fully realize the neighborhood versus developer demands. The Railsbacks would like to forward a recommendation to down-size the building possibly to 2000 square foot.

**CI 5 Motion: The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to refer the site plan review to the Housing Advisory group. Motion carried 10 / 1 / 2**

**Discussion on motion:** Alex is opposed to the Housing Advisory group micro-managing aesthetics. Linda said the very ones voting on this motion will go to the group. Nancy talked about buildings having street value.

Langford advised the CI that he is operating on a timeline and may file the variance for the project very soon. He will meet with the committee and take advice into account. He has spent a year and a half trying to pass the project and appeals to the CI for due process.

**221 W 28<sup>th</sup> St – Dan Bartis**

Marian spoke on the 221 W 28<sup>th</sup> St project. The Investors backed out and there were some challenges in developing this project. One of the 3 units is about 90% complete. Unfortunately the developer has abandoned the project. The project is about to close on foreclosure and needs about \$16,000 to be completed. The City CPED Dept still has a link to the project and contract so we will talk to our CM. Jim is concerned about poor landscaping in that area and adding street appeal if the project will not be finished. If the property is boarded up it will look bad for Whittier.

**Old/New Business**

James Gray of Irving Developers is finally developing a 6-unit condominium at 27<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. He previously allowed it to be used as a community garden as a neighborhood courtesy. However the construction seems to have stopped.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was **adjourned** at 8:58 PM. Minutes submitted by Eric James.