

UNION PARK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Board of Directors meeting

Wednesday, September 6, 2023, 7–9 p.m. | Via Zoom

Board President Sarah Dvorak | Minutes taken by Amy Gage

Members present: Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, Dean Cummings, Sarah Dvorak, Ellen Fee, Kirsten Fryer, Amy Gage, Joe Hughes, April King, Henry Parker, Allen Saunders, Demetrius Shaw, Kent Treichel, Claire Warren; plus Transportation Committee member James Johnson and co-chair Lisa Nelson

Members absent: Jerome Benner (excused), Bruce Corrie, Dan Elenbaas, Lisa Mueller | Open seats: Grids 1, 2, 6

Guests: Mike Hahm, United Village project; Jane McClure, *My Villager*; Beth Varro

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 7:06 p.m. She reminded board members of the Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam event on Saturday, September 16. Henry Parker/Allen Saunders moved to approve the agenda for the September board meeting and the August minutes. *Motion passed.*

Agenda #2: Open Forum

Allen asked whether people were aware of infrastructure plans for electric vehicles in Minnesota. He's heard a charging station is being planned at I-94 and Cretin/Vandalia. The RFPs are through MnDOT, he said.

Agenda #3: United Village Update

Mike Hahm, a project advisor to the project, is the former director of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. He wants to cover three things:

- 1) Offer his apologies and ask for grace. He inadvertently missed a CLUED meeting.
- 2) Litter abatement and trash on the Allianz superblock.
- 3) Further discuss temporary parking at the surface parking lot at this phase.

Amy asked if he would also speak about the Parkland Dedication Ordinance relative to the project. The City of Saint Paul has an ordinance that requires developers to dedicate land to parks and, in absence of that, to put in resources for the future for parkland to meet growing density. It's relatively new in St. Paul (about 15 years). The projects at the former Ford site and the Hillcrest Golf Course also had parkland dedication requirements.

- <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/parkland-dedication-ordinance>
- Ordinance requires developers to set aside up to 9% of “total, developable” land for parks and open space. Mike said he’ll ignore the percentage of money, because the city typically would require land for a project of this size.
- Great Lawn was developed as a privately owned public space to satisfy future platting required on the site. In Block G, the project also will set aside land.
- Mike said the intention is to have the land fully accessible to the public, even during a soccer match. Permits, roadway access: Those details would be set forth in the agreement that the Parks and Rec Commission and City Council will ultimately approve. The commission is scheduled to do that on Thursday, October 12.
- Allen asked if the parkland would be fenced. Mike said the intention of fencing the play area would be typical of a municipal park — for example, to help keep kids safe.

Trash: A Dumpster is on the site that can be used for cleanup. The general manager has contracted to have the site cleaned up. That staff will do that on a two-week rotation.

- The service providers, late last week, cleaned the portion of the superblock that was “exclusive” of the stadium site and inside the fence line. Justin Borrell, general manager, hired them. Jim noted that no public trash cans are at the corner or nearby.

Parking: Mike is not certain where EVs are in parking plans. Amy said she assumes that EV parking and charging stations would adhere to the city’s climate goals. CLUED has asked questions about minimum parking goals; some parking, said Mike, “will be required for the project to be successful,” even with the great mass transit. About 90 spaces fit on one acre of land, and that doesn’t speak to stormwater requirements.

- This land is valued at \$3 million to \$5 million per acre. And there are 17 home games for Minnesota United. Economics require “full utilization of that space,” and surface parking doesn’t meet those goals.
- Temporary parking likely will be softscape rather than asphalt between the sculpture area and the proposed hotel. Most of the other parking would be asphalt until structured parking is established. April is concerned that temporary parking doesn’t become permanent, given the number of impervious surfaces. Mike said such parking is “low revenue,” and the parking likely won’t remain.
- Lisa lives near there and said, aside from game days, a lot of parking isn’t needed. Mike said tenants and businesses like a restaurant would need parking. Yes, he said, the requirements are more from investors than the city.

Misconceptions that Mike wants to clear up: This is not temporary parking to serve the city. The need for parking would be to serve hotel guests and retail/restaurants. The financial groups willing to invest in the Midway now are applying a “social” and “urban investment” lens on top of the financial lens. “I do understand the tension and the questions,” he said; but at this stage, some measure of parking is essential in addition to the “great transit.”

Agenda #4: Committee Reports and Updates

Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chair Dean Cummings has two requests for action. One, CLUED will write a letter opposing a five-year extension of the existing parking permits at several sites. The committee argued that they've had a long time to develop those sites, have ignored garbage pickup till now, and the committee wanted to send a message.

- Yes, opposition to the parking could put the development project at risk, said Dean, based on his recent meeting with Mike Hahm. Henry would hesitate to oppose the parking permit if it risks the development.
- Scott said the vote was not to oppose parking and scuttle the development. Lisa countered that she doesn't want UPDC to go on record as approving more parking; she lives near there and says the parking is used only on game days. Those surfaces "gather heat" and contribute to climate change.
- Mike Hahm rejoined the meeting and said financing likely would fold without parking.

Action: Henry/Amy moved to reiterate Union Park's position from 2019 and in 2023 that this site not be parking into perpetuity and that trash get cleaned up, but we would take no position on this parking permit; instead, we would restate our concerns. *Motion carried with two nays.*

Saint George Orthodox Church at Summit and Lexington wants a variance for its setbacks. CLUED voted unanimously to

- *Action:* Henry/Allen moved to support the motion from CLUED. *Motion carried.*

Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee (NSVC): Co-chair Ellen Fee said the committee had a special meeting to discuss the Ice Cream fundraiser event.

Transportation: Co-chair April King said two interesting speakers came to speak about snowplowing and one-sided parking. On September 26 will be a walk along I-94 that meets at Lake Monster at 6 p.m. And the upcoming meeting will feature a MnDOT representative speaking about I-94.

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee: WSNAC representative Henry Parker had no update. WSNAC will next meet on Tuesday, September 12.

Agenda #6: Staff Report

Executive Director Leah Timberlake Sullivan described the 1% Sales Tax Forum that Union Park has organized with the League of Women Voters on Monday, September 18 at 6:30 p.m. The event is a webinar, and Leah asked all board members to share information.

- If we want Midway Peace Park to continue, we may need to find more funding.
- She's excited about the sponsorships for Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.