



RAILROAD ISLAND TASK FORCE

Neighbors That Care About Their Community

MINUTES OF MEETING

Thursday, January 15, 2009

In attendance: Linda Arnesen, Gary Bobb, Mary Brauer, Chelsea DeArmond, John Metzger, Barb Mundahl, Al Oertwig, Sheri Pemberton-Hoiby, Troy Trooien

1. Call to Order.

2. Introductions.

3. Lower Payne Avenue Reconstruction and Streetscape Report (Mary Brauer)

Mary introduced Barb Mundahl, from the City of St. Paul Department of Public Works. Barb is the project engineer for the Payne Avenue Phase 1 Project.

Barb updated the Task Force on the Phase 1 Project. It is proceeding as scheduled. Funding should be safe as it was 2008 money. There is one real estate transaction that still needs to be resolved before the project goes out for bid. Details need to be finalized on the rain garden project at Beaumont and Payne. Then the project will be bid with a projected start date in May or June.

Barb distributed drawings of the current intersection and what it will look like when the rain garden is installed. She also brought plans for three types of plantings: a sun garden, a shade garden, and a mixed sun/shade garden. Attendees discussed the various options, and the consensus was to go with the mixed sun/shade garden as it had trees, as well as blooming and non-blooming plants that would provide good color mixture. Barb invited anyone in the community who is knowledgeable and interested in other plants to contact her to see if they would work out. There was some discussion about whether or not to have a path through the garden. It was decided to keep it as it would add visual interest; however, it was suggested that it be flagstone rather than mulch. There was a discussion on whether or not there should be a bench in the garden. No decision was made on this. Mary Brauer volunteered to find out more about the Ramsey County 1000 benches project to see if one would be available. Troy Trooien questioned Barb Mundahl about the possibility that the basement of 608 Beaumont could flood once the rain garden is installed. Neither Barb nor Sheri Pemberton had ever heard of a problem with basement flooding due to a rain garden installation.

Barb reported that the City has agreed to provide the maintenance for the rain garden. They will buy plants, grade the site, buy and spread the topsoil and mulch. They are asking the community for assistance with the planting, possibly in the Fall of 2009 or else Spring 2010, depending on the project completion date. The City will weed about once per year, but appreciate neighbors helping maintain it during the year. Attendees felt this would be a good neighbor project for Railroad Island, and possibly Hope Academy.

4. Vacant Properties Committee Report (Linda Arnesen)

Sheri Pemberton reported on the status of the properties that Gary Bobb submitted:

738 Bradley – Category 3 – Notice to Proceed with Demolition dated 1-13-09
759 Edgerton – Category 2
628 Bush – Category 2 – But a permit issued 12/08
738 Burr – Category 2 – Building Permit 10/15/08
741 Jessie – Category 2 – Owned by Wells Fargo – Inspection
663 Payne – Owned by Wells Fargo – Trying to get them to donate to City
676 Rivoli – Category 2
638 Bedford – Category 2 – Owned by Chase Bank
759 Edgerton – Lien by IRS
437 Mt. Ida – Demolished

Linda will send the list to Steve Magner at DSI.

One of the attendees reported that the big white house on Hopkins (which is supposed to be vacant) had lights on when the rest of the area was without power due to a blown transformer. Sheri encouraged attendees to keep reporting any unusual activity at vacant houses, and to report any houses that are not registered vacant but appear to be so.

Gary Bobb asked Sheri to check on 599 Payne – Is it vacant? She suggested that he report it to Steve Magner.

Mary Beth Redmond has volunteered to chair the Vacant Properties Committee.

5. PED Update (Sheri Pemberton-Hoiby)

The City has submitted an application for Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds from the Housing and Economic Recovery Act in the amount of \$4.3 million. They have also applied to Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) for an additional \$4.5 million to acquire vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties. The money must be spent within 18 months once awarded.

6. Marketing Committee Report (Chelsea DeArmond)

The Marketing Committee has lined up a volunteer to host a Railroad Island website, as well as several volunteers to develop and maintain the content.

Sheri suggested that the committee put together a brochure to be distributed during the home tour in April. (One of the Brownstones will be on the tour.) Al Oertwig volunteered to check to see if District 5 Invest St. Paul funds could be used to cover the printing costs.

Chelsea is encouraging Railroad Island residents to submit stories to the St. Paul Almanac, and distributed information to those in attendance. Several residents' stories were published in the last edition.

7. District 5 Updates (Al Oertwig)

Al reported that the CIB proposal for upgraded lights and railings on the Payne Avenue bridge over Phalen Corridor was submitted as one of the District 5 per the Railroad Island Task Force request. The upper Payne Avenue Streetscape and Revitalization (Dan Bostrom's proposal) was included in the Mayor's letter to Washington with a list of infrastructure projects that need funding. Al also reported that there are three District 5 representatives meeting on the Task Force working on the 3M property redevelopment.

8. Other

- Lafayette Bridge update – Linda distributed a book with pictures and drawings relating to the Lafayette Bridge reconstruction project.
- Friends of Swede Hollow (FOSH) – Nothing new to report.
- Police Memorial Garden 2009 – We need volunteers in the spring to work on this garden. It needs new plants and grass. Someone suggested that the Minnesota Horticultural Society might be a resource. It was also suggested that the Railroad Island Task Force establish a Gardening Committee and recruit members to participate. It was suggested that Cindy Berg might be interested in working on this.
- Ice Skating Rink – Andy Twedt wrote a letter to Council Member Dave Thune regarding the need for an ice skating rink on Railroad Island. She had shared the draft of the letter via email with a number of Railroad Island residents, who expressed both concern and support. Andy has not received a response from Mr. Thune.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 6:30 at the Eastside Police Precinct.