



## Minutes for the Community Meeting

Tuesday, August 27, 2024, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Arlington Hills Recreation Center, 1200 Payne Avenue

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1. **Welcome:** Introductions and Review of the Agenda **6:00 pm**

Attendance

- Community Members: Melissa Lorentz, Gabby Menomin, Donovan Tegg, Kymari Love, Susan Banovetz
- Board Members: Lynette Harris, Anna-Marie Foster, May yer Thao, Reier Erickson, Patricia Enstad, Marci Exsted, Emma De Vera, Janey Atchison, Rebecca Nelson, Damien Schaab
- Board Staff: Jack Byers, Robin Horkey

**Business items:** **6:05 pm**

2. *Approval item:* Minutes from June 2024 and July 2024 meeting (Marci Exsted)
  - a. Janey – page 5 of June: Cook vote, someone voted against it.
    - i. Janey Motioned to amend, Anna Marie seconded, passed unanimously.
    - ii. With this amendment - Anna Marie voted to approve the May and July 2024 minutes, Patricia seconded, passed unanimously.
3. *Approval item:* Financial Reports for May, June, July 2024 (Janey Atchison)
  - a. Emma motioned to accept May, June, & July 2024 financial reports. Reier seconded, passed unanimously.
4. *Approval item:* Joint District Council funding request to the City for 2025
  - a. Janey – explained that councils are funded through a density formula: physical size as well as population income, language spoken, and racial makeup. There has been a push to change the funding formula (see board packet for further details).
    - i. Lynette - does this get approved by the city?
    - ii. Jack – some councils put this together to send to the city council. All the directors agree that the city should increase funding. The letter Jack drafted is in agreement for approval of funding and that this should be based on the 2020 Census (not 2010). Additionally, all the councils want a cost of living index increase of 3% per year (not just

one increase). Other councils that have a large population and are districts with a larger population with lower income have concerns because some of the proposals would take away from the larger councils' fundings in order to increase their own budgets. This is addressed in Jack's draft letter. Summit Hill, for example, is a smaller community that is not nearly as diverse or sparse in resources as Payne Phalen.

- iii. Reier – do city counselors attend the district council executive director meetings?
    1. Jack – no, they could but they don't
  - iv. Patricia – this seems like an important step for us, I like the letter
  - v. Lynette – agreed. All districts need more money but Lynette emphasized the disparity between different districts.
  - vi. Jack – this recommendation also aligns with District 2 & 6
  - vii. Patricia – has the city said anything about this redistribution idea?
    1. Jack – they haven't, but the meeting is coming up in Sept. This issue has been raised to council member Yang and VP Kim.
- b. Patricia - moved to approve the letter Jack wrote and include all of our names on it. Lynette seconded.
- i. May yer – asked that Jack let us know when we make nudges about this. [Jack said if we approve the letter we can start right away.]
  - ii. Passed unanimously.

### **District Plan Update:**

5. *Approval item:* Natural Resource Inventory and Enhancement Opportunities 6:15 pm  
Dayton's Bluff and Payne-Phalen Community Council, Presentation and Discussion: Rachel Funke, Capital Region Watershed; Brendan Dougherty with Barr Engineering

- Lynette – for grants for landowners/residents and/or nonprofits...are you considering doing any education or shadowing along with them to support?
  - Rachel – depending on the project & how it aligns w/our goals we may take a more engaged role, including technical assistance.
  - Lynette – asked whether they also are having folks come out and shadow, for example with Native Landscaping & helping residents to know how to do this.
  - Rachel – agreed that they do some financial and educational support for this.
  - Lynette – have you thought about programs particularly around the Eastside with regards to agriculture since this is such a food desert?
  - Brendan – for this report, we tried to lay out what is already present and how they might be converted to different things, perhaps an orchard. Can serve as food sources as well as being native plants.
  - Rachel – we didn't dive very deep into that in this report but it's a good point.
- Reier – with soil degradation, were you looking at horizons, etc?

- Brendan - didn't take soil samples, but were able to look back at change over time. We know there's earthworms, compaction, and fill but we didn't get into grading.
- Patricia – some of the savannah restoration has been really beautiful, for example at Phalen lake.
  - Rachel – Ramsey/Washington was part of that work and [it's great].
  - Brendan – a lot of MN has been converted into something else and so little additions/changes to planting can make a huge difference.
- Lynette – are the grants used once per year?
  - Rachel – applications are taken on a rolling basis, year-round
  - Brendan – we also identify DNR and other statewide grants as well
- Patricia moved to incorporate the watershed's report into our District Plan. Anna-Marie seconded. Passed unanimously.

6. Daylighting Phalen Creek: Update and progress Report: Gabriele Menomin, 6:55 pm  
Environmental Restoration Manager, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi

- Damian – asked about a culvert versus a bridge at Wheelock.
  - Gabriele – the culvert is not the best it could be but hopefully a bridge that would be better for wildlife crossing can/will be developed in the future.
- Lynette – asked about which tribes were indigenous to this area
  - Gabriele – primarily this is known as Dakota but we have also connected with the Hochunk nation and loway tribes that are indigenous to this area.
- Gabriele – asked for folks to provide feedback about signage, what they'd like to see, feedback about potential new names for the creek.
- Reier – hopes to see two-eyed seeing scientific information in the signage, including Indigenous knowledge
- Emma – MN landscape arboretum has a Dakota alternate reality walk, might be a good idea; loves incorporation of artists
- Gabriele – website is [wakantipi.org](http://wakantipi.org) or you can email [gmenomin@wakantipi.org](mailto:gmenomin@wakantipi.org)
- Rachel – will there be a baseflow or will it be dry unless it rains?
  - Gabriele – there will be a set height so as long as the lake levels stay at or above that height there will be consistent water flow to the creek. (60fs)
- May yer – what's the timeline once construction starts?
  - Gabriele – we're looking at a 9-12 month construction period
- Reier – moved to support this project, Emma seconded, passed unanimously.

7. *Decision item*: 525-629 Bush Avenue: Re-application for rezoning and variances 7:15 pm  
for King Scapes landscape center at 525-629 Bush Avenue, Zoning application referred from City of St Paul, PED. Donovan Tegg (owner) & Megan (lawyer)

- Public hearing scheduled on September 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Janey – Damien you live on railroad island? Are there talks of putting housing there?
  - Damien – there have been a lot of potential plans, but none have been viable. It's on an extreme slope. Pretty tough to develop most of the parcels. Most don't have standard lot sizes. Two plans had tiny houses and neither were viable. The fact that it's right against the railroad makes it a tough sell. It would be great if someone could put apartment buildings but putting in parking would be difficult. The tiny houses were probably the best options that

came up but they never went anywhere. Another plan was to have food trucks set up there but that also didn't go anywhere.

- Megan – we originally obtained signatures from all the homes surrounding and didn't get signatures from the railroad. Those took a year to get. That was the significant delay. Yes this is industrial district we're seeking rezoning to but we're trying to downgrade the intensity of the railroad to transition over to residential & restrict development intensity. We're seeking approval for a use that would add greenery, landscaping to this space. There will be a significant investment in landscaping since that's the business. Lots of effort to beautify the space. Will include sale of landscaping products but will also be a design center for people to come into and pick out what they're hoping for.
- Susan– will there be equipment stored on the site?
  - Donovan – there would be a loader to help people obtain their items, but there will be a line of trees, other landscaping to serve as a barrier. Just landscaped the pet crematorium to the west. Helped work on soil remediation there as well & helping to dispose of contaminated soil.
- Jack – reviewed maps and planning for the site. Larger consideration is not for the business or the business owner but also giving up land that could have better residential uses than industrial uses. A portion of the site is no less narrow than the Heights, which is affordable housing that was built in the neighborhood. Notably, the city's own long-range industrial plan calls for this location to remain a neighborhood node and mixed-use.
  - Megan – looking at the Hallows, while the site size is similar the conditions are very different as is the surrounding neighborhood & neighborhood commercial use. The consent we received from the railroad reduces the intensity of the use throughout the parcel for industrial use. Megan asserts that the railroad would not shift their use out to residential use.
  - Lynette – once it's rezoned, that would be it?
    - Damien – unless it's rezoned again
  - Lynette – have you all been paying attention to the things happening on the Eastside regarding industrial sites in the last few years since coming here?
    - Megan – have been regarding environmental factors. Particularly with the dirt issue. The dirt is currently listed as a problematic site on the MPCA. Having limited development will contain hazardous materials. The site won't add noise, fumes, or smells and will add greenery. One of the conditions of the approval is a heightened landscaping plan, which will add vegetation, green space, and trees.
  - Emma – what is the different between light industrial vs industrial and why doesn't commercial work?
    - Megan – the city saw the purposes of the landscaping company as partially fitting more of a categorically industrial site, as well as getting the railroad on board. Industrial is significantly restricted use. Industrial 1 is what is currently on the north end of the site. Megan provided the listed distinctions for Industrial 1 zoning versus light industrial.
    - Damian – talked about his support for having any viable site.
  - Patricia – some of my concern is the city of St. Paul. We like you, you come in and there are flowers etc, but then you leave and it's rezoned. Just thinking about what the implications are for that.

- Donovan – lowering what they can do to light industrial would hopefully help to prevent something like big manufacturing, processing activity. So, taking that space on the north and lowering the zoning.
  - May yer – so what is the board’s decision [Jack: support or to not support for the rezoning].
    - Jack – staff recommendation is to not support the rezoning
    - May yer – wondered whether we can hear more about why
    - Jack – staff report outlines the zoning and reasons for reconsideration, including negative impacts of industrial uses to the neighborhood. Also, new, more detailed recommendations from public agencies (e.g. for the Purple Line) have arisen. For the city to rezone this to industrial would be a set back to that process and this would be a lost opportunity since the sites around it would be less enticing to other developers potentially creating affordable housing, daycare centers, etc. Finally, city’s plan calls for something other than industrial zoning – some place walkable, small businesses, residential, & transit friendly.
  - Reier – talking about soil remediation. It’s not just the soil, it’s the trace metals in the soil that would be pollutants to anyone living there. Thinking about noise, vibrations from the train tracks. Would need the city to do extensive clean-up.
  - May yer – also having a hard time with benefits versus cons. With so many nonviable plans going through...difficult with just leaving the parcels there and having that not benefit the community.
  - Susan – issue is about rezoning the property.
  - Anna-Marie – talked about how there are a lot of ‘what ifs’. As much as it’s hard because we like this, but it’s hard to also go against our plans and the city’s plans that have been decided.
- Kymari – is the fear that it would be zoned to the higher level? [clarification provided that the primary concern is for the portion of the parcel that is currently zoned for residential use that would be rezoned to light industrial] There’s also a decision about protecting people who have to live on that soil – easily could be one of those projects where people in affordable housing are being poisoned.
- Melissa – why couldn’t there be a conditional use permit?
  - Megan – conditional use is allowed in industrial, commercial, and light industrial but not residential or urban neighborhood. Our initial thought was to bring this in as an I1 site but the city said we needed a rezoning to have commercial use and a conditional use permit would also be needed, as well as a variance to not have a building.
- Rebecca – my own opinion is that we should rezone it. Can I get some kind of motion?
  - Damian motioned to support rezoning, Anna-Marie seconded.
    - In favor: May yer, Reier, Patricia, Janey, Marci, Rebecca, Anna-Marie
    - Not in favor: Emma, Lynette
    - Motion Passed

**Closed Meeting:**

**7:30 pm**

## 8. Board-only Discussion

- Jack: Seger Square is not interested in having them bring the station to Arcade. Meetings Rebecca and I have had – Metro Transit just says “no” every time. We may want to work around them to take solutions to our elected officials or to the head of Metro Transit instead of Purple Line staff. We met with many elected officials, including legislators, Met Council, etc. Our Met Council representative included Metro Transit in a meeting. If Seger Square was ever an option, it’s off the table. Jack showed a couple of new options/solutions that have never been shown to community. Given Metro Transit’s current plans, Jack presented an alternate option.
- Janey thinks that this is a really great option that addresses a lot of concerns.
- Patricia – when they come next month, is it just to talk about this issue? They’re doing sessions where they only want to talk about certain chunks.
- Jack – Metro transit is trying to push through a decision about the White Bear Ave location. Maplewood is also discussing this again & might pull out. Additionally, the Purple Line project won’t be eligible for larger federal funding, now going after smaller local funding – which may benefit us.
- Lynette – went to PABA & there were businesses there impacted by development on University. They were promised a grant to help mitigate the impact. I haven’t heard them talking about reimbursements, grants for business owners on Arcade. AND – those owners on University said that that funding fell through.
  - Jack – I and other folks have worked on several grant applications and were rejected, the city wasn’t able to help out, and Metro said they’re focused on transit.
- Jack – We wanted to come up with a strategy tonight. Probably better to ask Commissioner Xiong, gather representatives, and perhaps City Council representatives as well to use the levers of their power.

## ADJOURN

8:00 pm

- Janey motioned to adjourn.

➤ **Next PPCC Community Meeting:** Tuesday, September 24, 2024  
Arlington Hills Recreation Center, 1200 Payne Avenue

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