

UPDC
Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality
Committee Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2023

Chair: Ellen Fee

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

Guest: Lisa Nelson, Co-Chair UPDC Transportation Committee; Claire Warren, Treasurer for UPDC Board

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.

Correction to March, 2023, Minutes

The March Minutes had a table on “Community Events and Their Costs for 2022.” The chart stated that the Desnoyer Park Fire & Ice Winter Event cost \$4,000.

David Tierney said that the actual cost was \$600. That was the amount provided from the Cell Tower Fund.

Jerry Clendenin said that he will change the Minutes. The corrected Minutes will be posted to the Union Park District Council website.

A Visit from the Co-chair of the UPDC Transportation Committee

Lisa Nelson is Co-chair of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) Transportation Committee. The Transportation Committee meets on the second Monday of the month.

She discussed some activities and events sponsored by the Transportation Committee. She said that many Transportation Committee projects overlap with the projects and interests of the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC).

Clean-Up Projects

The Transportation Committee organizes clean-up projects. The goal for these projects is to pick up trash and litter.

- The Committee plans an Earth Day Clean up event for April 22.
- The Committee organizes a monthly clean up event for University Avenue. They are usually held on Saturdays, weather permitting.

Lisa showed some pictures of chronic trash and litter problems near Snelling Avenue and other areas.

Pedestrian Projects

The Transportation Committee works on projects to improve pedestrian safety. The goal is to have more walkable neighborhoods.

- They are working on the area of Allianz Field. The Committee is trying to get elected officials to improve infrastructure for pedestrian safety. They have also made contact with police officials.
- The Committee is working on Wabash Street. There is no sidewalk on the street that is close to the Metro Transit garage. The Committee is lobbying for a sidewalk for the street that is near to Cleveland Avenue and I-94.
- They are working on plans for safer routes for children that walk to school.

The Transportation Committee has a program to assist people who want to organize block parties.

- People organizing a block party may want to close a street. The Committee provides assistance on how to work with the City of Saint Paul to get permission to block a street.
- The Committee can help block party organizers to set up the Ready Go Program. Ready Go brings art activities to block parties.

Bicycle Projects

The Transportation Committee promotes bicycle riding. The Transportation Committee organizes “Slow Roll” events for bicycle riders.

The Committee has an ongoing project to get more racks for securing bicycles placed around town. They are working on getting more bike racks installed at City of Saint Paul parks.

The Committee is interested in bike racks with decorative designs. They are behind the bicycle racks that have the words “Union Park” as part of the design.

Lisa displayed some slides with pictures of bike racks with different artistic designs. The Transportation Committee is interested in art related to transportation.

Kirsten Fryer said she would like to see more Union Park bike racks. She is also a big fan of using art as a way to build up the community.

Jenny Keyser encouraged Lisa Nelson to promote the Micro-Grant program with Transportation Committee members. Micro-Grants might be used for transportation related projects. A deadline for applications is coming soon.

Ellen Fee said that she is open to have Lisa Nelson or someone from the Transportation Committee attend the NSVC meeting of May 16 or June 20.

Update on Star Grant to Fund Replacement Trees for Midway Peace Park

Jenny Keyser reported on the project to remove dead trees and plant new trees for Midway Peace Park. New trees were planted in the park when it opened. However, many of the trees died in the drought of 2022.

There is no water service to the park. We still do not have a practical way for volunteers to water the trees. However, Parks & Recreation Department officials are thinking about ways to improve the water situation.

In late March, some Union Park District Council (UPDC) members and other supporters of Midway Peace Park met with Parks & Rec officials. Jenny Keyser said that the Parks &

Rec people are working to get a water line installed to bring water to the park. She said that they are also thinking about a broader plan for water. Parks & Rec people are thinking about putting in drip lines. These are small plastic tubes to bring water to each tree.

If Parks & Rec installs drip lines, the supporters of Midway Peace Park will have to change our plan for volunteer activities. Jenny said the volunteers will not have to carry a container of water to each tree. However, they may have to monitor and adjust the drip lines. Also, we may have to augment water from the drip lines if there is another drought.

The water catchment is still there. It is to control water after heavy rains.

The STAR Grant

Besides water, supporters of Midway Peace Park are working on getting funds. We need money to pay for removing the dead trees and purchasing new trees.

A member of the Saint Paul City Council, Russel Balenger, suggested that we apply for a STAR grant to cover the expenses for new trees. STAR stands for Sales Tax Revitalization. The STAR grant program provides funds for neighborhood improvement projects, including landscape projects.

Jenny Keyser said that we applied for a grant by the deadline of April 21. The Neighborhood STAR Board reviews applications and makes awards. The Board has 21 members from all parts of Saint Paul. The grant request is for \$25,000.

In order to get the STAR grant, we need to provide matching funds from other sources. Jenny described three likely sources of funds:

- 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.)

If all three sources work out, we will have a total of \$10,500 in funds to match the STAR grant. However, Council Member Russel Balenger said that we do not necessarily have to provide a 100% match.

Letters of Support

Jenny said that we have received four letters of support for the Midway Peace Park tree project:

- A letter from Common Bond Communities, the owners of Skyline Tower.
- A letter from Trust for Public Land.
- A letter from Friends of the Trails & Parks of St. Paul and Ramsey County
- A letter from Saint Paul Parks Conservancy.

Jenny Keyser and others are encouraging people with an interest in Midway Peace Park to sign up for a short course on tree stewardship. There is a course offered by the University of Minnesota Extension Service. The course takes three to ten hours. The cost is about \$25.00.

Merriam Park Signage Project

Leah Timberlake Sullivan recapped what we have done on the project to create a sign for the Merriam Park No-Mow Area.

- We determined that the name “No-Mow” should have a hyphen.
- We reviewed the statement for the sign written by Barb Deming. Her sign copy is in an attachment to these minutes.
- We considered adding some statements to Barb Deming’s copy, but we decided not to add any additional material.

The NSVC Minutes show that we discussed the above items in March.

After the February NSVC meeting, Leah sent an e-mail about the sign project to Andy Rodriguez.

Leah said that Andy Rodriguez replied. In his e-mail, he said that Parks & Recreation can build a sign for the No-Mow Area. Leah said that Andy requested that we provide the following details:

1. A proposed text
2. A rendering of the sign
3. A proposed size
4. A suggested location

After the NSVC people decide on these details, Parks & Rec employees can go ahead and make a proposed rendering.

Leah said that she will contact Andy Rodriguez and discuss how to progress with the sign.

As for the above Item 1, the proposed text, she can show Andy the attachment to these minutes that has the text for the sign written by Barb Deming. She can also show Andy the March NSVC meeting minutes. The minutes state:

We reviewed language for the sign as written by Barb Deming. Some committee members suggested adding more details to the sign. By consensus, we decided not to add language.

The above Item 2 is asking for a rendering of the sign. The NSVC minutes do not have any discussion about a design for the sign and supports for the sign.

The above Item 3 is asking for a proposed size for the sign. The NSVC minutes do not show any discussion about size for the sign. However, Jerry Clendenin tried an experiment. He displayed Barb Deming's text with Microsoft Word. He changed the computer controls to show the text at 200% size. He could read the text at about 8 feet from the computer.

Jerry said that the size of type displayed in the experiment may work for the No-Mow sign. He suggests that the sign could be 14 inches wide and 9 inches deep.

Item 4 above asks about a location for the sign. The minutes from the March NSVC meeting suggest a likely place for the sign.

Everyone at the meeting liked the idea of placing the sign at the bottom of the hill and just to the west of the wooden steps.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that she will meet with Andy Rodriguez. She will ask him about the options for sign construction. They will discuss materials and other details. He has offered to provide a rendering of a proposed sign design.

Leah said that she has an optimistic feeling that the sign project will get done.

Cell Tower Fund Applications

Applications were submitted to fund four events with Merriam Park Cell Tower Funds.

Jerry Clendenin determined scores for each of the events by using the Cell Tower Fund-Scorecard.

Evaluation of Events Determined with the Cell Tower Fund-Scorecard

Desnoyer Park Summer Picnic	70 Points
Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam Festival	70 Points
Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social	50 Points
Desnoyer Park Fire & Ice Winter Skating Party	70 Points

The Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social got the lowest score. However, Jerry said that he believes the Midway Peace Park event is well worth funding. The other three events got higher scores because the scorecard automatically gives extra points for events held at Merriam Park or Desnoyer Park.

Desnoyer Park Summer Picnic-2023

For the Desnoyer Summer Picnic, Kirsten Fryer moved to approve funding of \$3,000. Jenny Keyser seconded the motion.

David Tierney said that in most years, the actual cost exceeds \$3,000. However, when the cost goes over budget, some Desnoyer Park residents make up the difference. He said that approximately 300 to 350 people attended in 2022.

The Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee (NSVC) approved the \$3,000 motion by unanimous vote.

Ice Cream Peanut Butter and Jam Festival

For Ice Cream Peanut Butter and Jam, Jenny Keyser moved to approve funding of \$4,000. Ellen Fee seconded the motion.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan brought up possible changes to the ICPB&J event. She did a small-scale survey of what people want. The activity to create a mural was not popular. The mural project cost about \$400. She suggested that we consider dropping the mural painting activity.

We discussed possible dates for the ICPB&J.

Jenny Keyser suggested that we set a tentative date of the third Saturday of September. Kirsten Fryer noted that whatever date we set, we will conflict with some other community event such as the Church of the Nativity Fair.

The Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee approved the \$4,000 motion by unanimous vote.

Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social

Leah said the actual cost for the 2022 event was \$3,500.

She expects a bigger turn out for the 2023 event.

Leah said that the Midway Peace Park event is not a good program for raising money. However, we did discuss some possible donations from nearby organizations.

For the Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social, Kirsten Fryer moved to approve funding of \$3,500. Jenny Keyser seconded the motion.

The Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee approved the \$3,500 motion by unanimous vote.

Desnoyer Park Fire & Ice Winter Skating Party

David Tierney said that the Desnoyer Winter Party is “zero funded” by the City of Saint Paul.

Leah said that she was impressed by the great volunteers who maintain the skating rink ice.

For the Desnoyer Winter Party Jenny Keyser moved to approve funding of \$600. Kirsten Fryer seconded the motion.

The Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee approved the \$600 motion by unanimous vote.

Review by UPDC Board

Now that the NSVC has approved the four funding applications, all four must now be reviewed by the Union Park District Council Board of Directors. If they approve, the four projects will receive a total of \$11,100.

2023 Micro-Grant Program

Ellen Fee summarized the progress on the Micro-Grant project:

- Updated guidelines for Micro-Grants are posted on the Union Park District Council (UPDC) website.
- Ellen has created a flyer to encourage people to apply for Micro-Grants.
- We have a campaign on social media to promote the Micro-Grant program.

Jenny Keyser said that NSVC members can encourage people they know to apply for grants.

An electronic application form is posted on the UPDC website.

Leah will contact the staff at Common Bond to encourage Skyline Towers residents to apply.

Ellen said that we will review Micro-Grant applications at the May meeting.

Adjourn

We adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

An attachment to the minutes is on the next page.

Suggest Text for a No-Mow Sign

No-Mow Grass Area

Volunteers maintain this area of naturally growing tall grass and oak trees. The grass is a blend of cool-season fescue grasses that require very little water, due to a large dense root system that also serves to inhibit weed growth. Not mowing this section of the park cuts down on noise and air pollution, reduces stress on mature oak trees, and allows new oak seedlings to grow naturally.

To volunteer, contact the Union Park District Council at <https://link to Union Park website>