**West Maka Ska Neighborhood Council Annual Meeting (by Zoom)**

**October 11, 2022**

**Meeting Focus: Public Safety**

**Call to order:**  6:04 PM

**Presided by:** Tim Knight, Chair

**Board members in attendance:** Allan Campbell, Richard Logan, Tim Knight, Bob Gordon, Lynette Davis, Melanie Fehlberg, John Bordwell, Leyden Iraheta, Dave Stougaard

**Absent:** Megan Betterman

**Coordinator:** Michelle Sass

Tim announced that the meeting would be recorded. There were no objections.

**Approval of September minutes:** Allan moved approval. Richard seconded. **Minutes were approved.**

**Treasurer’s Report:** Dave reported there were only professional and administrative expenses in September and that spending was under budget. Dave moved approval of the Treasurer’s Report. Allan seconded. **Treasurer’s Report was approved.**

Allan asked whether we had decided on a date to work with Habitat for Humanity on a project. Michelle said we were still waiting to hear back.

Dylan Ohm asked about remaining funds and when they need to be spent. Allan answered that we have sufficient funds for current plans, but that Equitable Engagement funds need to be committed by the end of the year.

**Safety Presentations**

**Katie Blackwell, Inspector, 5th Precinct, Minneapolis Police Department**

Inspector Blackwell reported that our neighborhood has not experienced a robbery thus far in 2022, with robberies being the number one focus of the 5th Precinct. Elsewhere in the Precinct there has been a slight decline in robberies, most of which take place along major corridors. The Inspector attributed the decline to many of the perpetrators of previous crimes now being in jail and to juveniles being back in school. Blackwell warned that there is usually an uptick in robberies in November and December due to the holidays and people being distracted by cell phones or loading cars with purchases. There has also been a big uptick in auto thefts, both in our neighborhood and nationwide, with sixteen auto thefts in West Maka Ska so far this year, though only one in the past 28 days. Hyundais, Kias and rental vehicles have been particularly targeted. Most vehicles are recovered within a week, but often with drug paraphernalia found inside. There were nine burglaries of dwellings for the year to date, though none in the past 28 days. Burglaries of dwellings are most common during warm weather, when garage doors and windows are open.

Inspector Blackwell’s suggestion about how residents can help is to be alert and to report suspicious activity to 911 by voice or text. The inspector said that for non-urgent reports to police use the number 612-348-2345, or call or email 311.

Regarding the shortage of police officers, Blackwell said that training to be a police office is a four- or five-year process and once someone becomes a police officer there is a six-month training period followed by a six-month probationary period. Minneapolis also hires experienced officers from other jurisdictions which makes the process faster.

Richard Logan questioned the statistic that no robberies have taken place in West Maka Ska in 2022. Inspector Blackwell explained that for a crime to be classified as a robbery physical force must be used. Snatching of an unguarded purse, for example, would be classified as a theft, but not a robbery.

**Marion Greene, Chair, Board of Hennepin County Commissioners**

Commissioner Greene introduced Lisa Bayley, the County’s Director of Safe Communities. Ms. Bayley explained that her office was working with communities in doing gun violence prevention, using money from the Pandemic Emergency Response Fund. Her office is also investigating ways the County can address domestic violence, hate and bias crimes, and sexually trafficked youth. They are also looking at what works for violence protection from a public health perspective.

Richard applauded using the public health model.

Dylan Ohm asked whether a data set was being created. Ms. Bayley said that collecting and analyzing data was a big part of their work and they were deciding what needed to be tracked to evaluate their performance.

A resident asked whether there are plans to install cameras in the area. Commissioner Greene said that this is a question for the Park Board.

Lynette asked about cameras on County roads such as Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard. Commissioner Greene said there are cameras at many intersections on these roads.

Melanie asked about the effectiveness of cameras in preventing crime. Commissioner Greene said that the County’s cameras were primarily for traffic monitoring, not crime prevention.

Dylan asked about the impact of the large amount of construction on public safety. Commissioner Greene said this is something the County could look at jointly with the City.

Lynette and Richard raised questions about the timing and coordination of large residential construction projects along with light rail construction. Commissioner Greene responded that the light rail project was primarily a Metropolitan Council responsibility, but the County worked with both the Council and the City to coordinate these projects.

Dylan asked for more neighborhood association involvement in planning for construction projects.

Commissioner Greene suggested that we invite our Met Council representatives, John Pacheco to a meeting to learn more about the light rail project.

**Council Vice President, Linea Palmisano**

Councilmember Palmisano said that the 2040 Plan calls for high density in our neighborhood and that many of the projects now under construction have been approved for some time, but because of delays due to the pandemic and financing are just now coming to fruition. She noted that the main residential developer, Robb Bader, is local, living in Southwest Minneapolis. CM Palmisano also noted that improvements have made to the safety of the Lake/Excelsior intersection.

The City has a program for evaluating requests for traffic calming with a deadline for applications of November 1st.

CM Palmisano advised us to spend our $50,000 in equitable engagement before the end of the year.

Lynette asked whether multiple applications for traffic calming funds would be helpful. CM Palmisano indicated that a single consolidated application from the neighborhood with statements of support from individuals and organizations would be most likely to succeed.

**Inspector Blackwell**

Inspector Blackwell was invited to use her remaining allotted time and responded to the question about the usefulness of cameras in preventing crime. She said that the sight of a camera may sometimes dissuade someone from committing a crime, but cameras are more useful to help with investigations after a crime has been committed.

**Public Safety Commissioner Cedric Alexander**

John asked about what was being done to address crime on the light rail and on busses. Commissioner Alexander said the MPD works closely with Metro Transit police and safety, but that recruiting enough officers is a challenge for both police departments.

Richard asked what more could be done to create neighborhood watches and neighborhoods where people care about one another. Commissioner Alexander agreed that this was an important issue and one about which he is passionate and that he thought it would take time but that we could make Minneapolis one of the country’s safest cities.

A resident asked what could be done to recruit officers who would not be racist officers like Derrick Chauvin. Commissioner Alexander said that he had been involved with a task force to prepare a report for President Obama following the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. Based on that experience he has started to work with acting police chief Hoffman to rewrite training programs as one step to regaining public trust in the police.

Another resident asked whether crime was increasing or decreasing. Commissioner Alexander said that while crime fluctuates, police are making strides through Operation Endeavor, which is an extended (more than a few days) joint operation involving City police, the Sheriff’s Office, FBI, federal and state partners, targeted at the most violent offenders.

**Trahern Pollard, Founder and CEO, We Push for Peace**

Mr. Pollard described the work of We Push for Peace, which involves not just violence interruption but also giving people the skills they need to participate in the work force. WPFP works closely with law enforcement and Mr. Pollard speaks regularly with Inspector Blackwell. They work with Uptown business owners such as Stu Ackerberg on violence prevention, especially on Friday and Saturday nights.

Alyssa Wendorff, Whole Foods store manager, said that about a year ago there were a number of incidents such as car jackings and purse snatchings, some of which happened in the store. This summer there were no incidents, which Ms. Wendorff attributed to the presence of one or two WPFP members in the store at all times talking to customers and making their presence known.

Richard asked whether WPFP members are unarmed. Mr. Pollard responded that they are unarmed but work closely with law enforcement. He gave an example of WPFP reporting suspicious individuals in a car. The police then responded and broke up a carjacking at a nearby parking lot.

Richard and Bob commented on the friendliness and alertness of WPFP people at Whole Foods.

Tim offered the possibility of young professionals from the neighborhood providing assistance to WPFP in areas such as resume writing.

**Committee Report**

**Equitable Engagement**

Melanie asked whether we could provide funding for WPFP. Richard responded that we could. Allan added that our EE funds could be used to work with any organization that is doing good work anywhere in the City. This would include WPFP, Habitat of Humanity and others.

Melanie asked when the deadline is for spending these funds. Tim said they need to be committed, though not necessarily spent, by the end of the year.

Melanie suggested forming a small committee to develop recommendations for spending the funds to meet within the next two weeks. Michelle said the committee should have recommendations ready for a vote at the November meeting. Richard suggested $25,000 to Habitat for Humanity and $25,000 to We Push for Peace. Melanie suggested using Slack’s Equitable Engagement channel for the committee to discuss. Michelle reminded the board that any use of the funds would need to be vetted and approved by NCR.

**Board Election**

Richard nominated Dylan Ohm for board membership. Melanie seconded. Dylan was unanimously elected..

Dave confirmed that he was stepping down from the board as well as from his role as Treasurer. It was noted that Megan has also not sought re-election.

Tim nominated Richard for re-election to the board. Melanie seconded. Richard was unanimously re-elected.

Richard moved that all other board members who wish to continue on the board be elected by acclamation. Melanie seconded. All other board members were unanimously re-elected.

**Election of Officers**

Tim nominated Melanie for vice chair. Allan seconded. Melanie was unanimously elected.

Allan nominated Tim for chair. Richard seconded. Tim was unanimously elected.

After discussion of the role of Treasurer, Dave agreed to remain on the board and serve as Treasurer until the end of the year at which time a decision would be made about a new Treasurer. Tim moved that Dave remain on the board and remain as Treasurer until December 31st. John seconded. Dave was unanimously elected to the board and the office of Treasurer.

Lynette nominated Allan as secretary. Bob seconded. Allan was unanimously elected.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.