

# UPDC

## Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

June 21, 2022

Chair: Ellen Fee

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Kirsten Fryer, Greg Gridley, Jenny Keyser, Harmony Neal

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

Guests: Colin O'Brien, a resident of Desnoyer Park

### **Assign Note Taker**

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type minutes.

### **Meeting Agenda**

An agenda was sent out in advance of the meeting.  
No one requested changes to the agenda.

### **Welcome/Introductions**

Colin O'Brien is originally from Stillwater. He moved out of Minnesota. He recently moved to Desnoyer Park. He is looking for opportunities for more community involvement.

# Projects Funded with Micro-grants

The Union Park District Council (UPDC) Micro-grant Program provides funds for small projects that bring residents together through activities in their community. Other goals for the Micro-grant program are described on the UPDC website.

May 15 was the due date for the first round of applications. Several applications for Micro-grants were received by the May 15 deadline.

After the first-round grants are funded, proposals submitted after May 15 will be considered on a “rolling basis.” For 2022 the last day to submit request for Micro-grants is September 1.

## Approved Grants

The first-round Micro-grants that were approved include:

- Two community gardens.
- A garden to grow tulip bulbs.
- A garden on a traffic round-about at Shields Avenue and Wheeler Street.
- A little free natural history library. This will be like a little free library for books, expect that it will contain interesting stones and fossils. It will be on Hague Avenue.

## Projects Not Funded

Some projects were not approved and not funded:

- A proposed interactive drumming event. This was rejected because the plan was to hold the drumming at the same time and at the same place as another event. A goal for grant funding is to increase the total number of events.
- A proposal for planting some trees. This was rejected because Union Park District Council would have to co-ordinate on the project with the City of Saint Paul. There will be a lot of red tape.

## Increase in Micro-grant Budget

Jenny Keyser said that we will distribute a total of \$1,500 to the approved Micro-grant projects. Funding of \$1,600 is authorized for Micro-grants. This means that \$100 will be returned to the treasury.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that she has sent out memorandums of understanding to the groups that received Micro-grants. The memorandums are a type of contract between the grant recipients and UPDC.

## **Capital Improvement Budget Projects Update**

Wako presented an update on the status of Capital Improvement Budget projects.

The Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) is a project by the City of Saint Paul to finance public works projects that improve public safety. Citizen groups can propose ideas and submit them to the Capital Improvement Budget Committee.

For 2022, a total of 45 projects were submitted. The CIB Committee will determine which of the 45 projects will be funded. Out of the 45 projects, the CIB Committee recommended only 6 for funding in a preliminary ranking.

### **Projects from Union Park**

Out of the 45 projects, 6 projects were submitted from the Union Park Area.

Only one of the 6 projects from the Union Park Area was recommended for funding. It is a proposal to provide better bicycle parking at all of the parks in all parts of Saint Paul that have no bicycle parking or inadequate parking.

Lisa Nelson and Scott Berger from the UPDC Board did much of the work to advocate for Union Park CIB projects.

### **A Second Chance to Advocate for Projects That Did Not Make the Cut**

There will be a public meeting on June 23 at the George Latimer Central Library from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30. This meeting will allow the public to comment on the initial rankings of CIB projects. Wako said that we will have another chance to get more consideration for the Union Park projects that were not approved in the preliminary ranking.

The Union Park Board supports a project to improve pedestrian safety near Skyline Tower. The proposal is to install rectangular rapid flashing beacons for a pedestrian crossing of Griggs Street from Skyline Tower to Midway Peace Park.

Another proposal from Union Park is a project at Selby and Saratoga for traffic calming and safety infrastructure improvements.

Citizens can advocate for these and other improvements at the June 23 meeting.

Another meeting of the City of Saint Paul CIB Committee will be held on June 27 at the Rondo Community Library Multipurpose Room from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30. The meeting is open to the public, but there will be no opportunity for the public to make comments. This meeting will be to finalize the CIB Committee recommendations about which projects to fund. The CIB Committee will send their recommendations to the Office of the Mayor.

## **Planning for July No-Mow Area Maintenance Event**

The next maintenance event for the No-Mow Area will be on July 16, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The No-Mow Area is in the south west corner of Merriam Park. The idea of the No-Mow Area came from a 2008 plan for the park that we call Merriam Park. The No-Mow Area was established in 2012. The area has not been mowed since 2012. Most of the area has fescue grass that is allowed to grow naturally.

A key goal for the No-Mow Area plan is to reduce compaction of the soil. Mowing machines press down on the soil. Soil compaction discourages the growth of small oak trees.

Volunteers from Union Park District Council have worked at past events to maintain the No-Mow Area.

At these events we:

- Removed brush
- Pulled weeds
- Planted new grass seed in areas after weeds have been removed.

Removing purslane weeds was a major achievement at the October, 2021, maintenance event. We planted grass seed in the cleared ground. Much more attractive!

Wako explained that we have summer and fall events to maintain the No-Mow Area.

### **Design for a Flyer to Promote the Event**

Jerry suggested the idea of flyer to the promote event. The flyer should be delivered to people who live near Merriam Park. It explains what we will do at the event. It will invite them to come and work on the event.

Jerry designed a flyer. His proposed flyer is attached with these minutes.

Members at the meeting wanted to remove the text that says the event is a “low risk event” for Covid-19.

Barb Deming designed a flyer similar to Jerry’s flyer. Barb’s flyer includes a photograph. She added a rain date.

Wako said that he will call on Andrew Mazariegos to design a flyer with appropriate art work. Andrew is an intern working with UPDC. He will use the Jerry’s flyer design and Barb Deming’s design as starting points.

We planned to have the flyers ready before the weekend of July 4. The plan is to do most of the flyer distribution during the weekend of July 8 and 9.

Jerry suggested printing or copying 200 copies of the flyer. He suggests delivering a flyer to each house in the 8 blocks closest to Merriam Park. Other area can be covered if we have the time and enough flyers.

### **Tools and Refreshments**

Wako said that he can arrange for borrowing tools from the Parks & Recreation Department.

He said that he also can arrange for bagels and beverages.

Wako said that we need a truck or some kind of vehicle. We should contact Barb Deming to see if she can provide a vehicle.

# **Park Improvement Applications for Desnoyer Park Picnic and ICPB&J**

## **Desnoyer Park Picnic**

We reviewed the Park Improvement Application Form that was filled out for the annual Desnoyer Park Picnic.

The Park Improvement Fund Application Form is designed to allow any citizen in the Union Park Area to request funding. The funds can be used for park improvements and other park projects and events. The funds come from money that is collected from telecommunications companies who pay rent to use the cell tower at Merriam Park.

Greg Gridley talked about the request for the Desnoyer Park Picnic. The sponsoring organization is the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association

Greg said the Desnoyer Picnic has been held annually for 12 years. The average attendance for the 12 years has been 225 people.

The event is scheduled for the evening of July 12, Tuesday. The Desnoyer Park Association is requesting \$3,000. Greg said that the Park & Recreation Department is also providing some resources

Greg Gridley said the funds are to provide food and also games to entertain children. The application form had a detailed list of expenses for the event.

The Application form has guidelines for event organizers. One of the guidelines calls for evaluation. The event organizers should provide some measurement of success for the event such as "number of people served."

Greg Gridley says that the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association intends to do a survey of people who attend. The survey is intended to determine how well they enjoyed the event. The Desnoyer Park Improvement Association will post an electronic version of the survey results.

### **The Scorecard for the Desnoyer Picnic**

After reviewing the application, Wako displayed a blank copy of the Environment & Parks Committee Cell Tower Funds – Scorecard. The Scorecard is used along with the Park Improvement Application Form to evaluate a project for possible funding. Environment & Parks committee members assign a score to each proposed project. The projects with the highest scores get funded.

Wako filled in the Scorecard. Greg Gridley provided information as stated on the Park Improvement Application. The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee members present helped to determine scores for the Scorecard.

The Scorecard has a question “does the event benefit the broader UPDC community?”

Wako said that the UPDC Board wants to advertise to all of Union Park and invite people who live outside of the Desnoyer Park area as well as those who live close to Desnoyer Park. Wako will post a flyer announcing the picnic on UPDC website.

Greg said that the Desnoyer Picnic organizers don’t turn anyone away even if they don’t live near Desnoyer Park.

Using the Scorecard form, we determined a score of 60.

Jenny Keyser made a motion to approve the application for funds for the picnic. Ellen Fee seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

The request for funds along with the scorecard will go to the UPDC Board for approval.

## **Park Improvement Fund Application for ICPB&J**

Wako filled out the Park Improvement Fund Application Form for the 2022 Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam (ICPB&J) event.

The application requests \$4,000 for the event scheduled for September 18.

We reviewed the form.

Jenny Keyser said the ICPB&J is described in the minutes for May, 2022, and earlier meeting minutes. She suggested that we approve the application as part of a “consent agenda.”

Jenny Keyser made a motion to approve the application for funds for the ICPB&J. Ellen Fee seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously

The request for funds will go to the UPDC Board for approval.

## **Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social Put on Hold**

We did not consider funding for an ice cream social event at Midway Peace Park.

Wako said that we need to put this project on hold. Wako said that we need to coordinate with the Lexington-Hamline District Council, Skyline Tower residents, and Gordon Parks High School. It will take a while to work things out. Wako suggested that the event will be in August at the earliest.



At the May meeting, Wako suggested a budget of \$3,000 for a possible Midway Peace Park ice cream social.

In a related topic, Wako said that he working to organize a clean-up project for Midway Peace Park.

## **New Committee Name**

We considered three names for the committee:

- Environment Parks and Neighborhood Involvement Committee (EPANIC)
- Neighborhood Environmental Parks Committee (NEPC)
- Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NeSVIC)

We conducted a poll of members. Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NeSVIC) was the choice for 75% of members.

Therefore, the new name for the committee will be

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee

## **Motion to Adjourn**

Barb Deming made a motion to adjourn. Kirsten Fryer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. We adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

A proposed flyer appears below

# IMPROVE MERRIAM PARK!

Volunteer for Our Gardening  
Event at the No-Mow Area.

July 16, Saturday

(Rain Date: )

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Bring work gloves if you have them.

Tools will be provided.

Free donuts and bagels!

Low risk for Covid-19

- An outdoor event with room to separate.
- Face masks are encouraged.

Sponsored by Union Park District Council