

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2022

Chair: Ellen Fee

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Kirsten Fryer, Jenny Keyser

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

Guests: Allen Saunders from the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type minutes.

Introductions/Approval of Agenda

An agenda was sent out in advance of the meeting.

We took discussion of the No Mow plan off of the agenda. Wako requested that we take the No Mow Plan off. Wako would like to discuss the No Mow Area at the November meeting when Barb Deming should attend.

Correction to the Minutes of September 20, 2022

Jenny Keyser requested a change to the minutes from the September meeting.

The minutes had a section on “Response to the NSVC Table at the ICPB&J.” This was related to the “Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam Evaluation.”

We planned to display a map of the Union Park area at the Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee table. The idea was to provide color coded pins. The plan was to invite each guest to put in a pin that locates their own home. The map idea was intended as a way to build community engagement.

However, the wind interfered with the map. We did not have time to find a way to put up the map given the wind problem.

The map was not displayed and not used.

Jerry Clendenin said that he will take steps to correct the minutes to state that we did not display use the map.

Midway Peace Park Event Evaluation

The event that we call “Midway Peace Park Fall Fun” was held at the park on October 8, Saturday, from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

Midway Peace Park opened on June 16, 2021, so that on October 8 we also celebrated that the park had been opened for more than a year.

The weather was mild. There was no rain on October 8. The high temperature was 64 degrees F.

Some Overall Impressions of the Event

Jenny noted that there were not a lot of people attending toward the start of the event at noon. However, the number of people increased steadily as the day progressed.

We planned for an event with about 500 people. The food truck served about 500 sambusas. Therefore, the number of guests was roughly the same as the number that we expected.

The sambusas were popular. The sambusa is a pastry with a filling of vegetables or meat. The sambusa comes from Asia and Africa.

We also served apples.

The food serve went Okay. However, we ran out of hot tea.

The T shirts that we distributed were popular.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan observed that the event was a good match for the community.

A Range of People

A variety of people came. Many people came from Skyline Tower. However, people also came from the neighborhoods that are close to Skyline Tower.

In addition, 3 or 4 members of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) attended. Two former UPDC members were present.

Many children came to the event with their parents. There was a range of people from young to the elderly.

Community Engagement

A representative from the Ramsey County Elections Department attended. She encouraged people to register for voting.

The Ramsey County election lady said that the County is looking for election judges. They are especially interested in people with foreign language skills.

Three groups set up tables.

- The Saint Paul Parks & Recreation Dept
- The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee
- The UPDC Transportation Committee

Ellen invited the Union Park District Council (UPDC) Transportation Committee to have a table at the Midway Peace Park event. An item of great interest was a survey about safety and security on Green Line trains. The survey is being done by the Transportation Committee

Abdulrahman Wako noted that people appeared to be more interested in food and fun activities more than the tables.

An Opening to Skyline Tower

Jenny Keyser said that the Midway Peace Park event was an opening to build relationships with people at Skyline Tower.

UPDC members have made contact with are some key people at Skyline Tower. The Skyline people may get involved with UPDC.

One is a staff member at Common Bond. He came to the Midway Peace Park Fall Fun event. He wanted to see what was going on. He expressed an interest in becoming involved with the UPDC.

Another important contact is the president of a club of students at Concordia University.

Jenny Keyser said that we can invite a cultural group from Skyline Tower to put on a display or demonstration at the 2023 Midway Peace Park event.

We are engaging with groups at Skyline Tower. Jenny Keyser said that there are several groups with different interests.

Residents of Skyline Tower expressed thanks to Wako. They said that Midway Peace Park Fall Fun was an event where Union Park District Council paid attention to people at Skyline Tower. The Skyline people said that they were often ignored by government officials and others.

Several mothers expressed thanks to Leah Timberlake Sullivan.

Funding the Event

The funds for the Midway Peace Park Fall Fun event came from the Merriam Park Cell Tower Fund. The Union Park District Council approved funds of \$3,000. The spending plan includes \$500 for inflatables and \$1,500 for food costs. The plan was to spend \$300 on promotional materials. After reimbursing all vendors, we will determine the actual amount spent.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan noted that the funding for the Midway Peace Park event was different than the funding for Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam (ICPB&J). The ICPB&J was a much bigger event. Also, ICPB&J gets revenue from sponsors and other sources. The ICPB&J generates income that offsets some expenses.

The Midway event did not have a revenue component. Leah said that if we have more funding and if we put on a bigger event at Midway Peace Park in 2023, we will change the nature of the event.

Some Practical Matters

Wako said that we had to arrange several details to make the Midway Event a success.

Leah arranged for some portable bathrooms. She also arranged for insurance coverage which is required by the City of Saint Paul. We had to apply for a permit from the Parks & Recreation Department.

Activities

Wako observed that people had fun at the Midway Peace Park event.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan thought that the activities at the event were appropriate.

We had a project for children to do art projects. We arranged for 75 canvases to be painted. The kids used all of the 75 canvases.

We had “bouncy houses” and other inflatables for kids. The inflatables are like huge rubber balloons with fantastic designs. The inflatables are big, they are colorful, and they are filled with air so that kids can bounce on them.

Four volunteers from Skyline Tower worked with the inflatables. They were 16 and 17 years old. They monitored the small children for safety.

We needed one volunteer at each inflatable. Each inflatable has a fan that pumps in air to hold up the balloon. Often kids will pull the plug attached to the fan. They want to see if the inflatable will collapse. We need a monitor to prevent the kids from deflating the inflatable.

We had signs that tell the kids to remove their shoes before they get on an inflatable. Removing shoes protects the inflatable rubber from damage. The volunteers encouraged the kids to remove shoes.

The inflatable rental company did not send a staff person.

Ideas for the 2023 Midway Peace Park Event

Wako said that it will be easier to plan the 2023 event if we start earlier in the year.

Skyline Tower is managed by the non-profit called Common Bond. There are staff members at Common Bond who might help with planning.

For the 2023 event, we discussed the idea of setting a date that is related to a Muslim holiday

We discussed the idea of printing material in different languages. However, Leah said that Common Bond staff advised that the idea is not preferable because there are many languages at Skyline.

Leah said that we could have used more volunteers. She suggested that we immediately start looking for volunteers for the 2023 Midway Peace Park event.

For the 2022 Midway Peace Park Fall Fun we had problems providing water. For the 2023 event we need to plan out a better way to provide water.

Reporting to the UPDC Board

Wako said that we need to describe the Midway Peace Park Fall Fun event in the 2022 work plan for the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee.

We can also display a Power Point presentation about the Midway Peace Park event at the UPDC Social Event.

No Mow Plan

As stated above under Approval of Agenda, discussion of the No Mow Plan will be delayed until the November meeting.

However, Jerry Clendenin said that the No Mow Area looks better following work by volunteers in the summer.

Jenny Keyser also noted that the No Mow Area looks better because many Ragweed plants have been removed from the area near Merriam Lane.

Midway Peace Park Tree Project

Jenny Keyser led a discussion about trees at Midway Peace Park.

After several years of planning and construction, Midway Peace Park opened in June of 2021. The park was intended to provide green space and add to the tree canopy in a low-income urban area.

The problem of dying trees

The design of the park called for planting 73 trees. However, fewer than 73 were planted.

Park & Recreation officials say that 50 trees were planted. Out of the trees planted, 33 have died. The trees were planted before drought of 2022. The trees died during the drought because of lack of water.

None of the trees had a water bag. The park does not have a source of water for the trees.

Cost of Fixing the Problem

Jenny is thinking about how to replace trees that have died.

Jenny described the cost for fixing the problem. The estimated cost to remove a dead tree is \$300.00. The estimated cost to plant a replacement tree is \$360.00.

We have a total cost estimate of \$23,000 to replace 33 trees that have died plus plant 3 additional trees.

We are not sure if the City of Saint Paul can afford to replace the trees. We discussed the feasibility of Union Park District Council providing funds to replace five trees.

Possible solutions

The trees need water. However, the park infrastructure is designed so that water from rain will flow away from the park.

We discussed some ideas of how to get water to the trees. One idea was a hose from the building owned by Concordia University of Saint Paul. None of the ideas discussed appeared to be workable.

We discussed possible volunteer groups who may be interested in planting replacement trees. Union Park District Council is one group. Other groups are connected with local churches. Friends of Midway Peace Park is aware of problem.

We discussed lobbying the Department of Parks & Recreation to plant new trees.

Jenny said that she would like to get a Parks & Recreation official to attend a meeting of the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee.

We decided that winter a good time to work on a plan to help the trees. We can lobby the City of Saint Paul. We can also make connections with interested volunteer groups.

Cell Tower Funds Request

Allen Saunders appeared at the meeting. He represented the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association.

He talked about the Desnoyer Park ice rink. The ice rink is the main focus for winter activities in the Desnoyer Park neighborhood.

Volunteers maintain and groom the ice surface. They work with a Zamboni machine. Unfortunately, the Zamboni is wearing out.

The Desnoyer Park Association would like to purchase a new ice sweeping machine. They estimate that the machine will cost \$4,600. They are requesting \$4,600 from the Cell Tower Fund to purchase the machine.

They would like to get a new machine before the Desnoyer Park Ice Rink & Winter Skating Party on December 30.

Ellen Fee said that the Merriam Park Cell Tower fund provides \$7,000 per year. For the year 2022, we have approved payments of \$11,000. Therefore, we have enough funds to cover the Desnoyer Park ice machine request.

Abdulrahman Wako pointed out that the Cell Tower Funds are provided on a reimbursement basis. For this type of purchase, the Desnoyer Park Association or some Association member will have to buy the machine, then provide a receipt. After getting the receipt, the Cell Tower funds will be released.

Allen said that if the machine costs more than \$4,600, the Desnoyer Park Association will pay the extra cost.

Allen Saunders said that they expect the new machine will last 10 to 15 years. He also said that the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association will pay the costs for maintenance of the machine.

Jerry Clendenin asked about storing the machine. Allen Saunders said that the City of Saint Paul will store the machine when it is not in use.

Jenny Keyser asked if the machine could be used at other parks besides Desnoyer Park. Allen said that the machine will be used every day at Desnoyer Park. It will be difficult for volunteer workers to use it at Desnoyer and then move the machine to another park.

Jerry Clendenin asked about how the new machine will be powered. Allen Saunders said that the machine that they want runs on gasoline.

Jerry Clendenin pointed to the climate change crisis. He wanted to know if there was another way to take care of ice that did not require burning a fossil fuel.

Allen Saunders said that the gasoline powered machine was the only practical solution.

Ellen Fee made a motion to provide \$4,600. Jenny Keyser seconded the motion.

Jerry Clendenin voted 'no'. However, the motion passed.

The UPDC Board of Directors must approve the ice machine funds. They need to take it up at the November 2 meeting so that the funds are available for December.

Motion to Adjourn

We adjourned at 8:30 p.m.