





PAYNE PHALEN DISTRICT FIVE PLANNING COUNCIL

STRONG  SAFE  WELCOMING  CONNECTED  NEIGHBORHOODS

Meeting Minutes Neighborhood Action Committee March 17, 2009

[**Present:** Brian Cooper, Robert Fox, Buzz Wilson, Laurie Krivitz, Roy Evans, Ryan Kapaun, Kerry Stone, Dave Theisen, Tom Russ, and Larry Simpson. **Staff:** Leslie McMurray Patty Lammers]

Item one: Call to Order, Welcome, Roll, and Introductions

- NAC Chair Rob Fox called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. He introduced himself, welcomed all the residents in the audience, recognized the meeting's special guests, District 5 President Ryan Kapaun, and the District 5 staff. NAC Chair Fox then had the NAC committee members introduce themselves.

Item Two: Review of Agenda

- R. Fox reviewed the March 17, 2009 NAC meeting agenda noting that Councilmember Lee Helgen would be added to the agenda as the first speaker during the Public Forum item and so he could provide an overview of the city budget to the meeting's attendees. Mr. Fox noted the majority of the meeting would be dedicated to the discussion of Wilder Recreation Center's future. The revised agenda was approved by consensus.

Item Three: Public Forum: The Future of Wilder Recreation Center

R. Fox introduced Councilmember Lee Helgen who gave a brief overview the City's budget situation. Highlights are as follows.

- City Council is faced with some difficult choices. The Pawlenty administration has un-allotted millions of dollars in local government aid, the city already needs to overcome a substantial deficit in 2009 and in 2010, and sales tax and building permit revenues are down sharply. About \$40 million needs to be found in 2009 and 2010.
- The general fund budget is what is being looked at to make cuts. Departments that are paid from the general fund are Police, Libraries, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and the City Attorney. Approximately 80% of the costs in the general fund are related to personnel. The Mayor has asked for a 14% cut in all departments, but Parks and Recreation, the City Attorney, and Libraries will have to bear the brunt of the cuts because City Council believes it must maintain public health and public safety funding. Therefore, the Police and Fire Departments will be shielded from a large reduction in their budgets.
- The budget cuts required of Parks and Recreation translates into closing three recreation centers and re-partnering five others.
- Mr. Helgen indicated that no cuts were definite just yet because no one is certain where the economy is headed. However, there is a good chance that even more cuts may be needed in the future.

R. Fox introduced Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Area Supervisor Kathy Korum and asked her to explain the decision making process as it related to closing and re-partnering area rec. centers. Highlights are as follows.

- While Ms. Korum is the area supervisor, the final decisions to close and/or re-partner the recreation centers would be made by the City Council. She has a personal interest vested in the East Side as she grew up in the area and is a resident. Parks and Recreation has attempted to keep at least one rec. center within a mile of every resident. Their biggest costs are staff and overhead.
- Partnering at rec. centers is not new. The Boys and Girls Clubs have partnered with the City at a number of sites, as have some schools, Merrick, and other special interest groups such as the Blackhawks who operate the Orchard Recreation Center.
- In the case of Wilder Recreation Center, Parks and Recreation is attempting to capitalize upon a 15-year partnership it has had with City Academy, which currently pays rent and operates its academic activities from the center. The school already provides some after school programming at the recreation center and could possibly take on a larger role.
- The Lower East Side Football program will remain at Wilder, and Parks and Recreation can send part time staff to open the gymnasium, provide meals for certain programs, etc. All rec. centers will continue to have their outdoor fields, play areas, sidewalks and parking places maintained by the City.
- If the Arlington Rec. Center were to be shut down for construction some programming and staff would be shifted around to other sites and Wilder would likely be one of them. Another idea would be to ensure that kids were provided the opportunity to use the Circulator Buses to get to sites where programming was being offered.
- Whether the Wilder building could still be used by other groups for meeting space once it was re-partnered would be up to the new partner but it would certainly be an option.
- The mobile playground teams will still be in operation and could provide some activities at Wilder as well as places currently without amenities. Linda Flynn is heading the program.
- A concern was mentioned that community organizations could rent gym space to certain paying customers and reduce the amount of time that local kids had access to the gym. Ms. Korum noted that renting of gym space was not common, but they encourage rentals to occur during non-peak hours.
- Wilder Recreation Center operations currently cost \$240,000 annually, with \$26,000-\$28,000 of that being utilities.
- Ms. Korum has only met one time with City Academy; a re-partnering would not take place until the fall of 2009. If City Academy cannot partner with the City to expand community services then she will be seeking advice from the community to determine service priorities for the site.

R. Fox introduced Primary Administrator of City Academy, Milo Cutter, and asked her to explain her institution's position towards the opportunity. Highlights are as follows.

- City Academy is glad to be involved with the community and part of the decision making process. In the 15 years the school has rented Wilder from the city it has invested over \$1 million into the recreation center and \$8 million dollars into housing initiatives in the surrounding area.
- She has only met with Parks and Recreation one time, but is hopeful that City Academy can increase its services to the community; however, the school will only do so if the City is willing to collaborate in a partner relationship.
- The City Academy board is putting together a plan for assuming more programming at Wilder, but is itself facing a 10-17% reduction in funding.
- City Academy can only enter into 1-year commitments at the facility because of laws governing charter schools.
- City Academy would be very open to working with a variety of community groups and would appreciate the assistance of a booster club.
- A resident expressed concerns about large groups of youth who have gathered around the center in the past. Ms. Cutter indicated that loitering was a problem and she wanted the tot lot well lit at night. Ms. Korum interjected that

the large groups of youth hanging out at the site a couple of years ago was an unintended consequence of a poorly conceived program by a rec. leader that is no longer employed by Parks.

At this point Chair Fox opened the floor to additional comments from the special guests and to questions from the community members.

- Ms. Korum mentioned that if volunteers would partner with Parks and Rec. staff, then service times could be doubled. Evening staffing is hurting the city the most in financial terms.
- Mr. Helgen noted that the mayor was looking at July to be when all the changes proposed by the budget cuts would take effect. Any changes at Wilder wouldn't occur until September.
- Ms. Korum mentioned that her office was pushing for sequenced changes.
- Mr. Helgen claimed that the City would still own and take responsibility for Wilder.
- R. Fox asked for the rationale for removing the life guards from Phalen Beach. Ms. Korum noted that there would be staff thru this summer, possibly at reduced hours though. She noted that the beach is unstaffed when the beach is not in season and also for many hours during the day when in season. Parks and Rec. is in conversation with Ramsey County and the Saint Paul School District about sharing some administrative costs and staff.
- R. Fox asked about the possibility of an aquatic facility being built in the area. Ms. Korum noted that the YMCA has a pool, as well as the area high schools, but that there has been little interest heard from the East Side about additional aquatic facilities. She indicated that she would love to see one built, possibly at Phalen Rec. Center, and encouraged residents to engage in the CIB process, contact their City Council representatives and go through the regular channels.

Chair Fox thanked the special guests for their time and information and concluded the public forum.

Item Four: Work Group Strategy Session

Community Gardens/Beautification

- R. Fox suggested NAC undertake a springtime spruce-up project along Edgerton Street in April. He noted that there is \$200-\$300 available thru ISP funding for the project. K. Stone wanted to ensure the residents directly affected were involved and organized around the project. President Kapaun indicated that NAC should feel free to move forward with the project.
- R. Fox noted that a Ramsey County Master Gardner or two will likely be at the plant exchange table during the District's Spring Clean-up Event this year. He asked for volunteers willing to sit at the table to self-identify. He also asked that East Side Pride signs and Recycling Bins be provided to give away at the table.
- L. Krivitz announced that she may have found a community garden space in the upper part of the district near the Gateway Trail trailhead (SE corner of Arlington Ave. E. and I-35E). Anyone interested in being involved should let her know.

Strengthening Community Pride

- R. Fox asked staff for an update on the Welcome Kit. Ex. Dir. McMurray indicated that staff had not moved on the kit and was still awaiting direction on what the committee wanted. The committee agreed that it wants to see a template of all the materials put together. McMurray will have staff do so, but doesn't want to devote too much time to the project if the committee will want to make numerous changes after the fact.
- K. Stone noted that she had given staff a copy of the Bloomington City Guide that should serve as a nice example. She thought a cover that highlights important dates is a nice practical approach to the design. L. McMurray noted

that she will email a draft of the kit for the committee to review so we don't have to wait until the next meeting to move forward with it.

- The committee decided to approve the use of the tag line "Make It Payne-Phalen!" as a form of community branding that should be part of the full color cover to the Welcome Kit. L. McMurray will look into finding someone who can provide free design work and suggested that the committee members get involved and email their design ideas to her.

Restorative Justice

- P. Lammers announced that the Restorative Justice group was planning a program roll-out on April 23, 2009. L. McMurray noted that it would be important for committee members to attend and show support for this project.

Item Five: Announcements and Adjournment

- Resident Larry Simpson mentioned that he was working with authorities to determine the best way to help secure Phalen Park. He will make sure that District 5 staff are kept informed of what is determined so that the council can get involved and spread the word.
- There being no further business, Chair Fox wished all a happy St. Patrick's day and adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.