

PAYNE PHALEN DISTRICT FIVE PLANNING COUNCIL

STRONG  SAFE  WELCOMING  CONNECTED  NEIGHBORHOODS

Meeting Minutes Neighborhood Action Committee January 20th, 2008

[**Present:** Rob Fox, Brian Cooper, Laurie Krivitz, Roy Evans, Ryan Kapaun, Jimmy Gerding, Larry Simpson, Dave Theisen, Tom Russ., Joann Ellis, Linda Jungwirth, and Aaron Shatton. **Staff:** Patty Lammers and Leslie McMurray. **Special Guest Speaker:** Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough.]

Item One: Call to Order, Welcome, & Introductions

- Chair Rob Fox called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

Item Two: Review of Agenda

- R. Fox reviewed the draft agenda.
- D. Theisen made a request to have discussions about trash in alleyways and alleyway snow plowing.
- R. Fox noted that alleyway trash could be discussed after the community gardens/beautification item. The alleyway snow plowing item would be discussed under announcements.
- The revised agenda was approved by consensus.

Item Three: Public Forum – How County Government Works and Works with Communities

Guest Presenter Jim McDonough, Ramsey County Commissioner

Mr. McDonough provided a presentation on how the county works, what services it provides, and how a resident can obtain information from the county.

- Mr. McDonough has been making outreach attempts around the county. He has focused on meeting with small grassroots groups like block clubs.
- Ramsey County receives the largest percentage of a household's total residential property tax.
- Ramsey County receives MN state mandates on service delivery and quantity outcomes. Some mandates are funded, some are not funded. Ramsey County has certain core areas of services: Human Services (requires about 50% of the budget); Corrections/Public Safety; Public Health; Parks and Recreation (suburbs only); Libraries (suburbs only); Public Works (suburbs only); Court Services; Solid Waste; Property, Birth, and Death Records.
- About 85% of the county budget is mandated by the state for specific programs. About 15% of the budget has some flexibility in how it's used.
- The County Sheriff and the County Attorney are both elected positions and each office has the ability to use its budget at its own discretion, although the county board approves their budget proposals. The County Sheriff and the County Attorney can sue the county if they can prove their budget allocations are not adequate.
- Residents can contact their commissioner if they have questions or concerns. The commissioners are accountable to the public.
- A question was asked about the consolidation of services with St. Paul. Answer: county libraries bulk purchase along with Saint Paul Libraries. The Public Health programs merged several years ago. The most recent merger was the law

enforcement communications center, spearheaded by Commissioner McDonough. Consolidation is difficult because of “turf war” mentalities.

- A question was asked about the length of time needed to record property deeds. Answer: not sure of the exact amount of time currently needed to record, but it’s now well within the accepted standard (approx. 2-3 weeks).
- A question was asked about the reason for the County allowing homeowners to be delinquent with property taxes for five years before forfeiture action is taken. Answer: not certain about the specific time frame, but will research the topic and report back to the committee.
- A question was asked about how the County budget is prepared to deal with a loss of revenues due to increased foreclosures. Answer: the County sets aside an “uncollectable taxes” line item in the budget in anticipation of such occurrences. If the actual uncollectable taxes amount exceeds what is set aside in the budget, then cuts will need to be made to the budget.
- A question was asked about the Duluth and Case Recreation Center’s proposed re-design and the possible re-location of the Frank and Sims Yard Waste Site. Answer: Dan Bostrom’s idea for the Rec. Center is supported, but the commissioner’s position is that the city must find a suitable relocation site for the compost area. Exploration of potential sites is currently underway, with a site in Dayton’s Bluff seeming to be the best place for the time being.
- A suggestion was made that the commissioners should ask tougher questions at their hearings (e.g. why aren’t probation officers working nights? Why in the current fiscal climate is Corrections moving to hire more expensive employees to do what case aides have done for so long? What are the numbers of runaways at places like Totem Town?).
- Mr. McDonough mentioned that he anticipated an increased need for Human Services due to the declining economy. He suggested that neighbors and District Councils could help by encouraging those affected to seek help before issues of violence, chemical and alcohol abuse, etc. become problems.
- A resident noted that the county should explore developing an additional dog park because the Arlington Dog Park is currently overused and disrupting residential life.
- The commissioner’s aide indicated that master gardeners who are employed by the County could assist with neighborhood beautification efforts. Each is required to provide 50 hours of volunteer service per year.

Item Five: Work Group Breakout Session

- The committee broke up into two work groups to discuss community gardening/beautification and community pride.

Item Six: Restorative Justice Work Group Report

- T. Russ gave an update about the restorative justice initiative and handed out some information. He noted that the group is currently looking into purchasing a training program which is estimated to cost between \$900 and \$1000.
- The group is working on a mission statement and outreach pieces.
- The group works closely with D5 staff and the City Attorney.
- The next meeting for the work group is Thursday, January 22nd.

Item Seven: Community Gardening/Beautification Work Group Report

- L. Krivitz noted that D5’s E.D., L. McMurray, is exploring potential gardening sites that are city owned.
- B. Cooper noted that the group has met with Ramsey County master gardeners to move the project forward.
- D. Theisen discussed his concern about trash being dumped in the alleyway behind his house. Patty noted that residents do not have to pay for the removal of trash dumped in alleyways. Citizens should contact Citizen Services at 651-266-8989 and the city will take corrective action.

Item Eight: Increasing Community Pride Work Group Report

- R. Fox reported that the group had reviewed a welcome packet put together by the D5 staff. The group will provide recommendations to staff about how to best package the information.
- Staff has assembled a calendar of numerous local events, which the group hopes to publicize and use to increase outreach and volunteer recruitment efforts.
- They group now has a list of area school principals and hopes to contact them in an effort to increase community pride in their sports teams, etc.
- Patty provided some information about hosting block parties; the group hopes to get local organizations to sponsor summertime/NNO parties.

Item Nine: Announcements

- D. Theisen mentioned his concern that the city does not plow alleyways. Staff mentioned that alleyway snow removal in St. Paul is not a current City responsibility and there is significant resistance to changing what has become a cottage industry for snow plow owners across Saint Paul. Rob Fox indicated that the topic was more appropriate to the CPED committee and NAC wouldn't pursue it.
- D. Theisen noted that a city employee had told him that snow plowing hadn't occurred on his street because the amount of snow measured at the MSP airport wasn't enough to call a snow emergency. Rob Fox asked Dave Theisen to research where snowfall measurements are taken before the city announces a snow emergency and to report back to the committee.
- D5 staff introduced a new door-hanger with information on them about St. Paul's snow removal ordinance relating to walkways. Residents were encouraged to distribute the door-hangers to educate and/or remind their neighbors who were slow in clearing their walks.

Item Ten: Adjournment

- Rob Fox asked if there were any other topics that needed to be discussed or mentioned. There being none, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.