

Union Park District Council Board Meeting: minutes

March 2, 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 (11): 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), Kent Treichel (Lexington-Hamline Community Council)

Members absent: Dan Elenbaas (Grid 11), Gregg Gridley (Desnoyer Park Improvement Association), Joe Hughes (business); open seats for Grids 1, 2, 3, 6, nonprofit, Skyline Towers and Macalester College

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

Guests: Jane McClure, *My Villager*

Meeting

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

Consent Agenda: Parker/Treichel moved to approve the March agenda and Corrie/Neal moved to approve the February board minutes. Unanimous approval.

Town & Country update: After word leaked that the University of St. Thomas had made a bid to purchase the Town & Country golf club, Dvorak said the conversation on NextDoor.com got unnecessarily personal about Gage; she urged board members, in such circumstances, to jump to other board members' defense. Gage will be meeting March 8 with the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association (DPIA) board. Town & Country rejected the university's offer.

City's climate change emergency: Should this be a standing agenda item? How can UPDC operate sustainably in its own work and ensure that the city follows through on this intention?

- Berger hopes for a "science- or data-based definition" of sustainability. Dvorak said there's no "incentive or requirement" for developers to incorporate green elements into their buildings. Some claim it is less of an issue if the building is on a transportation node, but the building itself uses energy.
- Parker said that the code changes now required for energy efficiency will substantially raise costs for rehabs. So new construction is more energy efficient.

Wako suggested we educate neighbors about climate change and emphasize things they can do. Bring together neighbors at parks and hand out information. Take advantage of Cell Tower

Funds and Park Improvement Funds to do park programming and improvements; last year, we used only \$5,000 of the \$17,000. Neal asked if “neighbors” are individuals or businesses, since the latter are the ones affecting the environment most.

According to Wexler, UPDC could alter the wording of the scorecard and hold accountable local polluters such as Cooperative Plating. We could promote local businesses that use green practices, such as compostable takeaway containers. UPDC passed a resolution supporting a plastic carryout ban a couple of years ago. We also could promote the Friends of the Mississippi’s free rain barrel program. <https://www.fmr.org/rain-barrels-river>

Once the city launches curbside composting next year, we could help encourage and educate individual residents. We already offer compost bins and bags to neighbors.

- Book recommendations: *Green Metropolis* and *Parking and the City*.

Brand visioning: Where do neighbors feel comfortable joining in? How can we be experts without being exclusive? We don’t want to represent only homeowners. Collaborate with and uplift other organizations, too. We’re not reaching students, young people, renters or people of color. Fee would like to see a brand and style guide for all to use in our communications.

Committee Reports and Updates:

Committee on Land Use & Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chair Corrie said developer Jon Schwartzman presented renderings of 1708 Selby. He followed city rules and gained permits to construct a five-story building of market-rate studio apartments. Without public subsidy, he will offer four units at 60 percent AMI. Neighbors were concerned about being “last to hear” without enough time to respond. City officials are making decisions based on renderings without getting “boots on the ground”; this block, for example, has no alley.

- CLUED also talked about Starbucks closing its drive-through, with a patio being added.

Transportation: Co-chair Berger reported on a transit study by Ramsey County in correlation to the Riverview Corridor project.

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transportation/multi-modal-planning/blue-lineriverview-connection-study>

- The committee also discussed the Met Council’s Zero Emission Bus Plan and the I-94 project: [Twin Cities Boulevard](#)

Lisa Nelson reported on block parties and Play Streets, a project she’s been urging. A Play Street is a recurring block party that requires less paperwork and expense. They discussed:

- 1) **Singular application:** police department has already changed its online application.
- 2) **Cost of renting barricades:** Costs \$140 to rent barricades for one block party; makes for inequitable access. Nelson said you can buy your own barricades for about \$500, but that will pay off. Corrie suggests that UPDC buy barricades, though we already rent out a few sets at \$40 for an \$80 deposit. The police see those as too small.

- 3) **Promotion:** The police are not eager to create a separate program, given that they already invest in National Night Out. A block party is defined as being for people who live on that block only; otherwise, the city calls it an “event,” with different rules.

Action: Corrie/Fryer moved that UPDC buy acceptable barriers and let the Transportation committee decide how to allocate them. Passed unanimously. Wako will communicate with neighborhood district councils to see if we want to buy barricades in bulk; delivery is a flat fee.

Neighborhood Involvement Committee (NIC): Co-chair Fee said that NIC and Environment & Parks will have its first joint meeting, to be on the second Monday of the month. Since that’s when Transportation meets, they may try find a new time.

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council (WSNAC): Parker, a UPDC rep to WSNAC, came to his first meeting in February. St. Thomas presented about the proposal to build D1 facilities at Highland Bridge. The head of Residence Life talked about the effect of the two-year residency requirement, which begins this fall. WSNAC will be launching a task force to look at changes in the neighborhood because of zoning and the Student Housing Overlay District.

- Gage urged board members to attend the Public Safety Workshop at St. Thomas on Saturday, April 2, 10:30 a.m., co-sponsored by UPDC and Mac-Groveland Community Council and featuring Brooke Blakey, Office of Neighborhood Safety.
- <https://www.stthomas.edu/neighbors/events/urban-safety-workshop.html>

Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (NUFC): King has applied to be on the NUFC advisory committee. Wako reported that UPDC has cut nine checks to minority-owned businesses. Concordia business students have worked with many of the businesses on marketing.

Communications Task Force: Timberlake-Sullivan said the task force wants to make the document more readable and have orientation for new and current board and committee members. The goal is to have common ground.

Conflict resolution training: Wako presented about recent mediation training. Two people meet with a third party to gain a better understanding of their conflict and try to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. The participants retain control; the mediator does not drive the solution but instead asks open-ended questions and guides the conversation. The mediator does not interrupt or correct mistakes. The goal is to avoid de-humanizing other individuals.

- Acknowledging, reflecting, restating or paraphrasing, summarizing, reframing are all mediators’ skills. It’s OK to take a break to calm down or ride out periods of chaos.
- <http://crcminnesota.org/> 612-822-9883 or mediation@crcminnesota.org

Neal/King moved at 9 p.m. to adjourn.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 6, 2022 | 7–9 p.m. | ZOOM