

UNION PARK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Board of Directors meeting

Wednesday, August 2, 2023, 7–9 p.m. | Via Zoom

Board President Sarah Dvorak | Minutes taken by Amy Gage

Members present: Jerome Benner, Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, Dean Cummings, Sarah Dvorak, Ellen Fee, Kirsten Fryer, Amy Gage, Joe Hughes, April King, Lisa Mueller, Henry Parker, Allen Saunders, Demetrius Shaw, Claire Warren

Members absent: Bruce Corrie, Dan Elenbaas and Kent Treichel | Open seats: Grids 1, 2, 6

Guests: Paul Magne Bakke; Ingrid Birkeland; Alex De La Mora; Mitra Jalali, Ward 4 City Councilmember; Jane McClure, *My Villager*; Marcy McHenry; Rob Mensing; Sarah Mullins; Katheryn Schneider; Jean Schroepfer; Jerry Striegel; plus Mike Hahm and Carolyn Wolf, United Village; plus seven unidentified people (first name only or phone number)

Staff member: Leah Timberlake-Sullivan, executive director; Kingsley Hollon-Coleman, intern

Agenda #1: Call to Order and Welcome

Sarah Dvorak, president, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Dean Cummings/Rachel Callanan moved to approve the agenda for the August board meeting.

Agenda #2: Open Forum

No one had any news to share.

Agenda #3: United Village Update

Mike Hahm, a consultant, and Carolyn Wolf, his colleague on the development team for United Village, came to present the project. Mike asked for some patience and said they came here with humility. He acknowledged the “large gaps” in communication.

- Everything outside of the stadium footprint was left for future development; Allianz Field opened four years ago. Some old buildings were still there.
- The Great Lawn was a privately owned public space, which relates to park dedication.
- Phase 1, which we’re discussing, is specific to the NW corner and specific to Block G.

They’ve secured \$1.5 million in environmental cleanup grants, in partnership with the St. Paul Port Authority, particularly along Snelling. The site has contaminants and conditions that require cleanup. After the civil unrest of May and June 2020, it wasn’t possible to proceed at that time. Before cleanup, they must plat the area, showing a street grid and where public rights-of-way will be. Asbury and Simpson would have new alignments from University Avenue. As part of that, they will establish a Parks and Open Space Plan. The Parks and Recs Commission in July endorsed having some of the privately owned spaces become public land.

The City Council will hear the plat application in September. The Parks and Open Space decision will go to the Parks and Rec Commission (monthly meeting on Thursday, September 14), then City Council, also in September. They're in discussion with the city about the investment required in public infrastructure. | A food pavilion, all-access playground and bike racks will be part of the complex.

Discussion on United Village: Scott Berger noted the trash in the area that UPDC volunteers encounter on their monthly cleanups. Mike said the Met Council, Ramsey County and the state's Department of Economic Development have collaborated on the environmental cleanup awards. Government pays for infrastructure, roads and lighting.

- McDonald's has a lease to remain on the site through 2024.
- Community input on types of businesses and developments: Carolyn said there are opportunities to work with the community. A specific hotel type or chain has not been identified, nor has a restaurant chain been identified.
- Mike committed to investigate Metro Transit bus access once the B Line is established. Will a version of the 21A still go by this site?
- April King, transportation committee co-chair, noted that approximately 34,000 vehicles pass along the Snelling-University intersection north-south daily, and 14,000 pass east-west. Combined with the light rail and bus transit stops, this makes it potentially some of the most valuable commercial property in the state.
- Ordinance requires that parkland (green space or public space) be established as part of the platting process. Could open space be added to the Great Lawn area?

Many neighbors attended this meeting, with questions, and Mike Hahm said they're "hamstrung" in answering all of them tonight. He said comments make a difference, nothing that someone mentioned the need for water at the site, which wasn't part of the plan.

- Sarah noted that a number of people asked in the chat about trees. Mike said the number will be "above the standard" that the city requires. She requested that watering be part of the plan.
- Some asked about the food pavilion: It will be a permanent structure, with restaurants open to the general public. Others asked who the hotel will serve. Mike said they're responding to plans developed in 2016.

Councilmember Jalali said she appreciates the acknowledgment that communication has been lacking. The site is adjacent to her ward but not in it. She is focusing on 1) facilitating engagement, 2) compiling constituent questions ("it's not United Village without villagers"); she also sees concern about public access: restrooms, open playground, water.

- Some are concerned that the playground is only a third of an acre. That is small, and this area has a lot of children.

Agenda #4: Committee Reports and Updates

Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chair Dean Cummings said that Mike Hahm came to their meeting. CLUED is still refining its Union Park business survey. And they may have a forum the third Monday in September on the proposed 1 cent sales tax.

Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee (NSVC): The committee had no July meeting. Co-chair Ellen Fee said they voted in June on a new piece of equipment at the Desnoyer Park ice rink. Leah will need volunteers for the annual Ice Cream-Peanut Butter & Jam fundraiser on September 16.

Transportation: Co-chair April King said that Justin Borrell, Allianz Field general manager, visited to describe the bike and other transportation options.

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee: WSNAC representative Henry Parker said an Environmental Access Worksheet (EAW) is required for the hockey/basketball arena, and the public comment period has closed. WSNAC is also hoping to engage with Wilder or another organization to conduct a study of the Student Housing Overlay Area; the student housing picture has changed with the two-year residency requirement and the new apartments on Marshall that are housing students.

- A work group is forming to explore merging WSNAC with UPDC and the Macalester-Groveland Community Council. Henry is volunteering to be on the work group to represent Union Park.
- *Action: The board voted unanimously to have Henry Parker represent UPDC. Amy Gage also will serve, though she said she wouldn't do so without Jerome's OK.*

Agenda #6: Staff Report

Executive Director Leah Timberlake Sullivan urged people to consider attending Little Africa Fest on Sunday, August 6 and India Fest at the State Capitol on Saturday, August 12.

- <https://www.iamn.org/>
- <https://www.littleafricafest.com/>

On September 28, Leah is hoping to organize a hybrid event with Ward 1 and to meet the City Council candidates. UPDC has submitted a Star Grant, supported by Councilmembers Jalali and Ballenger, for better bike parking infrastructure, including branded bike racks. | She also mentioned honoring volunteers. Amy asked about bringing back the District Council-wide Neighborhood Honor Roll event that used to be hosted at St. Thomas.

April King talked with the owner of Black Hart about surveying how their customers got there. Let her know if you have other ideas for a business survey.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.