

UNION PARK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 7:00-9:00pm

Members present: April King, Dan Elenbaas, Sarah Dvorak, Scott Berger, Leah Timberlake-Sullivan, Barb Deming, Claire Warren, Kent T, Deanna Seppanen, Jane McClure, Jerome Benner, Mark Morrow, Rachel Callahan, Reece Johnson, Sarah Swisher

- 7:00 pm Call to Order and Welcome**
Called to order by Sara Dvorak at 7:03 Sarah Dvorak
- 7:05 pm Consent Agenda** Sarah Dvorak
- *Approve the agenda for this meeting*
 - *Approve November minutes*
- Approval of agenda and November minutes: Motion was made by Claire Warren and 2nd by Tim Flanagan. Motion passed.
- 7:10 pm Open Forum** Sara Dvorak
- Sarah doesn't want to gloss over what has been happening in our community during the Federal Immigration deportation efforts. However, it impacts friends, neighbors, and family. It's been very stressful. Neighborhood restaurants are closing and more will be closing. Some are going on-line only. Many restaurant staff members have been lost; people are afraid to go to work; much fear and anxiety throughout. Leah spoke with Western District police representatives. She was trying to understand permissions, how to protest. Businesses are needing legal advice, both their rights and responsibilities. Legal advice is needed. There is confusion at this time. Mayor Her is asking District Councils to work on the specific need of providing food for families. Mayor Her has been meeting with ethnic business owners-she has been very dialed in with her council members in coordination with the 13 District Councils. Sarah Swisher said that the University of Minnesota has given her staff very specific information on providing advice. Leah said that the Midway Council is offering suggestions as well. However, Leah would like the city to provide information. Reece wondered about the police response and how they can help. He is concerned about Ice attacking legalized citizens. Mark suggested that we put a request that legal advice be given to businesses in the city.
- 7:20 pm Seating and Electing Board Members:** Sarah Dvorak
- Claire moved that Board Members April King and Dan Elenbaas be officially seating: seconded by Tim. April has represented grid 4 for the past 2 years and now will be representing Grid 5. Dan has been a Board Member for many years, served on many committees, and on the executive committee-will be representing Grid 11. Motion passed unanimously.
- 7:30 pm Comprehensive Plan Taskforce Update** Sarah Dvorak
- Sarah said that the data needs to come in before the plan can come together. Scott will serve on transportation and Tim will serve on CLUED. Leah's interns will help with tools to gather input from the community.
- 7:40 pm ByLaws** Scott Berger
- Scott is asking each member to look at the by-laws that he has been working on and comment on the document. This document was made to be edited, and changes can be discussed during future meetings.
- 8:00 pm Committee Reports and Updates**
- Land Use & Economic Development (CLUED) Dean Cummings
 - ◆ Letter to City – Decreasing Apartment Value Study – *Action Item*
 - Request for student economic analyses of the decrease in the market value of apartment buildings in Saint Paul
- Mark Morrow is speaking for CLUED this evening. This letter will study and give an analysis of the decrease in market value of apartment buildings in St. Paul. Jerome wanted to know why the focus is only on students. Mark commented that it is not only for students but for all apartments, not just students apartments. Jerome asked Mark to specify who the letter will go to in local universities. Mark moved that the letter be approved with adjustments and it was seconded by Reese; motion was approved.
- ◆ Letter to City regarding Fire Safety – *Action Item*
 - Union Park District Council (UPDC) strongly urges the City Council to create a standing committee on fire safety for residential zoning districts. UPDC recommends that the committee include representatives from the fire department, the Department of Safety and

- Inspections, apartment owners, renters (including student renters), and local universities.
- ◆ Letter to the City re H Zoning - **Action Item**

This letter is in regard to Fire Safety in rental units. A person noticed that there was not a 2nd exit or evacuation plan in a two story rental property. The request is that the city has the need to put together a committee to make recommendations for rental units. The improvement in technology can make it possible to notify all floors in a property in case of fire and carbon monoxide presence. If not responded to, then a notice could automatically go out to the fire department. Sarah Swisher commented that it need not be a standing committee. Jerome asked whether it would be better to be addressed by the Department of Public Safety.

A motion to approve the letter with amendments being sent to the Department of Public Safety was made by Mark. The motion passed but there were four abstentions. Sarah and Mark wanted input from Joe who could provide input from the perspective of a business owner.

- Request to replace the “Historic”/H1 and H2 residential district zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, with the prior R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2 zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, (modified to allow up to 6 units per dwelling); and revert lots currently zoned H1 or H2 to their prior zoning status (R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2).

Mark gave a brief overview of the zoning by the city. The city changed zoning because they felt that St. Paul needs to grow. However, the changes to the zoning rules has created significant problems for individuals and neighborhoods. This change has resulted in a significant number of tear downs in the city. The size of new structures after the tear down is much larger which doesn’t allow room for a tree canopy. It is further explained in the letter which Mark shared.

City officials have not responded to the issue at this time. Mark moved to send the letter. Motion passed with 8 ayes and 4 abstentions.

- Transportation

Lisa Nelson

- ◆ Letter to City: Safety Incident Reporting– **Action Item**
 - Request for the City of Saint Paul to establish a citywide system for reporting “near-miss” incidents involving vulnerable road users, including people walking, biking, and rolling. Drivers with concerns could optionally be included in a separate category. Scott discussed the reason behind this letter to document near misses for those walking and biking. Minneapolis has this type of letter. Scott moved to approve the letter. Motion passed unanimously.
- ◆ Letter to City: Support for Summit Avenue Regional Bike Trail – **Action Item**
 - Letter in support for the planned Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan (SARTP).
 - With addendum

April discussed sending this letter to the mayor and city council to affirm our letter previously sent to the council in support of the Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan. Mark voiced a concern given by Save our Trees and that the issue hasn’t been supported by a significant number of home owners on Summit Avenue. Mark is ok to withdraw his letter. His letter as an amendment was withdrawn.

Motion to approve the original letter was made by April. Approved with 10 ayes, 3 abstentions and one nay. Motion passed.

- Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC)

Sarah Swisher

Barb Deming and Sarah Swisher are present from the committee. If there needs to be restructuring of the committee, then those changes need to come from the full Board and not NSVC. Sarah said that the day of the meetings will be on Thursdays and not on Tuesdays. She said that there has been a decrease in attendance at NSVC meetings and that the focus needs to be primarily on neighborhood planning & events Sarah said that the core of the committee has been the use of the cell tower funds, celebrations, and the use of parks in the Union Park area. There is a need to regenerate interest in this committee. There is a need to recruit new members.

- WSNAC

Jerome Benner

Next meeting is scheduled for February 10 as reported by Jerome

- Housing Task Force

Reese Johnson

Reese stated that they are about to put together the results of the survey sent out last month.

- Snelling/University Alliance

Leah T Sullivan

They had a great meeting recently and progress is continuing with this committee.

8:45 pm

Staff Report

Leah T Sullivan

9:00 pm

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by April and 2nd by Tim. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by Allen Saunders, Board Secretary