

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

July 19, 2022

Chair: Ellen Fee

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Jenny Keyser, Harmony Neal

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

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.

Call for Volunteers for the Zero-Waste Plan at ICPB&J

We have a plan for collecting items that guests throw away at the Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam event.

Wako said that we have to change the name of the project from “Zero-Waste Plan” to “Low Waste Plan.” He said that people working on the Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam event determined that producing no waste is an impossible goal.

The plan is to have 5 disposal stations in different locations in Merriam Park. At each station guests can sort items for disposal. The sorting categories include

- Items that can be reused
- Trash to be sent to a landfill
- Waste that can be composted
- Materials that can be recycled

The volunteers will assist guests to place their items in the correct piles.

At past events, people put disposable materials in the wrong places. For example, some put items that are can be recycled in the pile for trash.

Wako estimated that we need 10 volunteers. We need two people for each station. One volunteer can take over when the first volunteer is tired or needs to take a break.

This year’s Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam will be noon to 4 p.m. on September 17, Saturday.

Leah said that we will have a clearer idea of what we need about waste when we get closer to September 17.

NSVC Table

The Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) can have a table at the Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam event. However, Wako said that the event organizers see the committee tables as a lower priority idea. The NSVC does not have to set up a table.

If we do set up a table, members at the July meeting discussed possible ideas for an NSVC Table.

- Ellen Fee suggested that we can use the table as a way to recruit new Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee members. She also suggested handing out a flyer that discusses “who we are and what we do.”

- o Jenny Keyser suggested that we advertise and promote the Cell Tower Fund. We can display a paper copy of the Park Improvement Fund Application Form. The form is designed to allow any citizen in the Union Park Area to request funding for park improvements and other park projects and events. The form is usually submitted by electronic means.
- o Jenny Keyser suggested that we can have a presentation on the Union Park Micro-grant program. We can have some Micro-grant recipients talk about what they are doing.
- o One of the Micro-grants went for 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. At the NSVC Table we could display some of the national history library items.

Ellen Fee suggested that each committee member can investigate and develop an idea for what we can present at the table for the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee.

Jenny Keyser said that at the August meeting we can discuss what ideas to use for the NSVC Table.

We discussed the mechanics of how to set up a table for the NSVC.

Jenny Keyser talked about story boards available from the Saint Paul Public Library. The story boards can be borrowed at no cost.

She also said that the Public Library has had displays at past Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam events.

Debriefing from the No-Mow Event

Jerry Clendenin reported on the maintenance event for the No-Mow Area of Merriam Park. The event was on July 16, Saturday.

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.

Ellen Fee and Jerry placed flyers in an area of about 8 to 10 blocks near Merriam Park. On the day of the event, two new volunteers came to the event. Both of them said they came because they saw the flyers. These are people who are not members of Union Park District Council.

Jerry considers finding two new volunteers a success! In some past No-Mow events, we distributed flyers and we did not get any new volunteers. Two people is a significant proportion of the small population that lives close to the park.

The No-Mow events are ways to increase membership in the Union Park District Council. People who are interested in the No-Mow Area can be recruited to become members.

The volunteers removed weeds from the No-Mow Area. We filled several large composting bags. We took the weeds to the Saint Paul Midway Yard Waste Collection Site.

Jenny Keyser worked on the No-Mow event. She said that she was amazed by the volume of weeds that we removed. She wanted to thank Jerry for providing leadership at the maintenance event.

Can We Improve the No-Mow Area with Composting?

Jerry Clendenin sees a down sides to hauling weeds to the Yard Waste Collection Site. It takes work to haul the weeds away.

Hauling the weeds away also depletes soil nutrients by removing nitrogen from the No-Mow Area.

Jerry is researching a way to create compost from the weeds. If we can make compost, we can use the weeds to make fertilizer. We might try this idea at the next maintenance event.

We are planning for the next No-Mow maintenance event to be in September.

Discussion About Recruiting a Second Co-Chair for the NSVC

At the present time, the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) has one chair person who is Ellen Fee.

Wako suggested that the committee will function better if we have two co-chairs. The two co-chairs can divide responsibilities.

Ellen Fee suggested that a certain combination of people will make the committee more effective. One of the leaders can be a member of the UPDC Board. The other co-chair can be someone not on the UPDC Board.

Wako suggested a co-chair who was a member of the Environment and Parks Committee, a predecessor to the NSVC.

No one present at the July 19 volunteered to be co-chair.

Wako said that we don't need a co-chair right away.

Ellen said that she will contact someone who may be interested in being a co-chair.

Anyone else who wants to become the NSVC Co-Chair can contact Ellen Fee.

Midway Peace Park Events

We are planning for two events at Midway Peace Park. To encourage activity on the two events, the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee decided to hold the August 16 NSVC meeting at the Midway Peace Park.

The meeting will be an in-person event. The meeting will be out of doors. We considered the risk from Covid. We decided that an outdoor meeting will be a low-risk event.

Ice Cream Social

Wako has continued to work on the Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social project. Wako needs to co-ordinate with the Lexington-Hamline District Council, Skyline Tower residents, and Gordon Parks High School. It will take a while to work things out. At the May NSVC, meeting Wako suggested that the event will be in August at the earliest.

At the May meeting, Wako suggested a budget of \$3,000 for the Midway Peace Park Ice Cream Social.

Wako has partially filled out a Park Improvement Application Form. The Form is designed to request funding from the Cell Tower Fund. The funds come from money that is collected from telecommunications companies who pay rent to use the cell tower at Merriam Park.

The partially completed Park Improvement Application Form was not available for review at the July meeting.

Midway Peace Park Clean Up Event

Wako is continuing to work to organize a clean-up project for Midway Peace Park.

Other Updates/Ideas

Harmony Neal brought up the problem of car theft. Many automobiles are stolen in Union Park. Auto thefts degrade the quality of life for many people. A related problem is theft of catalytic converters.

Harmony said that car theft is an aggravation, even if the police recover the car. Victims of theft must often rent a car until the police recover the stolen car. Theft is a huge problem even if the insurance company pays part of the cost.

Harmony's car was stolen recently. It was a KIA. Many cars by KIA are easy to steal. Thieves have discovered that any thumb drive can be used to start many cars made by KIA.

We discussed possible ways to prevent thefts such as parking in a garage if possible. Another possible solution is to lock the steering wheel with a "club."

Giving Up Your Car is One Way to Avoid Problems

Jerry Clendenin suggested that life without a car may be easier than life with a car. A car creates constant expense. Preventing theft or responding to theft is a universal problem.

Jerry said that living without a car is a major way to reduce greenhouse gas production. The dangers from climate change are becoming more and more frightening!

We all need to do our bit to control climate change.

Jerry has lived without a car for more than three decades.

Leah Timberlake Sullivan suggested that UPDC can post a notice about the problem of car theft.

Motion to Adjourn

We adjourned at 8:25 p.m.