

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2025

Chair: Yvonne Hundshamer

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Kirsten Fryer, Sande Traudt, David Tierney

Staff: Leah Timberlake Sullivan, Executive Director, Union Park District Council

A quorum was present for the meeting.

Approval of March Minutes as Corrected

The motion to approve the March minutes was first a motion to direct Leah to edit the minutes. The motion calls for approval of the minutes as corrected.

Kirsten Fryer moved to approve and correct the March minutes. Sande Traudt seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

The edited and corrected March minutes be posted on the Union Park District Council (UPDC) website.

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes for the April 15 meeting.

Open Forum

A New Food Scraps Program for Ramsey County

Jerry Clendenin said that he is impressed by the new Food Scraps Pick up Program for Ramsey County. However, it is not yet available in the Union Park area.

The plan makes it easy for citizens to compost food waste. Each household requests a supply of special bags from Ramsey County. The household members place food waste in the special bags. The special bag or bags are then dropped in the garbage cart or dumpster. When the waste truck arrives at the processing center, automated equipment separates the special bags from the trash. The food waste will be processed to make compost.

At present the program is only available in small areas of Ramsey County. The program is rolling out and it will eventually be free for all residents.

There are many environmental benefits from the program!

Review of Micro-Grant Requests

The deadline to apply for Micro-Grants with priority for funding is April 15, 2025. The NSVC has received six requests for Micro-Grants as of April 15.

Six Requests for Micro-Grants

A Public Picnic Table for Laurel Avenue Near Prior

Citizens who live near Laurel Avenue and Prior requested up to \$400 to repair and improve an old table.

They intend to place the picnic table on the Laurel Avenue boulevard near Prior. The table will be for the general public to use.

However, placing the table on the public boulevard may not be allowed under City of Saint Paul ordinances. The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee decided not to fund the table project.

An Intercultural Event for Senior Citizens

A group connected Carty Heights Senior Housing has requested a Micro-Grant of \$400 for an event about cooking and eating. The idea is to be a social event to bring together seniors from different cultures. The event is also about educating participants about cooking and enjoying foods from different cultures.

The event organizers plan for about 30 people to attend. The small event is intended to be a “proof of concept.” If the idea is a success there may be a larger event in 2026.

The Micro-Grant funds will be for food and related supplies.

Carty Heights is at 412 N Dunlap Street. It is close to University Avenue and to Lexington Parkway. Carty Heights provides affordable rental housing for senior citizens. Carty Heights is a part of the Episcopal Homes organization.

Improvement of a Garden Managed by Arts-US

A Micro-Grant was requested on behalf of Arts-US. Arts-US is a nonprofit organization founded in 1992. The group encourages artistic and educational programs.

The organization has a garden located near Dunning Field at 1221 Marshall Avenue. The organization educates children about growing food. It features vegetables and herbs used for African foods.

The group requested a Micro-Grant of \$400 for 2025. The grant will be used to expand and improve the vegetable garden. The money will be used to

establish plots that are one foot by three feet. The money will go for improving the soil and for controlling pests and for mulch.

The plots are for educating 60 to 75 students. Each child will work one of the small plots.

Some funds will be spent for flyers to encourage kids to sign up for the project. Arts-US will also buy snacks for a meeting of the gardeners.

Purchasing Supplies for the Skyline Tower Sewing Club

The staff at Skyline Tower requested a Micro-Grant of \$400 to purchase supplies for a sewing club at Skyline Tower.

The club members work to develop their sewing skills. They also work to build community spirit. The club members provide garments for themselves and for other skyline residents.

The Micro-Grant will be used to purchase fabric, thread, and other supplies. They will also purchase scissors and other tools. They may need to use some money to repair a sewing machine.

A Welcome Garden at Merriam Station

Two groups of volunteers connected with Merriam Station Community Garden made separate requests for Micro-Grants.

One group of volunteers want to grow new plants in the welcome garden at Merriam Station.

Merriam Station Garden is at 2009 Gilbert Avenue. There is a drive way to enter Merriam Station from Gilbert Avenue. The driveway curves in a loop. There is a small piece of land surrounded by the driveway loop. Volunteers

want to plant bulbs to start decorative plants in this small garden. The new plants will make Merriam Station more aesthetically appealing to nearby residents.

The volunteers requested a Micro-Grant of \$400 for the bulbs and related supplies.

The Garden at Merriam Station is near the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks and close to Interstate 94 and Prior Avenue.

Fruit Trees at Merriam Garden

A second group of volunteers at Merriam Station Community Garden wants to plant new fruit trees.

The trees will be a shared resource. All of the growers at Merriam Station will be able to take fruit from the trees.

The volunteers requested a Micro-Grant of \$400 to purchase small fruit trees and related supplies.

How to Allocate Micro-Grant Funds

Ordinarily we have a total of \$1600 for Micro-Grants for the year. We can provide up to \$400 per grant. However, an anonymous donor had provided an additional \$400 so that we have a total of \$2000 for 2025. Terms of donation needed clarification.

David Tierney made a motion to authorize Leah to meet with the anonymous donor and to clarify donor intent prior to awarding the extra grant. The motion calls for the NSVC to accept the plan appropriately given donor intent. Kirsten Fryer seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Requests for Cell Tower Funds for 2025 Events

Requests for grants from the Cell Tower Funds are initiated at the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC).

The Cell Tower Fund is also called the Park Improvement Fund. There is a tower in Merriam Park that supports telephone equipment. The communication companies pay rent to keep their equipment on the cell tower. The Union Park District Council receives the rent money for an account that is called the Cell Tower Fund. Money from the fund can be used to pay for improvements to parks in the Union Park area. The funds can also be used for public gatherings and events that are held in the parks.

The fund can provide about \$17,000 to \$18,000 per year.

At the April 15, 2025, meeting, the NSVC members allocated amounts for events shown in the table below.

**Requests for Cell Tower Funds
for Community Events for 2025**

Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam	\$4,000
Desnoyer Park Picnic	\$3,850
Desnoyer Fire & Ice Winter Event	\$600
Merriam Park Spring Event	\$600
Total for Four Events	\$9050

All of the events are connected to Desnoyer Park or to Merriam Park. The rules governing the Cell Tower Fund state that events and improvement for these two parks should receive priority for funding.

The Merriam Park Spring Event will be held for the first time in 2025. The plan is to have the event on a Saturday afternoon. There will be outdoor cooking and eating. The plan is to serve about 100 people.

Yvonne Hundshamer made a motion to approve the Cell Tower spending plan stated in the above table. Kirsten Fryer seconded. The members voted unanimously to approve the plan.

Snelling & University Alliance Website

The website for the Snelling & University Alliance is up and running. The address is *snellinganduniversity.org*.

The website has a list of many prominent government and civic leaders who support the Alliance. There is also a list of many colleges and civic organization that support the Alliance.

Leaders of the Alliance are working to get a Ramsey County Critical Corridors Planning Grant. The grant will be used to create a comprehensive plan for improvements and development in the area bordered by Hamline Avenue on the east, Fairview Avenue on the west, Minnehaha Avenue on the north, and Dayton Avenue on the south.

The Critical Corridors plan is designed to work with several other plans that cover the area. The Critical Corridors plan will fit in with the next 10-year plan for the Union Park District Council (UPDC).

Every UPDC committee has members who have volunteered to serve with the Snelling & University Alliance.

Adjourn

Jerry Clendenin made a motion to adjourn. David Tierney seconded. The members voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.

