



Minutes for the Community Meeting

Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Arlington Hills Recreation Center, 1200 Payne Avenue

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

Attendance

- PPCC Board: Rebecca Nelson, Emma De Vera, Marci Exsted, Anna-Marie Foster, Patricia Enstad, Damian Schaab, Seanne Thomas
- PPCC Staff: Jack Byers, Robin Horkey
- Community Members: Maria Oah, Victor U., Janet U., Paris Dunning, Yan Chen, Miles, Karen A., John Slade, Jeanne Surdo, Rebecca Tryon, Giovonnia H., Tim Marino, Gabby Menomin, Ianni H., Joann E.

Business items: **6:05 pm**

2. *Approval item:* Minutes from August 2024 meeting (Marci Exsted)
 - a Emma moved to approve the minutes, Seanne seconded, passed unanimously.
3. *Approval item:* Financial Reports for August 2024 (Janey Atchison)
 - a Anna-Marie motioned to approve, Marci seconded, passed unanimously.
4. *Referred from the Executive Committee:* Possible formation of an ad-hoc work group to revisit and update By-laws, Robert's Rules, governance policy and meeting protocols (Janey Atchison). Committee would dissolve once work is completed.
 - a Damian and Anna-Marie offered to be a part of the committee.
 - b Jeanne – asked whether community members would be able to be a part of this review, she has a lot of experience with by-laws.
 - i Rebecca – said we can see whether this is possible and let Jeanne know
5. **Marci Exsted** is pregnant and due at the end of November; would someone be willing to take over as secretary while she is out?

- Emma offered to act as secretary while Marci is on leave.

Discussion Items:

6. The Purple Line: Project updates, concerns/considerations, timing and strategy 6:15 pm

The Executive Committee of the Payne-Phalen Community Council seeks to hear from our allies, partners and colleagues from the Greater East Side District Council, the Southeast Community Organization, the Dayton's Bluff Community Council, the Purple People, MoveMN, ESABA, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, and any and all other East Siders and East Side Organizations too. As always, our meetings are open to all, and all are welcome. That said, PPCC is not requesting attendance or participation from MetroTransit staff at this time. Instead, we would like to hear from our allied community organizations about your experiences, thoughts, and ideas related to the Purple Line. And we'd like to share our experiences, thoughts, and ideas with you too. The intention is to share information and support one another as community organizations and citizens working with one another in community first and foremost.

- Paris – provided an overview of the Maplewood community board's recent vote 3:2 against the Purple Line, thinking that this would essentially kill the project.
- Gabby – the ones who voted against made the points that the cost and whether people will actually use the line. Members didn't want to wait until October to hear more about the development plans.
- Paris – mentioned that unless they could be assured electric buses right away that they would vote no.
- Tim – people didn't want a lane taken out of White Bear Ave. However, their belief that this kills the plans is not necessarily the case. One city can say they don't want the project but if the Met Council, the state, etc want to continue, they can. Mostly will be in hands of state & Met Council whether they feel this is a priority.
 - Rebecca T – unsure whether White Bear is included in Ramsey...are there differences there?
 - John Slade – [Micah] have a chapter in St. Paul & in eastern suburbs...what happened is there was an election, which changed the vote from for to against. One of the candidates [in Maplewood] ran on a "no rush line" (aka Purple Line) coalition. Don't like transit, feel it will ruin the 'charm' of their downtown, don't want 'those people' coming into the community. Being so close to the election...feel that the Met Council won't change their course & back away. Recommend people reach out to Ramsey Council if they like/want the Purple Line. Two of the representatives are up for reelection in Maplewood this year. Seems that catering to anti-transit folks *may* be an election strategy for mayor & council members up for re-election.
 - Patricia – Maplewood has had a lengthy time of dysfunctional leadership...so this isn't surprising.
 - Jack – to clarify, the makeup of the council could flip, but it also might not.

- Paris – heard that the 10/8 meeting is being kept by Metro Transit. County commissioners seem to be trying to just keep things going through and beyond the election.
 - Jack – between the county & Metro Transit, they’ve decided not to apply for one pot of money and applied to another, which will require 18 more months of planning. [gives them more time to work on things]
 - Tim M –this would also provide more flexibility financially for the project. [May address the “Get out the Gully” concerns]
 - Patricia – mentioned that the leave time from one end to another had to be a certain length (aiming for a commuter line)...does this change any of that?
 - Tim M – unsure. Would want to dig into this w/the people on the project to learn more around new guidelines.
 - Jack – this is important that Metro Transit is clear about these pieces
 - Paris – this issue w/Maplewood and the Purple Line not having the same end point opens up possibilities for what it *could* be & what we want/need it to potentially look like
- Jack – 10 days ago, the Ramsey County board also pulled the plug on the Riverview Corridor going from downtown St. Paul to the airport. Not sure where this money will go...that was 20 years of planning.
 - Gabby – part of the reason why they may have scrapped it was that it went through Midote (a sacred tribal site) [this site is located where the MN & MI rivers meet]
 - Jack – it was lightrail, then bus rapid transit, then railcar but it’s been scrapped
 - Tim M – with the bus plans they were comparing, it wouldn’t be any faster than the current 54 bus. Just would be slightly fancier stations. Has heard the tribal site reason for cancelling this, also: the airport losing parking they could make money from, as well as 7th and Grand not wanting it going through the neighborhood.
- Jack – may be good to talk about what we & our organizations think...
 - John Slade – MICAHA was involved in big decisions on the Green Line (connecting downtown to the University). Talked about Federal policy changes across administrations to transit requirements → eventually added stops in the Rondo & Frogtown neighborhoods, saw improvements to businesses as well as lots of inner-city travel use. John still would like the Purple Line to go to White Bear. Would benefit this community but also address safety on White Bear Avenue. Do need to also consider affordable housing placement while we think about transit to avoid gentrification...did this w/the Green Line.
 - Rebecca N – we do have representation from all 4 district councils from the eastside here. We need to join together & decide what we want as representatives of the eastside.
 - Joann - Not sure how we’re going to convince White Bear & with Maplewood voting against it...why don’t we just do what’s best for the eastside? Maybe we just go ahead without them.

- Patricia – seems like not supporting transit to Century College is a major oversight. Rather than concerns about downtown White Bear, I think the college would be a good terminus.
- Paris – ESABA has talked to businesses about how this type of project developing permanent transit that brings along investment as well. Though they don't want their street to be torn up for 2 years, when we ask whether they just want things to stay the same as they are now...they say no.
- Jeanne – would the Heights help draw attention to this?
- Paris – we've been trying to encourage discussion about infrastructure tying the heights to the rest of the eastside...with not much success
- John – on 9/30 the Purple People are having a party, called the Purple Line Community Fest. Anyone interested in this conversation is welcome. There will be discussions, breakouts, & at least one county commissioner will be present.

**Purple Line Community Fest:
9/30 at 6:30 pm at 1626 White Bear Ave St Paul**

- Tim – reminded us that the people making these decisions aren't the ones *truly* impacted & who need transit. People who *actually* use transit every day and need this service need to be centered in this.
- Yan Chen – sounds like we want to reverse engineer...want to have the end at the college/White Bear. Do we have what we want as eastsiders? It's critical that we plan transit before development. It's really for us on the eastside to lead the way & express our desires.
 - Jack – thanked Yan & said that this is exactly why we wanted to have this meeting & think others should happen. Talked about our issues with Metro Transit and how they've bent to White Bear & Maplewood but when we expressed issues with the plan, they just told us 'no.'
 - Yan – mentioned that contacting representatives is a need here
 - Emma – we do have a tool online to send a message to your representative, which people can use (& we can ensure is updated)
- Jack – unsure about people's (districts & orgs) positions about the development
 - Ianni – we endorsed White Bear Ave & center
 - Tim M – we were trying to have a full board decision but our discussions have been in favor of the Purple Line w/better options on Arcade
 - John S – D1 has no current position on the Purple Line, though we were in favor of converting White Bear Ave from 3 to 2 lanes. MICAH is in favor.
 - Paris – ESABA asked Maplewood to work together w/the data to look at things. In favor of transit-oriented development. Concerned about mitigation funds to help during development.
 - Gabby – we don't have a formal stance...thinking about it in terms of our goals for the Creek...it's been hard working with them due to

Metro Transit not communicating with us. Learned that along Johnson Pkwy Metro Transit's current plans allow for no room for the Daylighting project. This hiccup gives more time for the creek planning to catch up & having discussions about changing the design on Johnson parkway to try to ensure the creek can be brought to the surface along that part of the daylighting route.

- Patricia – important for district councils to support this vision (daylighting the creek). We should take advantage of this extra time. We had Metro Transit here a few months ago & they interrupted us...curious whether Maplewood & White Bear Lake's response is also related to this posture? Maybe that's overly optimistic but part of the failure is the dysfunction in Metro Transit's approach to community engagement.
- Gabby – there was a possibility for work to be done on our project while they did construction for the Purple Line. If this project goes away, we'll have to do that much more fundraising to address this.
- Jack – notably, 3 years ago when the PPCC was asked to comment on the Rush Line environmental study, we included comments about integration of the Daylighting project, inclusion of land use/mitigation of gentrification in development, and electric vehicles. So we've done a lot of work on this + our elected officials also know & care a lot.
- Rebecca T – I love this idea of coming together to decide what we want. As someone who used to bike & bus, the only bike infrastructure added to the St. Paul bike plan was to Maryland. All of a sudden that was removed b/c that would purportedly prevent the Purple Line from happening. There's no bike infrastructure planned east of Johnson. As a community, we see how these things are connected (e.g. the environment – e.g. prioritizing daylighting the Creek, avoiding & mitigating gentrification, businesses) and if we could include safe biking that would be helpful.
 - Emma – Metro Transit adopted a community engagement plan that includes equity as the first part of their new regulations. They're getting national recognition for something that they've only just (this month) started training for. We need to hold their feet to the fire to stick to this resolution THEY are championing.
- Rebecca – we did schedule a meeting with Chai Lee. Thought it would just be us and his office but 4 other people from Metro Transit attended. Chai didn't speak at all. The project staff only spoke & said the same exact things they've been saying in these meetings. We pushed more in the meeting – saw that Metro Transit had two other back pocket solutions that they hadn't shown the community.
- Seanne – let's identify the cohort partnerships: all 4 district councils, the Purple People, Wakan Tipi, MICAH, Eastside Environmental Justice, ESABA, Railroad Island Neighborhood Group, Move MN (part of the Purple People), St. Paul Bike Coalition, St. Paul 350, Hmong American Partnership, the YMCA, Skatepark people, Sustain St. Paul, St. Paul Port Authority (Christina), St. Paul Freedom Library, ESNBC, Habitat for Humanity, PABA, CLUES, Indigenous Roots, Metro State, St. Paul Brewing, Hmong Village,

Cookie Cart, Urban Roots, Century College, Family Values for Life, schools, the libraries (maybe), American Lung Association, American Indian Family Center, Health Partners, Kids & Cars, trade unions, Hour Car,

- Seanne - We should outline our position. Can revisit document Jack mentioned earlier, tweak it.
 - Ianni – Purple People might have something, too. [currently drafting a letter]
 - Seanne – we can take these & adopt this as our position
 - Paris – likes the idea of engaging our own city planner & engineer.
 - Joann asked whether CURA (UMN) can help us.
 - John S – Blue Line extension group has had a ton of work framing that project as anti-displacement. Perhaps we look at that work, the legislative dollars received, & the CURA report on anti-displacement
 - Patricia – we went through this w/Maryland & that is how I got involved on this council. Talked about how they got push back about development suggestions but they tried things and now it's a much safer street to walk and drive on. How much more so for White Bear Ave.
- Jack – heard from Commissioner Xiong that Metro Transit has 18 more months. I suggest we tell them this is OUR timeline for when you need to make decisions.
 - Ianni – only caveat is considering federal guidelines
 - Jack – their engineers can tell us those & even if they don't...to the extent Metro Transit has been unsuccessful bringing White Bear & Maplewood along, we can bring them along.

**People's Climate Action Summit
(looking at community geothermal)
10/5 10:30-12 pm at 1801 Lacrosse Ave St Paul 55119**

- Patricia - This is part of planning for a just transition & the city needs help.

7. Northern Iron and Machine:

7:30 pm

Updates from East Side Environmental Justice (ESEJ)

- Patricia – we have a core group conducting power mapping, had an op ed in the St. Paul paper (behind a paywall unfortunately). Next planning meeting is 10/2, which means next larger group meeting is 10/16 at 6 pm at the Eastside Freedom Library
- Jack – quick update is that last week there was a hearing about the order. Seems like it will go to trial & won't be settled in district court. Will be 30-day public review of Northern Iron's updated permit application. We'll all need to keep our eyes & ears trained on this.
 - Patricia – related that MPCA & Northern Iron are in court presenting their priorities but our concerns are not & that's important.

8. Get Out the Vote!

- a Emma- PPCC Executive Committee talked about holding an event w/the Secretary of State for a GOTV effort. We have some options. Would be great b/c we have low voter turnout in our area, lots of young people, & some people w/felony records.
 - i Joann – I always think in-person b/c you can explain things better. Have held events at schools.
 - ii Giovonna – suggested it be hybrid. Some districts have an OWL (e.g. D1).
 - iii Jack – questions to ask people: are you registered, do you know your polling place, have you looked at your sample ballot. MNvotes.org has everything!
 - iv Marci – we need to connect w/T.O.N.E. U.P. re: GOTV efforts for formerly incarcerated folks w/records; Marci can assist w/hybrid w/OWL, too
 - v Anna-Marie – is an election judge & can support this as well

ADJOURN

8:00 pm

O Next PPCC Community Meeting: Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Note location for October meeting: **Hmong American Partnership, 1075 Arcade St.

Engage * Educate * Empower