

UPDC
Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality
Committee Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2023

Chair: Ellen Fee

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Kirsten Fryer, Jenny Keyser, Louise Jacobs, David Tierney

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

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes.

Introductions/Approval of Agenda

An agenda was sent out in advance of the meeting. The agenda was accepted without changes.

Update on STAR Grant for Trees at Midway Peace Park

Jenny Keyser reported some great news. The Neighborhood STAR Board approved a grant of up to \$25,000 to remove dead trees and plant new trees for the Midway Peace Park!

The official applicant for the STAR grant was the Union Park District Council (UPDC). The UPDC will be the lead organization for the tree project and the fiscal agent.

The Saint Paul City Council has to review the grant. If they approve, UPDC and some cooperating organizations can move ahead with park improvements.

We also expect funds for the project from other organizations.

- The Saint Paul Parks Conservancy may provide \$2,500 for gardening tools, and rain gauges.
- The Minnesota United Football Club has offered to provide \$5,000.
- We can provide an amount of \$3,000 from the Merriam Park Cell Tower Fund. (The money provided for the Midway Peace Park fall event can do double duty. We can count the event money as part of matching funds for the tree planting.)

Jenny described the complicated financial path. The funds will go to Leah and the Union Park District Council. The UPDC will transfer funds back to the Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Department. The Parks & Recreation Department will call for contractors to bid on the tree project. The winning bidder will remove dead trees, dig holes, and put in new trees.

A Time Line

Jenny said that the Parks & Rec Dept will set a time line for activities needed to get the project done.

- Parks & Rec will set up water service to Midway Peace Park. We expect to have water in June or July.

- During the summer, the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) will organize and prepare volunteers.
- The new trees will be planted in September or October. The better time to plant trees is in the fall.

Volunteers from the Tree Trust, NSVC, and other volunteers will plant trees in the fall. They will work with Rachel Coyle, the Forester for Saint Paul Parks & Recreation.

The City expects to receive \$170,000 from sale of land near the park. With these and other funds, Parks & Rec intends to provide water for the park drinking fountains and for plants.

Parks & Rec is thinking about setting up a drip line to water each tree. Drip lines are small plastic tubes that carry water. Parks & Rec is also planning on a way to water grass in the park.

Exploring Fund Raising Ideas

Leah Timberlake Sullivan brought up the topic of funding for the Midway Peace Park fall event and other events. She wants to see if Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee members have a serious interest in pursuing grants for events.

She mentioned some constraints on fund raising by Union Park District Council.

- UPDC is a 501 C 3 organization. We have to follow the rules for non-profit organizations.
- Leah said that UPDC staff can't be paid for time spent on fund raising.

Jenny Keyser suggested that fund raising works better when it is led from the higher levels of an organization. She said that before the Neighborhood Sustainability &

Vitality Committee (NSVC) goes too far on fund raising, we should see if the UPDC Board is interested in fund raising.

Jenny Keyser said that if the UPDC Board is interested in fund raising, she is willing to pursue grants. In her experience, to be successful we need to form relationships with funding organizations.

We have some relationships with donors:

- Minnesota United donated to the Midway Peace Park project.
- A local real estate company gave UPDC a grant for a scholarship program.
- The Saint Paul Parks Conservancy donated for the Midway Peace Park Tree project.

Looking for Possible Donors

Ellen Fee thinks that it is a good idea for us to be on the watch for possible donors. She suggests that we discuss fund raising with the UPDC Board of Directors. Board members can also keep watch.

Kirsten Fryer said that she can keep an eye out for funding opportunities.

Leah said that she is thinking about working with the University of Saint Thomas. She will see if the school is interested in creating an internship for a student to work with the UPDC. An intern is a form of a donation. For years the UPDC has had interns from Macalester College.

Leah said that it will be helpful if she creates file with information on possible donors and grants.

Ellen Fee is a member of the Union Park District Council Board. She said that she will bring up fund raising at the next UPDC Board meeting. She said that she will lobby the UPDC Board of Directors to do more fund raising.

On a related topic, Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that soon we should begin looking for sponsorships for the annual Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam.

No-Mow Maintenance

Ellen Fee brought up the topic of maintenance for the Merriam Park No-Mow Area.

Jerry Clendenin has studied the book “Common Backyard Weeds of the Upper Midwest.” He is trying to develop a more scientific approach for controlling weeds in the No-Mow Area.

Jerry Clendenin is focused on controlling the Common Ragweed. The book says that Ragweed develops flowers in early and middle summer. After the flowers appear, the plants release pollen. The pollen leads to the formation of seeds. The seeds fall off of the plant, and the seeds start the next generation of Ragweed in the following spring.

He said that it is important to pull out Ragweed before the flowers form. He has been visiting the No-Mow Area two or three times a week. He pulls out a few weeds at each visit.

Three Maintenance Events

We discussed the need to increase maintenance work before the Ragweed has flowers. We decided on a very informal event for June 10, Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 10:30.

We will not provide refreshments.

Jerry and others suggested that anyone who wants to come should bring:

- Gloves for pulling thistles

- Sunscreen
- Water bottles
- Bug repellent

For pulling weeds, the main thing is to bring gloves. If you have hand tools and compost bags, it won't hurt to bring them along.

There are two more No-Mow maintenance events on the calendar. One is for July 22 and the other is for September 23. These two events will be more formal and organized.

Progress Against Weeds

Jerry Clendenin pointed out that we have had successes. There was an "ugly strip" of Purslane weed at the edge of the No-Mow Area along Merriam Lane. The Purslane was removed with a focused campaign of weed pulling. At least for now, we cannot see any Purslane.

After the Purslane was gone, there was Common Ragweed in the same area. We pulled out Common Ragweed in the summer of 2022. All of the adult Ragweed was gone by the fall of 2022. However, in the spring of 2023, we see small Ragweed plants growing near Merriam Lane.

We planted grass seed in the areas where the weeds were pulled out. Unfortunately, the grass has not grown very well. Instead of grass, other types of weeds have moved in where the Ragweed was pulled out. However, the new weeds are more acceptable than the Purslane and the Ragweed.

The southern edge of the No-Mow Area looks much better. In earlier years, it looked like there was a wall of weeds as a barrier along Merriam Lane.

Review and Vote on Micro-Grant Applications

The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee reviewed four applications for Union Park District Council Micro-Grants.

ARTS-Us Garden Improvement

Ebony Coles requested a Micro-Grant on behalf of ARTS-Us. ART-Us is a nonprofit organization founded in 1992. The group encourages artistic and educational programs. The organization has a pollinator garden located near Dunning Field at 1221 Marshall Avenue.

The group requested a Micro-Grant of \$400. The grant will be used to expand and improve the pollinator garden. The money will go for plants, material for plant markers, signs for the garden, and gardening supplies. The garden produces vegetables and fruits for neighborhood people.

The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee voted unanimously to approve the \$400 Micro-Grant.

Picnics for Elders at Midway Peace Park

Mangala Sharma requested a Micro-Grant on behalf of the Skyline Tower Community. The building has more than 165 residents who are age 60 or older.

The group requested a Micro-Grant of \$400. The grant will be used to buy food and supplies for picnics. The picnics will be for older Skyline Tower residents. The group will have a picnic each month from July through October. The picnics will be in Midway Peace Park. The goal of the project is to encourage more social contacts and decrease isolation for older residents.

The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee voted unanimously to approve the \$400 Micro-Grant.

Theater Production by Students

Sam Hierlinger requested a Micro-Grant to support a group of young actors. They are producing the show “Annie Jr.” Sam is 14, but she is already an experience theater director. In 2022, she produced the show “Lion King.” There were 21 neighborhood young people in that show. She expects that many of the same actors will perform in “Annie Jr.”

The group requested a Micro-Grant of \$350. The grant will be used to create costumes, provide make up, and pay for construction supplies to build sets.

NSVC members discussed the problem of royalties for the playwright. They were concerned about possible legal problems.

Kirsten Fryer said that she will contact Sam Hierlinger and company to discuss arrangements with the author.

Kirsten also said that the UPDC Board requires a Memorandum of Understanding with each person or group that receives a Micro-Grant. The Memorandum with the theater group can require that the group has a royalty arrangement acceptable to the author.

Kirsten Fryer did not vote on the grant request because she is a friend of Sam Hierlinger’s family. All other members of the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee voted unanimously to approve the \$350 Micro-Grant.

Bicycle Racks at 520 Prior Avenue N

Benita Warns requested a Micro-Grant to install bicycle racks at 520 Prior Avenue N. and in front of the shop called Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles.

The shop helps low-income people to get bicycles. Benita Warns requested a Micro-Grant of \$400. The grant will be used to get the type of bicycle racks that say “Union Park.”

All NSVC members at the May meeting expressed support for the bike rack project. However, the project will require co-ordination with the Saint Paul Department of Public Works. Committee members were afraid that the project would get tangled up with red tape and regulations.

For these reasons, the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee decided not to vote on the bike rack grant at the May meeting.

Jenny Keyser said that we should encourage Benita Warns to work with the City of Saint Paul on the bike rack idea.

Kirsten Fryer said that she can contact Benita Warns and clarify some details about the bike rack proposal. Kirsten can report on what she finds out by e-mail to other NSVC members.

After Kirsten reports, we will again consider the bike rack Micro-Grant request at the June meeting.

Review by UPDC Board

The three Micro-Grants that were approved will be sent to the Union Park District Council Board of Directors. The UPDC Board will review and approve or disapprove at the June Meeting

Anything Else/Suggestions for Next Time

A Talk on Treatment for Drug Addiction

Kirsten Fryer suggested that we have an expert on the treatment for drug addiction give a talk at an NSVC meeting.

Other NSVC members expressed an interest.

Kirsten said that she will contact someone who might give a talk.

Leah said that the Transportation Committee may be interested in having a combined NSVC and Transportation meeting on the topic. She will consider a joint meeting when she sets up the next NSVC meeting.

Meeting with Andy Rodriguez on May 31

Leah has set up a meeting with Andy Rodriguez, Director of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, on May 31

The meeting will be to talk about advocating for parks in the Union Park Area

Kirsten said that she wants to attend. She is especially concerned about Iris Park.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that she will send out an e-mail to NSVC members with directions on how to join the meeting on Zoom.

In Person Meeting

Ellen Fee said that she would like to organize an in person meeting for the NSVC soon.

Jerry Clendenin suggested an outdoor meeting because the Covid virus is still a hazard.

Adjourn

We adjourned at 8:37 p.m.