

**Draft Minutes
Community Development Committee
October 11, 2016**

Attending: Ken Webb (Chair), Bob Hain, Diann Anders, Kathy Sikora, Richard Callendar, Becca Staley, Sierra Saunders, Kelley Yemen, Bill Bliesath, Emilie Hitch, Garrett Peterson, Steve Peacock, Dan Olson, Pat Herje, Winston Cavert, Cam Gordon (City Council Member), Brian Miller (Seward Redesign), Doug Wise (SNG Housing Coordinator).

The July 12, 2016 Community Development Committee minutes were approved.

New Committee Chair and SNG Board Members

Committee Chair Ken Webb said that he has submitted a letter resigning from the position. Ken said that his job has become more demanding and he needs to do some work on his house. Ken said he would be willing to serve as chair until a new chair is appointed.

Doug Wise said there are vacancies on the SNG Board of Directors. SNG is seeking volunteers to fill these positions. He said the SNG Annual Meeting is on November 9th. Doug encouraged committee members to think about running for the board and invited them to attend the meeting.

Franklin Avenue Crosswalks Discussion

Garrett Peterson provided some background history on this issue. The need for crosswalks on Franklin Avenue between 22nd and 26th Avenue has been discussed at SNG meetings for over 10 years. At one point, plans were drawn up for pedestrian improvements and the city received a grant from Transit for livable Communities to install the improvements. However, the city determined that the cost was too high and returned the grant funds.

At the January meeting, the committee discussed and approved a motion to send a letter to the city and County requesting the installation of crosswalks on Franklin Avenue between 22nd and 26th Avenues. Representatives from the County and city attended the April CDC meeting. At the April meeting, Kelley Yemen with Hennepin County said that they would install video cameras to cover the area between 22nd and 26th to determine how many pedestrians are crossing and where the natural crossing points occur.

Kelley said the video study was conducted and they found the number of pedestrians crossing the street was much greater than the minimum required for a crosswalk. The County would like to install a crosswalk at 24th Avenue with a flashing yellow light. They have included the project in an application for funding and they will contact SNG when they have more information.

I-94 Long-Range Planning Project

Emilie Hitch, an applied anthropologist, said her team is leading a project of Listening for Engagement Design that is a part of the larger initiative by MNDOT called Rethinking I-94. The study includes the I-94 corridor from I-394 to east of downtown St. Paul. The study will look at long-term needs for projects beginning in 2020, as well as short-term rehabilitation needs. Emilie said she is one of the first anthropologists that MNDOT has contracted with and she will gather information on cultural relationships throughout the corridor.

Kathy Sikora said it has been over a year since MNDOT came to the neighborhood to discuss

this project. At the time they said they were collecting data about the Riverside/25th Avenue exchange and would provide the information. We have heard nothing from them. It was also pointed out that in the past MNDOT has not done a very good job at community engagement. When they do come out to hear from the community, we never get any feedback or hear what other communities have recommended. MNDOT comes back with a final plan and says this is what they are going to do. They are not interested in receiving any more input.

Emilie said this project is different from the way they have done things in the past. She said they are trying to change and it's not an easy process. She said that is why she was hired and she will take back to them what she hears.

Brian Miller said he has tried to contact MNDOT to get information about this project without success. Brian said he is trying to bring together a number of organizations to help in the planning process and would like MNDOT to work with them and provide some resources. He said he would like to receive a letter of support from MNDOT.

It was pointed out that when I-94 was built, it divided a lot of communities. The study should look at reconnecting communities, not just improving MNDOT's assets. Cam Gordon asked: What can we recover that was lost? How can we make neighborhoods more livable?

Kathy Sikora said she would like to hear what is going on up and down the corridor. The environmental and cultural impacts need to be carefully considered. There are 145 bridges over the Interstate within the corridor. Each of those bridges needs to be studied to see how they can be changed to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

Emilie said she would take this information back to MNDOT. She said she would be glad to meet with us again and other groups in the area.

Update on Replacement of I-94 Noise Walls

Andrew Lutaya, MNDOT project manager for the noise wall replacement project, handed out a map showing the walls to be replaced. All of the noise walls on the north side of I-94 and the noise wall east of 20th Avenue on the south side of I-94 will be replaced. The walls on the north side will be replaced in 2017 and the south side wall in 2018. He distributed a handout showing different types of walls. He said the final decision on the north side walls needs to be made within the next two months. Steve Peacock from Augsburg College said that their engineering people are looking at it, but it needs further review in terms of aesthetics. It was decided that since Augsburg is the most affected by the north walls, they should have the primary input.

It was pointed out that when MNDOT came and talked about the project last year, they said work would also be done to the south side wall east of Riverside Avenue. The residents said the wall is deteriorating and needs extensive work. Andrew said that wall would be repaired. Andrew said that MNDOT will inspect the wall to determine what is needed. He said that when the walls were inspected for the replacement plan, it was determined the wall didn't need replacement.

It was brought up that there are a number of houses on 30th Avenue and 8th Street that don't receive any noise protection from the wall because there is no wall between 8th Street and the river. Andrew said MNDOT does have a process to determine if a wall is needed, but he didn't know the history on this area. The residents asked if this area by the dog park could be studied and Andrew said he would follow up on it.

Litter along the south side of Franklin Avenue between 27th and 28th Avenues

Doug Wise said SNG has received complaints about litter along the south side of Franklin Avenue between 27th and 28th Avenues, particularly around the laundromat. He said the callers were advised to call 311. Doug said there is green space along Franklin and 27th south of Franklin between the sidewalk and parking lots/buildings. While it is nice to have the green space, it has been collecting a lot of litter from people walking by.

Committee members agreed that it is the property owner's responsibility to clean it up and people should continue to call 311. Doug asked Cam Gordon if there is a city policy on putting trash receptacles on public sidewalks. Cam said he would check into it. Several committee members expressed frustration about people dropping litter.

Report from Doug Wise, SNG Housing Coordinator

Doug said that he had been contacted by a couple of residents wanting the proposed Ethiopian church at 30th Avenue and the Greenway on the agenda. Doug said he would contact them to get it on the agenda for the November meeting.

Doug said November 8th, the second Tuesday in November, is Election Day. He suggested holding the next committee meeting on November 15th. **The committee agreed to hold the next meeting on November 15th.**

Other Business

Bill Bliesath, owner of the duplex at 2220 26th Avenue, would like to convert the attic space into a loft apartment for himself. In order to do this, he would have to have the property rezoned. Bill had attended a previous CDC meeting and the committee looked at the other properties on the block. Most of the properties on the block are three or four unit buildings. At the time, the committee suggested he talk to the other owners to see if they would be interested in rezoning as well.

Bill said he spoke to 9 other property owners. None of them had any objection to the rezoning of his property and only one was not in favor of rezoning the whole area. He said the one property not in favor of rezoning is a triplex.

Motion: The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) supports the rezoning of 2220 26th Avenue South and surrounding properties to allow three and four unit buildings. Bob Hain moved and Ken Webb seconded. Motion passed. Cam Gordon abstained.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.