

Union Park District Council

Board Meeting: minutes

February 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. Dan Elenbaas (Grid 11), Ellen Fee (at-large), Kirsten Fryer (at-large), Joe Hughes (business), April King (Grid 5), Harmony Neal (Grid 9), Claire Warren (Grid 4); plus, Bruce Corrie (Concordia University), Amy Gage (University of St. Thomas), Gregg Gridley (Desnoyer Park Improvement Association), Kent Treichel (Lexington-Hamline Community Council)

Members absent: Scott Berger (Grid 10), Henry Parker (Grid 8)

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

Guests: Dean Cummings, CLUED; Elliot Frayne, Kristina Kliber, neighbors; Noelle Jacquet-Morrison, WSNAC; Jane McClure, *My Villager*; Amy McDonough, UST

Meeting

Call to Order and Welcome: Sarah Dvorak called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Consent Agenda: Claire Warren/Gregg Gridley moved to approve the February agenda and the January board minutes. Unanimous approval.

February Retreat Update: The board retreat will be February 19 from 10:30 a.m. to noon, via Zoom. Claire will have an ice breaker and a treasurer's report. Ward 4 City Councilmember Mitra Jalali will speak about the council's climate emergency initiative, and the board will discuss how UPDC can work climate emergency initiatives into our work. Ellen Fee will lead a discussion on the district council's mission and brand. Amy Gage will do a closing circle.

- <https://www.startribune.com/st-paul-city-council-poised-to-declare-climate-emergency/600135632/>

Committee News: NIC and Environment & Parks may decide to combine. NIC is in favor, and Environment & Parks is discussing via email. E&P has had low attendance and may operate as a subcommittee of NIC to help ensure that its issues get attention, especially in light of the city's declared climate emergency.

Committee Reports and Updates:

Committee on Land Use & Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chair Bruce Corrie reported that the Saint John's Vianney project on the University of St. Thomas campus will keep neighbors informed of construction issues. / CLUED has a letter of support for an affordable housing project at 1222 University Avenue with 15 units renting at 30 percent of Area Median Income (AMI) for the county and the rest at 60 percent. Corrie praised a sister project that was "culturally smart," built with large pantries, for example, for extended families. One-bedroom units would rent for \$500; 30% AMI was \$562/month and 60% was \$1,125. These figures are from 2019. 2BR \$708 at 30% and \$1,417 at 60%. The building once housed a casket company.

- *Action: Gridley moved to approve. Unanimous. 7 ayes*

346 Cleveland: This unregistered student rental is renting to five undergraduate college students in violation of the Student Housing Overlay District. The committee has a resolution opposing the variance. The seven-point letter said the Overlay helps "student residents to integrate into the neighborhood," but some discussion ensued about describing how the company, Millennium Management, also tends to "overwhelm" college neighborhoods. CLUED co-chair Dean Cummings suggested that point 6 be modified to read: "We are concerned this management company will inundate the University of St. Thomas campus neighborhood with student rentals. For example, we've seen this happen in the Hamline campus area."

- **Millennium Management:**
<https://www.twincities.com/2021/08/08/minneapolis-landlord-scooping-up-st-pauls-hewitt-avenue-homes-for-student-rentals/>
- *Action: Harmony moved to approve, with the Cummings-authored friendly amendment. Motion passe, 10 ayes, 1 abstention (Gage, because the matter relates to a landlord who rents to St. Thomas students).*

Environment & Parks: The committee has discussed hosting events in the park, especially with organizations related to climate change. E&P has \$17,000 every year for cell tower funds.

<https://www.unionparkdc.org/projects/park-improvement-fund>

Transportation: No report. Co-chair Scott Berger was absent.

Neighborhood Involvement Committee (NIC): Co-chair Fee said the cell tower funds, which would be available with an E&P merger, could augment NIC's work with micro grants. She asked if the bylaws permit a merger. NIC also discussed a Union Park version of the Neighborhood Honor Roll, which used to be hosted at St. Thomas.

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council (WSNAC): Noelle Jacquet-Morrison, co-chair, said the council will discuss the Board of Zoning Appeals' vote on a variance appeal in the Student Housing Overlay District at its next meeting on Tuesday, February 8. WSNAC has been funding Tommie Shelf, a project of Keystone Community Services to alleviate food insecurity at St. Thomas. WSNAC also wants to commission a survey about the impact of the university's

two-year residency requirement, which will take effect in fall 2022.

Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (NUFC): April King will be representing UPDC on this board. Wako recruited her. Corrie reported that business students at Concordia University consulted with the owners of a mall in the Midway area.

Communications Task Force: Amy Gage reported that the task force, which includes Ellen Fee, Harmony Neal and Leah Timberlake-Sullivan, has met once. They concluded that the current communications plan, circa 2014, is legalistic and long and seems geared to handle emergencies or crises. The 12-page communications plan references items that don't seem part of contemporary UPDC operations, including a communications chair and a UPDC brand. The document puts a lot of responsibility on the board chair and committee chairs to coordinate messaging and speak to the media but says little about the role of the Executive Committee. The plan also lacks direction about social media postings, especially the personal or work-related accounts of board members. The document was well researched and produced with care — but the group is concerned that it never comes off the shelf. Gage is in her third term on the board and literally has never seen it used.

- *Neal is a working editor, and they have ideas for formatting and language.*
- *Timberlake-Sullivan sees it as a potential guide to positive community relationships.*
- *Fee would like an ethos document or branding guide if we're going to refer to a brand.*

Timberlake-Sullivan said UPDC will need to separate the day-to-day from emergency situations, such as a legal scandal that drew media attention or a board member getting sued.

Staff Report: Wako has cut all checks to NUFC grant applicants. He applied to have an intern from the University of Minnesota to help standardize how we do community engagement and to analyze our digital spaces for how we could improve engagement. He'll get another summer intern from St. Olaf College to help run Ice Cream-Peanut Butter & Jam in September and will get a Macalester College intern for the 2022-23 academic year.

He submitted the City of St. Paul recycling contract; renewed liability insurance and workers' comp insurance; and is trying to engage Skyline Tower residents with paper newsletters and providing space for updates. UPDC has been approved for \$84,000 from the city for 2022, the same amount as the previous year. He'll need committee work plans from the co-chairs to complete that contract with the city.

- Timberlake-Sullivan suggested assigning a staff member at board meetings to answer community members' questions about acronyms or issues raised.
- Wako will be out of town February 3–17.

Corrie/Treichel moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

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