

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2024

Chair: Ellen Fee

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Barb Deming, Kirsten Fryer, Jenny Keyser,
Siri Knutson, Katrina Peterson, David Tierney

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

I. Introductions/Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the December 19, 2023, meeting were sent out in advance of the meeting. Kirsten Fryer moved to accept the minutes without changes. Jenny Keyser seconded. The December minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes.

Staff Report and Announcements

A License for a University Avenue Business

A business that is called Midway Café & Grill wants to get a license to sell liquor. Such an “on sale” license is approved or denied by the City of Saint Paul.

Ordinarily, a liquor license is not a huge deal. However, Habitat for Humanity opposes this license. Midway Café is at 1964 University Ave W. and the headquarters for Habitat for Humanity is at 1954 University Ave W.

Habitat for Humanity in most cases does not take a position on liquor licenses. However, Habitat for Humanity stated that they oppose this license because an additional liquor outlet puts more strain on a struggling neighborhood. The area has many police calls and many homeless people.

Usually, Union Park District Council takes a position to recommend or not recommend a liquor license. The Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED) takes the lead. Then the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) takes a position. The Union Park District Council Board approves or disapproves a final recommendation.

This license request is more complicated because Union Park District Council has a close relationship with Habitat for Humanity.

An Opportunity to Engage with the Northwestern Part of UPDC

Kirsten Fryer said the license debate is an opportunity for UPDC to engage with businesses in area.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that she will send a letter to Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles at 520 N. Prior. She will ask this business owner how they feel about a new liquor license. NSVC has a relationship with Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles.

Ellen Fee said that we should work on long term plan to engage more with the people in this area. Union Park includes the south side of University Avenue and also Iris Park. The area is often neglected by the Union Park District Council.

Jenny Keyser said that she would like to know more about the procedure followed by CLUED for liquor license applications.

Leah said that she knows about CLUED procedures for real estate development applications. She does not know how CLUED approaches liquor licenses.

The City of Saint Paul website describes a complicated process for a business to apply for a liquor license. The City of Saint Paul mails notifications to residents and businesses located within 350 feet of the business that wants a license. Usually, there is a public meeting with a hearing officer. Leah expects a Habitat for Humanity representative will attend this meeting.

Leah said that she will send out documents related to the Midway Cafe license request to NSVC members. Interested NSVC members can attend the public hearing.

Jerry Clendenin Has Lost E-Mail Service

Jerry said that he cannot access his e-mail provided by CenturyLink. He is working on switching internet service to Xfinity. He will type out the minutes. He will try to find a way deliver the January meeting minutes before the February meeting.

Hamline-Midway Potluck on January 29

On January 29 there will be a potluck dinner for board members and committee members of the Hamline-Midway District Council.

Updating the 2023 NSVC Work Plan

The Annual Workplan is a document required by the City of Saint Paul. Each Committee of the Union Park District Council produces a Committee Work Plan. Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that she combines the work plans from all UPDC committees and produces one combined final 2023 Workplan for the Union Park District Council.

The official document is called:

City of Saint Paul, Minnesota COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FY2023 Work Plan FINAL

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that we need to turn in the updated UPDC Workplan for 2023 to Saint Paul City officials in February, 2024.

The final 2023 Work Plan will have five columns:

Activity	Anticipated Outcomes	Time Frame	Person(s) Responsible	Achieved Outcomes (for end of year reporting)
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We discussed the NSVC 2023 Workplan at the February, 2023, NSVC meeting. We filled in all columns except for “Achieved Outcomes.”

Ellen Fee said that she has received comments from NSVC members via Google Docs. She has received more comments by other means. She will gather up comments from the January NSVC meeting. She will assemble these comments and she will fill in the column for “Achieved Outcomes.”

A Simplified Rough Draft of the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Final 2023 Work Plan with Achieved Outcomes

Activity	Anticipated Outcomes	Achieved Outcomes (for end of year reporting)
<p>Create a Template for Plans for Community Events</p> <p>More about this activity is in the minutes from January, 2023.</p>	<p>We discussed making a template that can be used by UPDC members. We want a template that can also be used by non-members who want to propose an event.</p>	<p>A suggested template from Andy Saunders is attached at the end of the January, 2023, minutes.</p>
<p>Plant Trees in the Midway Peace Park</p> <p>More about this activity is in the minutes from January, 2023.</p>	<p>We discussed replacing 36 trees that died. We discussed drought-resistance species. We also discussed ways to water new trees.</p>	<p>The project to plant new trees was completed on November 1. (From the December, 2023, Minutes.)</p>
<p>The Midway Peace Park Fall Fun Event</p>	<p>The goal is to host an event that is fun, accessible to all, and culturally relevant.</p>	<p>The Midway Peace Park event was held on Saturday, September 30, 2023, from noon to 4 p.m.</p>

		Many people attended.
Support community events at Desnoyer Park	Desnoyer Park Improvement Association holds a picnic event in the summer and a winter event with ice skating.	The Desnoyer Park “Fire and Ice” outdoor ice rink and winter skating party was held on December 30, 2023. About 150 people attended. (From the January Minutes.) The summer picnic was well attended.
Host or support events at other parks in the Union Park area	We will consider events at Iris Park, Dunning Field, and Aldine Park.	Space intentionally left blank.
Space intentionally left blank.	Space intentionally left blank.	Space intentionally left blank.
Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam	Support the event that is usually held in late summer or early fall.	We do not have an exact count for how many people attended. However, we provided over 700 servings of ice cream at the Sept., 2023 event. (From the Sept. 2023 minutes.)

<p>No Mow Area Maintenance</p> <p>(From the September Minutes.)</p>	<p>Organize volunteers to work on two maintenance events. Work with the Parks & Rec Department to create a long-term plan for the No Mow Area</p>	<p>The No-Mow Area of Merriam Park looks much improved. Over the summer, volunteers removed Ragweed. Walking along Merriam Lane, pedestrians can see an area that looks “wild but not weedy.”</p>
<p>Create a sign for the No Mow Area.</p>	<p>The sign should state that UPDC volunteers maintain the area. The sign should also explain the environmental benefits from the No Mow Area.</p>	<p>On March 22, we requested the Parks & Recreation Department to create a sign. Then on March 29 City officials said that it is possible for the City to provide a sign. We are still waiting for a sign. (From the October, 2023, minutes.)</p>
<p>Advocate for recycling and reusing</p>	<p>Aim for zero waste at the Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam and other events.</p>	<p>Space intentionally left blank.</p>
<p>Composting</p>	<p>Work with the Eleonor Graham Community Garden. Work with Merriam Station Garden.</p>	<p>There is a composting drop off site at Dunning Field</p>

<p>Composting & recycling facilities</p>	<p>We discussed drafting a letter to the City of Saint Paul. The letter will request better facilities.</p>	<p>Space intentionally left blank.</p>
<p>Engage marginalized groups</p>	<p>We discussed how to involve more people with composting & recycling and other projects.</p>	<p>NSVC Members commented that we did not accomplish anything toward this goal. (From the January, 2024, minutes.)</p>
<p>Managing the Cell Tower Fund</p> <p>More about this activity is in the minutes from January, 2023.</p>	<p>Develop a sustainable plan. We discussed establishing a scope of projects eligible for funding. Engage in dialog with citizens and city officials to determine how to use cell tower funds.</p>	<p>We adopted a motion to reorganize our process for approving projects to receive Cell Tower funds. (From the March Minutes.)</p>
<p>More on managing the Cell Tower Fund</p> <p>More about this activity is in the minutes from the Environment & Parks Committee meeting of March 17, 2021.</p>	<p>Work toward sharing information about Cell Tower projects with marginalized groups. Work toward sharing resources. Make use of all the money available for a year.</p>	<p>Members commented that we have a long way to go before we efficiently and effectively distribute Cell Tower Funds. (From the January, 2024 Minutes.)</p>
<p>Scholarship Program</p>	<p>Leah will contact the 2022 scholarship winners to see how they are progressing.</p>	<p>Scholarships were awarded for 2022.</p>

Climate Action	Foster engagement in the City of Saint Paul Climate Action Plan	Two NSVC members commented that we did not do anything about Climate Action. (From the January, 2024, Minutes.)
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Support Union Park Gardens	NSVC members commented that this an inappropriate activity for the NSVC. The UPDC Board handles relations with the gardens. (From the January Minutes.)	For 2023, NSVC did not do anything to engage with Union Park Gardens.
Micro-grant Program	Continue to administer the program to provide small grants for neighborhood projects.	Three Micro-Grants that were approved and were sent to the Union Park District Council Board of Directors. (From the June Minutes.)

The NSVC Committee Goal

The 2023 Work Plan had a statement for the committee's goal:

“Use a community engagement process to make improvements in current and potential future parks and recreation spaces.”

This was the goal for the Environment & Parks Committee, the committee that became the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC). In February, 2023, we discussed revising the mission statement, however, we kept the same committee goal.

The NSVC Work Plan for 2024

Each of the Union Park District Council Committees needs a separate Work Plan. We have to get started soon on the 2024 Workplan. The 2024 Workplan should state what the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee plans to do in 2024 and how we will do it.

We discussed a few ideas to include in the 2024 Workplan.

Ellen Fee said that she will assemble the ideas and edit them to make a tentative 2024 Work Plan. We can discuss the 2024 Work Plan at the February NSVC meeting.

Some Ideas for the 2024 NSVC Work Plan

Below are notes from the minutes of recent meetings.

Activity	Comments on the Activity
Monthly meetings	Organize some in-person meetings or hybrid meetings of the NSVC in 2024
Cell Tower Fund	Improve our methods for distributing money from the Cell Tower Fund.
Fighting Climate Change	Set a goal for some meaningful reduction of greenhouse gases.
“Air Defenses” for the No-Mow Area of Merriam Park	A plan to stop seeds that fall from mature trees in the spring. A plan to stop “weed trees.”
Midway Peace Park	Develop new funding sources for the park. Develop new funding sources for Midway Peace Park Fall Fun Event.
Advocate for Iris Park	Contact the two nursing homes that are near the park. See if the care home managers will support a project.

<p>Improve the children’s play equipment at Merriam Park.</p>	<p>We can lobby the Parks & Recreation Department to place Merriam Park at a higher position on the priority list of parks waiting for new equipment.</p>
<p>Renovate the Merriam Park Recreation Center building.</p>	<p>We can lobby Parks & Rec to improve the building to meet current standards</p>
<p>Advocate for improvements to Merriam Park.</p>	<p>See if people close to the park are interested in setting up a “Merriam Park Improvement Association.”</p> <p>Organize a community forum with a guided tour of Merriam Park. Demonstrate that parts are in rough shape</p>
<p>An activity to support renters</p>	<p>A majority of Saint Paul households are renter households.</p>
<p>Boulevard Gardens</p>	<p>Determine City of Saint Paul rules for citizens to plant gardens. Disseminate information about the rules. Friends of Midway Peace Park might become involved.</p>

<p>Establish and reinforce the “Union Park Brand.”</p>	<p>The idea is to find some way to tell people when they are in Union Park territory. Also, educate people about what makes the Union Park are distinctive.</p>
<p>Neighborhood engagement on community care of boulevard trees.</p>	<p>The 2023 Legislature passed legislation for community forestry grants. See the Department of Natural Resources website.</p>
<p>Organize community forums</p>	<p>The Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee (NSVC) worked to encourage attendance. Leah said that NSVC learned lessons on how to promote attendance at this type of meeting.</p>

Adjourn

We adjourned at 8:31 p.m.