

Union Park District Council

Board Meeting: minutes

July 6, 2022, 7–9 p.m., via Zoom

President Sarah Dvorak, Secretary Amy Gage

Griggs Midway Building, 1821 University Ave. W., room 330, St. Paul, MN 55104

Members present (9): Sarah Dvorak (Grid 7), presiding. Scott Berger (Grid 10), Ellen Fee (at-large), Kirsten Fryer (at-large), April King (Grid 5), Harmony Neal (Grid 9), Henry Parker (Grid 8), Claire Warren (Grid 4); plus, Bruce Corrie (Concordia University), Amy Gage (University of St. Thomas), Allen Saunders (Desnoyer Park Improvement Association), Joe Hughes (business), Kent Treichel (Lexington-Hamline Community Council)

Members absent: Dan Elenbaas (Grid 11); open seats for Grids 1, 2, 3, 6, nonprofit, Skyline Towers and Macalester College

Staff: Abdulrahman Wako, executive director; Leah Timberlake Sullivan, program manager

Guests: Dean Cummings, CLUED co-chair; Jane McClure, *My Villager* reporter

Meeting

Call to order: Sarah Dvorak called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Consent agenda: Parker/Berger moved to approve the July 2022 agenda. The June 2022 minutes will be sent via email.

Introduction of Allen Saunders: He is replacing Gregg Gridley as the Desnoyer Park representative. Saunders moved from Iowa to the St. Paul area in 1977 and worked for the public schools for 17 years, including as an elementary school principal. He lives close to a couple of his grown children and is retired.

- The Desnoyer Park picnic will be Tuesday, July 12. Everyone is welcome.

Committee Reports and Updates:

Committee on Land Use & Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chair Bruce Corrie said the last meeting focused on the research coming out of Housing Link and the median rents throughout the metro area (see the CLUED minutes for more information). \$38,000 is the median income for renters in St. Paul, and he urged UPDC to keep 30 percent AMI units on our radar. The city has a “deeply affordable” housing fund:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/housing/30-ami-deeply-affordable-housing-fund>

- 1222 University Avenue will be 15 units at that level, the city has announced. CLUED passed a resolution supporting the proposal.
- May 2022, median rents: one-bedroom in Minneapolis, \$1,025; in St. Paul, \$999
- May 2022, median rents: two-bedroom in Minneapolis, \$1,399; in St. Paul, \$1,273
- May 2022, median rents: three-bedroom in Minneapolis, \$1,635; in St. Paul, \$1,795

Minnesota Reformer:

<https://minnesotareformer.com/2022/07/05/landlords-try-to-skirt-rent-control-in-st-paul-with-new-utility-charges/>

Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee: Co-chair Ellen Fee introduced the new name of the merged Neighborhood Involvement Committee and the Environment & Parks Committee. The word *sustainability* evokes neighborhood health (thriving area, good housing) and, in its classic sense, refers to environmentalism.

- The No Mow Maintenance event will be Saturday, July 16 in Merriam Park, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. They'll borrow tools from the city and have food and coffee. "You don't have to be a gardener to help out."
- She announced two Park Improvement Fund applications that the committee approved: one for the Desnoyer Park picnic for \$3,000 and another for Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam for \$4,000. The Desnoyer Park monies will go toward food and bouncy houses for children. Corrie/Warren moved to approve the requests.
- The Little Africa Fest is on August 7, said Corrie. Vendors and a parade will be among the festivities. In 2019 more than 10,000 people attended. <http://littleafricafest.com/>
- A Midway Peace Park request was not received; it crosses several district councils. Wako is considering whether Union Park should do its own event, such as an ice cream social. The Skyline Towers board seat remains empty and this could be a recruitment event.
- **Microgrants:** Wako said the acceptance letters yielded no responses.

Transportation: Co-chair Scott Berger said the July meeting will be a walking/biking tour with a B Line representative from Metro Transit. Meet at Fairview and Marshall at 6:30 p.m.

- Saturday, July 9, a cleanup will begin at 10 a.m. in the former CVS parking lot at University and Snelling. Minnesota United has hosted cleanup events, and the committee hopes to align the events.
- A meeting with Alex Burns and the Our Streets initiative happened today. MnDOT will get back to stakeholders by August. <https://www.ourstreetsmpls.org/>
- Reconnect Rondo and Our Streets will meet on Monday, July 11; there is friction between the organizations. Corrie said it's important to be sensitive to the Rondo community. He said the project needs to serve the historic aspects of the community.
- The Yum! building, which houses the Harper apartments, had a second entry to the surface parking lot off Selby. City staff said the site plan did not allow for vehicular traffic there, which will be enforced.
- Summit Avenue Regional Trail Master Plan: Most of the information is on the website for

a proposed total redo of the site from the river to downtown. Engagement site, from the city: <https://engagestpaul.org/summit>

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council (WSNAC): UPDC representative Henry Parker said that WSNAC will meet again on Tuesday, August 9, 6:30 p.m.

Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (NUFC): The group did not meet in June and is looking at times in July to review applications. Corrie may be involved in a city-activated oversight committee about NUFC. Wako said the MOU (memorandum of understanding) is under review, which would include stipends for committee members and the Hamline-Midway and Union Park district councils.

- Union Park and the Midway don't have a philanthropic organization.

Communications Task Force: Timberlake-Sullivan has submitted a proposed final draft to the Executive Committee. She urged the board to develop orientation procedures for this and other documents, and to ensure that these are "living" documents. It will help a variety of people understand the norms of the organization and be able to participate.

Staff report: Wako complimented the interns on their help with the ninth annual Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam event on Saturday, September 17. They want to advertise throughout the community. Timberlake-Sullivan has secured two bands and two artists (including one who works with children). They're securing sponsors, including Concordia University. Wako needs the board's help to secure more organizations to table or exhibit.

- We need to secure an ice cream vendor. Nellie's is unavailable. Several mentioned Two Scoops on Selby, which is BIPOC-owned. <https://2scoopseatery.com/>
- If we don't use the Cell Tower Fund money by year's end, it goes back to the city. Wako has ordered T-shirts that showcase the geography and the seven neighborhoods of Union Park: One Community, Many Neighborhoods.
- Leah is working about 10 hours per week more than her allotted 25 hours per week; we will pay her, and Wako and Sarah hope to raise her hours permanently.
- The city contract has been ratified, which will allow Wako to put in for contract reimbursements. Wako would like to see the fiscal year end in June, going forward.
- Friends of the Mississippi River is inviting community members to learn about the locks and dams. Lisa Nelson has put together weekly block parties on Shield and Herschel, at 6 p.m.; these are Play Streets events with the street closed.
- The Lexington-Hamline Community Council will hold its 50th annual ice cream social on July 23.
- Wako will be on vacation and away from email July 20-30. Leah will step in.

Corrie/Saunders moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m.