

Seward Neighborhood Group Committee Development Committee Meeting Minutes | June 9, 2020

Present: Helen Mohamed (Seward Towers), Kerry Cashman (SNG), Robin Garwood (Minneapolis City Council Member Cam Gordon staff), Hillary Oppmann (Seward Civic and Commerce Association staff), Chris Romano (Seward Redesign) Alexis Troschinetz (SNG board), Lisa Boehlke (SNG board), Joe Buck, Neal Cuthbert, Jim Welna (Seward Civic and Commerce Association board), Rebecca Staley, Sheldon Mains (CDC member) Louisa Kelleher, Greg Tromiczak, Richard Cole, Matthew Hendricks, RyAnne Quirk, Teri Kwant, Cam Gordon (Minneapolis City Council member Ward 2), Fred Kreider.

Discussion: How should the money in the Seward GoFundMe be allocated to businesses in Seward damaged by the unrest after George Floyd's death?

Chris Romano shared the criteria that the Lake Street Council is using for their GoFundMe Lake Street in their survey:

1. severity of damage
2. ability to seek reimbursement from insurance
3. priority for people of color
4. provide more funding to businesses with a commitment to Seward than ones with corporate ownership

Hillary Oppmann suggested that we give everyone a minimum of \$1,000, then more to people of color, community-owned, those businesses with no insurance and/or some insurance that doesn't cover the damage. For example, Cash and Pawn located at Lake and 28th, as well as the one on 8th and Cedar.

Neal Cuthbert pointed out the tenants in the Ivy Building were businesses and should be treated as businesses. Six businesses sustained physical damage (fire or water damage from fighting the fire) and other businesses were displaced, bringing the total of businesses forced to close to forty. In addition, the Ivy building is closed indefinitely so all tenants are affected. Some businesses suffered broken glass. This could be fixed with smaller sums of money.

Chris Romano suggested that the fund repair physical damage to businesses rather than covering costs of being out of business due to the unrest. The people present gave a thumbs up to fund physical damage only.

Hillary Oppmann pointed out that the SCCA (Seward Commerce and Civic Association) wanted to draft a survey for businesses to self-identify damage occurred and the amount of damage. She pointed out that a relatively small number of businesses sustained physical damage.

Neal Cuthbert suggested that we make the application simple to use, include a picture of the damage and confirmed by SCCA if they are a member, perhaps \$500 for some damage and \$1,000 or more for more extensive damage. We would be giving out two types of grants.

Jim Welna and Chris Romano thought that the community needed to know the criteria used to give grants.

Alexis Troschinetz suggested that perhaps we consider the approximately \$26,000 currently in the Seward GoFundMe as part one. Then, if we raise more money, we can provide additional funds.

Fred Kreider wondered if tenants are responsible for paying for the damages to their businesses. Hillary Oppmann stated that the Metro Place business tenants are responsible for covering the damage to their businesses. Capitol Café sustained \$6,000 in damages. Jim Welna stated that a new door could cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000.

Neal Cuthbert suggested that we do additional outreach to the tenants of the Ivy Building. Sheldon Mains pointed out that the Ivy Building is a member of SCCA.

Joe Buck who helped put up plywood added that buying screws and filling the holes where the wood was removed costs relatively little. Volunteers did this.

Lisa Boehlke suggested the importance of providing funds to businesses to show solidarity. Neal Cuthbert said that we need to get the money on the street as soon as possible to show Seward CARES about them.

Kerry Cashman stated that we should put the criteria to be used for giving out the Seward GoFundMe grants immediately, so people are clear on how their donations are used.

Sheldon Mains suggested that we have another fundraising push to raise more money.

Alexis Troschinetz and Hillary Oppmann suggested that we post the list of businesses damaged and let businesses tell us if they sustained damage but aren't on our list. Hillary stated that donors want to know which businesses were affected by the unrest and that deliberate criteria be used for grants. Chris Romano and Lisa Boehlke stated that we should show both.

Jim Welna stated that SCCA has a list of damages to businesses, but SCCA needs to know all of the Seward businesses damaged. He added that Welna Hardware will not request any money from the fund.

Lisa Boehlke suggested that we start by giving \$500 each to the twenty-two businesses affected. That takes \$11,000 from the fund with more to be given to more businesses than we have listed. Alexis Troschinetz agreed and suggested that we survey, state criteria used for grants, and include the names of affected businesses.

Hillary Oppmann, Chris Romano, and Kerry Cashman will meet to take what was discussed at this meeting and refine it into the criteria for Seward GoFundMe grants. We need to tell businesses that we will offer them \$500 as a sign of solidarity and it is possible that additional funds could be available in the future.

Discussion: What are other ways to help small businesses in Seward?

Joe Buck informed us that volunteers could help fill the screw holes with the same color screws as the metal. Better Futures and Vineland Tree Care will take some of the plywood. ReUse MN is also hosting a Plywood Rescue program and there's a parking lot at the University of Minnesota where the rescued plywood will be available all summer to anyone for free.

Chris Romano and Joe Buck said we could provide legal help. Sheldon Mains stated we let businesses know that there is free legal assistance from a downtown Minneapolis law firm who will provide it.

SCCA, SNG, and Seward ReDesign create a page with resources for businesses suffering damage.

Fred Kreider, “Does Seward GoFundMe have IRS oversight and is tax-deductible?” Donations ultimately go to SNG and therefore are tax-deductible.

Jim Welna suggested that we encourage Seward residents to buy local from our businesses who have suffered from damage.

Kerry Cashman wondered whether we should have a neighborhood clean-up. For example, Ahlan needs its alley swept. SCCA, SNG, and Seward ReDesign could publicize the clean-up.

In summary, help Seward businesses with legal assistance, plywood, clean-up, and buying local.

Discussion: What is happening with the Agra development?

Kerry Cashman explained that Agra is very close to agreement with the sellers. Also, Agra is one of the projects that the city of Minneapolis is including in its request for funding from Met Council. Agra wanted to wait to hear back about this funding before proceeding with additional widespread public engagement; expect to hear about this funding in June.

Discussion: Other development updates

Kerry Cashman and Alexis Troschinetz informed everyone that they were contacted by some potential developers, but the developers said their situation had changed and they weren't pursuing the development at this time.

Sheldon Mains added that the Cushman property on E. Franklin is under a one-year agreement with a potential buyer. A posting on NextDoor neighbor thought that the Cushman site would become assisted living.

Discussion: What is the city of Minneapolis and the state of Minnesota doing for the damaged properties?

Cam Gordon said that city staff is looking at damaged properties. Senator Torres-Ray is pushing for state support.

Discussion: Target redevelopment

Kerry Cashman stated that a Seward resident who works for Target reached out about Target wanting to get input from the community on needs/interest as they restore the facility. He's been invited to the July CDC meeting. Teri Kwant, is working with an architectural firm that is involved in rebuilding the Target on Lake Street.