

Union Park District Council

Board Meeting: minutes

January 5, 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 (12): Sarah Dvorak (Grid 7) presiding. Scott Berger (Grid 10), Ellen Fee (at-large), Kirsten Fryer (at-large), Joe Hughes (business), April King (Grid 5), Harmony Neal (Grid 9), Henry Parker (Grid 8), Claire Warren (Grid 4); plus Amy Gage (University of St. Thomas), Gregg Gridley (Desnoyer Park Improvement Association), Kent Treichel (Lexington-Hamline Community Council)

Members Absent: Jack Acomb (Macalester College), Bruce Corrie (Concordia University), Dan Elenbaas (Grid 11)

Staff: Abdulrahman Wako, executive director; Leah Timberlake Sullivan, program manager; Jonah Wexler, intern (Macalester College)

Guests: Jerry Clendenin, neighbor; Dean Cummings, CLUED co-chair; Jane McClure, *My Villager*; Anna Morgan, Gusgus (former Stewart's); John Occhiato, Kalsava (former Augustine's)

Meeting

Call to order and welcome: Sarah Dvorak called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Prospective board member: Maurice Jones introduced himself as a prospective board member for Grid 8, which Henry Parker currently represents; he recently moved to this area and wants to get involved. mauricejonesea@gmail.com

Consent Agenda: Parker/Gridley moved to approve the December 2021 minutes and the January 2022 agenda.

Board retreat: February 19 is the date from 10:30 a.m. to noon via Zoom. A proposed board gathering at Yum! at Selby and Snelling will be postponed until we see where the Omicron variant goes. Some said they would enjoy an outdoor bonfire.

Ordinance: Gridley asked the board to review the City Council's proposed changes to the ordinance enacting Chapter 366B of the city legislative code requiring permits for special events. He said the city gets complaints about blocked streets, and the police want advance notice of seven days. Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2 member, introduced the proposal. Ward 4 City Councilmember Mitra Jalali is opposed to this, as is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and community organizations. Public input is not allowed at this time, and Noecker's office said

they'd already sent out information to the District Councils. Wako said he saw information last spring, though the board never discussed it. Several board members spoke against the proposal, one calling it "fascist." Noecker has a Facebook post seeking feedback:

<https://www.facebook.com/ward2saintpaul/posts/285115120319753>

Action: Parker/Fee moved to send the letter to the city. 10 ayes, one abstention (Hughes)

Committee news: Open board seats include Grids 1, 2, 3, 6, nonprofit and Skyline Towers. The Macalester seat may also be open. <https://www.unionparkdc.org/board>

- Fee asked to hold off on discussion of whether to combine the Neighborhood Involvement and Environment & Parks committees till she can speak with NIC members.

Committee reports and updates

Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED), Dean Cummings, co-chair:

- Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul updated the committee on the Religious Uses Zoning Study, which will have a City Council hearing on January 12.
- CLUED also discussed the city's 1- to 4-unit housing study; a webinar is available on the city website:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/planning/current-activities/1-4-unit-housing-study>

Matt Privratsky, who was Councilmember Jalali's legislative aide for several years, recently published an article in streets.mn in favor of the proposal:

<https://streets.mn/2022/01/04/st-paul-to-consider-allowing-adus-tinyhomes/>

- The 1708 Selby project by developer Jon Schwartzman, owner of the Marshall-Moore student housing complex and a new complex on Marshall east of Finn, is causing neighborhood concern, said Cummings. He bought two lots zoned RM2 (5 stories) and a third lot not zoned to go that high, but the city has granted a variance.
- Anna Morgan and her husband, Kevin Manley, will open a new restaurant, Gusgus, in the former Stewart's space and are seeking a waiver on the 45-day waiting period for a liquor license. They want to keep the "cozy, upscale" feel that Stewart's had and, by request, will keep the burger on the menu. The current staff is staying.

Action: Parker/Neal moved to endorse the 45-day waiver for a liquor license. Ayes, 12

- John Occhiato will take over the Augustine's space at 1668 Selby. His group owns Café Astoria on Grand and Stella Belle on West Seventh. From 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., the space will operate "as a sort of Astoria West," with coffee and crepes; the evening will feature modern Filipino food. Occhiato is seeking a 45-day waiver on the liquor license for Kalsava, the new restaurant name. His other restaurants are child- and dog-friendly. They hope to open by March 1. Hughes owns the building that houses the restaurant.

Action: King/Warren moved to approve the waiver. 10 ayes, 1 abstention (Hughes)

Environment & Parks: The committee lost its chair and co-chair this year and is seeking to revitalize. It did not discuss the possibility of combining forces with the Neighborhood Involvement Committee.

Transportation Committee, Scott Berger, co-chair: The Yum parking entrance on Selby does not appear to have been part of the original plans. Co-chair Lisa Nelson discussed Snow Emergency “super stars,” a way to spread the word about snow emergencies.
<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/serve-saint-paul/neighbors-helping-neighbors/volunteers>

The committee also discussed collaborating with Midway Chamber of Commerce to clean up University Avenue near Allianz Field. Selby/Saratoga: neighbors of Berger’s who also use Primrose Daycare on Dayton east of Snelling spoke about the danger of this intersection.

Neighborhood Involvement Committee, Ellen Fee, co-chair: NIC didn’t meet in December.

WSNAC: Parker is the new Union Park District Council representative for the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council, which next meets on February 8, 2022.

Neighbors United Funding Collaborative: Dvorak has invited King to be the NUFC board representative. Wako is on the advisory committee but has no voting rights. He asked board members to get him ideas for businesses that may be eligible for grants in the Midway. The fund is not only for BIPOC businesses. <https://midwayunited.org/apply-now/>

Communications plan: Gage and Timberlake Sullivan are organizing a task force to review the 7-year-old plan, which is 12 pages long. Fee and Neal offered to serve on that group, which will hold its first meeting on January 26.

Equity Development Scorecard: The task force will be absorbed into CLUED. Wako, Dvorak and Cummings will reword the survey and get it out again; the previous one got little response.

Staff Report: Wako has applied to Macalester for the annual student intern program. He’ll be completing final reports for recycling activities and for the Midway Peace Park grant.

- Timberlake Sullivan wants to “brand” Union Park and help neighbors understand what the district council is. Gridley said there once was talk of renaming an area park Union Park or putting “Part of Union Park” on current park signage.
- Wako will ask at the next District Council staff meeting whether the city still has funds for bike racks or other “placemaker” funds?
- In March, UPDC will set up a table at Skyline Towers, have some giveaways and refreshments, and invite people to join the council. This is Hughes’ idea.

Adjourn: Gridley/Treichel moved to adjourn at 8:58 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 2, 2022 | 7–9 p.m. | ZOOM