

Como Community Council: Officers Meeting

March 14, 2018 (Half-Time Rec)

Present: Ryan Flynn, chair; Joao Medeiros, vice chair; Amy Perna, treasurer; Tim Post, secretary; Mike Ireland, Environment Committee chair; Michael Kuchta, staff. The meeting began at 7:16 p.m.

Events

Michael gave a rundown:

- **Sunday Series.** State Fair History on Feb. 25 attracted 80 people. Scheduled are Pedestrian Safety, March 18; Home Security Through Landscape Design, April 15; Como Tree Trek, June 3. Arborist Tim Morgan has suggested a rain date of June 17 or 24 for Tree Trek; Environment can decide.)
Have not been able to nail down dates yet for a potential presentation from International Institute / Muslim-American Society of Minnesota, so it is looking less likely this will be part of Sunday Series. Perhaps we can schedule later in year as part of equity initiative.
- Other D10 events:
 - **Community Yoga** on March 4 attracted 19 participants. Future dates are May 6, Sept. 9, Dec. 2
 - Neighborhood Relations is working with Blackhawks Soccer Club to hold another **Orchard Park Block Party** on Sunday June 3. This is same day as Como Tree Trek; times do not overlap but it could affect volunteer availability.
 - After evaluating survey results from previous participants, Neighborhood Relations is scheduling **Neighborhood Garage Sale** for Saturday June 16, when weather should be warmer.
 - **Citywide Dropoff** at State Fairgrounds, June 9. Amy reported by she and Maggie Zimmerman will co-chair; Debra Pursley will oversee senior pick-up. Recruiting volunteers from D10 and D12 will be important. Michael has contacted Great River School and Hmong College Prep Academy to see if upper classmen can volunteer.
- Other community events with D10 involvement:
 - **Seed Library May Mosaic**, May 5 at Streetcar Station, being organized by Dawn Lamm
 - **Rain Barrel Workshop**, May 19 at German Immersion School, being coordinated by Mike MacDonald
 - **Boulevard rain garden workshop**, June 23 at Streetcar Station, being presented by Capitol Region Watershed District.

Community

- **Sholom Home.** Nearly 50 people attended Land Use meeting at Holy Childhood parish. DSI's Travis Bistodeau outlined city's viewpoint, discussed potential options for future, and answered questions.
- **State Fair projects.** Councilmember Henningson will host initial meeting with city agencies about our concerns and proposals on April 3 in City Hall. Michael and Ryan plan to attend. State Fair also intends to send representatives.
- **Lexington restriping.** County has drafted a preliminary restriping proposal for northbound traffic between Front-Horton. City and county continue to iron out details.

- **Lexington Crossing.** Land Use survey shows 75% of participants support crosswalk as proposed. Among supporters, 70% say adding a pedestrian-activated warning light would be their first choice of an improvement. Among opponents, half oppose the project entirely; half support it only with improvements.
- **County Commissioner forum.** Michael has received recommendations from Council of Nonprofits of potential moderators besides the League of Women Voters (which D6 says it has not had good experience.)
- **Dog Park Work Group.** Land Use is launching this group; more than a dozen residents have applied.
- **Fire station (1290 Snelling).** Architects gave overview to Land Use of proposal to convert vacant building to single-family residence. Building will need some variances – for new garage at rear, and to grandfather in dimensions of existing building. Paperwork was not filed at time of meeting, but hearing is now scheduled before next committee meeting. Because committee has vetted proposals, and nearby residents expressed minimal concerns, this may be opportunity for full board to take position March 20 without formal recommendation from committee.
- **Aging in Place.** Julia Wolf from Ramsey County, who gave presentation to board last year, is looking into starting a Healthy Aging Partnership in Como, and wants to know if D10 is interested in participating. Capacity may be an issue for us, but Michael will ask her to include us in a planning meeting if she schedules one.

Communication

- **Live streaming of board meeting.** Wi-fi crashed during February meeting, so participation was down. Viewers continue to complain about poor sound. Mike Ireland has microphone attachments that could work with smartphone. Tim also has access to higher-end camera and microphone that streams direct; he may try to borrow this. Previous authorization was only for two meetings; he would like to reauthorize at beginning of March meeting for two more months. (April streaming would be only for board meeting, not annual meeting.)
- **Survey policy.** No policy drafted yet. Biggest concern is making sure surveys on which we will base policy decisions are well-vetted. Logistical surveys, such as NRSO garage sale survey, is less of a concern.

Financials

- **Bookkeeper.** Amy contacted six leads; three responded and were interviewed. One clearly stands out: Harrington Langer and Associates. May be more expensive. Amy will talk further with them to try to lock in annual cap on fees.
- **Equity grant.** City Council approved this Feb. 21, though contract and accountability measures still need to be worked out at city level before money will be released. D10 will have to draft plan for allocating money and outreach. Leadership will draft outline for full board to flesh out.
- **Fund-raising.** Amy and Cari Ness Nesje have not been able to connect to move forward on an individual appeal campaign. Amy has spoken with previous treasurer Penny Spence. Michael will scan recent sign-in sheets to begin building database. D10 will also draft survey on what neighbors would like to see us do more of; that could help us craft appeal – donations would be targeted at specific resident priorities. Look at community plan as place to start, but keep other options open as well. We will try to craft survey language so we can be sure what appeals most effectively to residents and that we use effective messaging in our outreach. Board discussed potential ways of doing outreach, including by mail (this may

require nonprofit mailing permit) and lit-dropping (at least a pilot project, depending on volunteer availability). We also should look at providing an incentive for support, such as a window-cling that builds community identity.

Organizational Business

- **Ad-hoc fact-finding committee.** Board issued decision in closed session in February. Ryan has been in communication with resident, as necessary. Mike Ireland suggested that, in future, board do what it can to shorten time frame. One option: appoint officers as standing committee at beginning of year, so fact-finding mechanism is ready to work from day one.
- **April Annual Meeting and Elections.** Six board members are not running for re-election, and Amy intends to run for vice-chair, not treasurer. That leaves plenty of open seats. Ryan will email board members to recruit replacements. Michael will also try to get fliers up in local churches and apartment buildings. One challenge will be filling Land Use; Maggie is only returning member. Ryan may need to make appointments immediately after elections, at least on interim basis, or officers may need to fill in until committee can be reconstituted. Mike raised suggestion of allowing residents to vote and leave, rather than have to wait through entire election process. That can be accomplished through how election procedures are written or adopted. There was further discussion about increasing turnout, including alternate ways of conducting elections, and lowering voting age to 16.
- **Darius Massoudi.** D10 has received critical emails from this former board member, who has also made critical comments on Facebook. Ryan has been in communication. There was discussion on adopting a social media policy to guide staff and board engagement.
- **March 20 Board Meeting.** Agenda Items will include Amazon Smiles and a proposed change to by-laws clarifying term limits. Land Use issues that have arisen since committee meeting – including off-leash dog park, variances for old fire station, and proposed redevelopment at Larpenteur and Hamline – also may be added.

Future presentation possibilities:

- **Accessory Dwelling Units.** City is asking district councils if they would like their neighborhoods included in revision of city code. This will be sent to Land Use for April meeting.
- **City of Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan.** Ask PED for presentation in May.
- **Matty O'Reilley** (Delicata and Spring Café). Schedule ASAP after restaurant opens.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

District 10 Environmental Committee Meeting Agenda

February 28, 2018 at 7 pm

STANDARD ITEMS

Highlights/Assigned items:

- Neighborhood Resource Fair moved to October
- Rain barrel grant and workshop on the horizon
- Friends of the Mississippi mural, part II is on the way, Mike is the contact
- Como Seed Library will be holding their annual spring seed and plant exchange
- Curbside clean-up: no data yet
- Pollinator summit was very informative
- Bee Skyrise signage was shared to select information, photos, etc. for the sign to call attention to the bronze bee that was awarded to D10. Committee members will look over possibilities that were collected by Dawn and discussion will take place at the next meeting
- There are Sunday Series offerings for each month, except for May.
- The Way-finding group is working on a survey
- The committee brainstormed several items that can be added to our “to do”/ focus list for 2018 and moving forward. Committee will work to integrate items to our work plan
- Como Woodland is hosting a Bio Blitz in April
- There is an Extend the Greenway meeting in Minneapolis on April 5th

- **Call to order**

Bill Devroy, Mike Ireland, Andrew Gustin, Gordon Wrobel, Adina Weseman, Bill Niebur, Dawn Lamm, Erin Dooley, Chris Cowen, Sara Cowen, Susan Jane Cheney, Mehr Aslani, Michael Kuchta, Teri Aliberico

- **Committee member and guest introductions**

- **Approval of January minutes and January’s agenda**

- **District 10 board meeting summary**

- Adina, Erin, Cari, Laura, Michael and Mike

New, quieter ride at Como Town, no seal exhibit this summer, due to construction
Re-stripping of a number of local intersections going on
Fencing is on the way back to Shalom Home

Yoga at the Streetcar Station on a regular basis \$5 per person
Garage sale info is being surveyed
Ice Cream Social is being planned
“Welcome to Como” new neighbor packs being put together
Crime prevention packets are also being developed

Neighborhood Clean-up is June 9th. Sign up information is coming out soon, we will need more volunteers, both at the clean-up and to pick up from local seniors.

PRESENTATION

- None scheduled

INITIATIVES AND UPDATES

- **Como Connect Neighborhood Resource Fair** - Dawn, Bill D, Julie and Mike

A fair to bring together volunteer and other resources with people who need them. Proposed new date is in October; Target date 10/13/2018.

- **Participation in district council meetings with mayor's office** - Erin, Laura, Cari, Bill D and Mike

Including sustainability as part of the city-wide plan for St Paul is currently in the works. The target date to start this group will be in March.

- **District 10 cosponsorship with CRWD on the rain garden program**

There are analyses set for homeowners interested in having one. There is a workshop coming up June 23rd on establishing a rain garden on their property.

- **Rain Barrel workshop** - Mike MacDonald

The action item passed authorizing Mike to submit a grant to the CRWD. He has submitted the grant – and has set up a workshop for May 19 from 1:00-3:00. The grant would cover approximately half of the cost of a rain barrel. The workshop will welcome both new barrel buyers and others who want to know about them.

- **Friends of the Mississippi River second storm grate mural** - Mike
Action item passed authorizing we submit a letter of recommendation and cosponsor the event. The letter was written and submitted

- **Como Community Seed Library** - Dawn Lamm
Action item passed for D10 to support hosting an event at the Streetcar Station on Saturday May 5 from 10 am to 3 pm

Annual Plant and seed exchange is on! Master gardeners will be on hand to give advice. The time is now if you're planning to start seeds indoors.

The seed library is also working on an event with Frogtown Farm that will be in Frogtown, and also a seed saving workshop at New Life Church at Victoria and Larpenteur. Both of these events will be in the e-newsletter.

They are also looking at making seeds available for multiple locations (i.e. tool library), so that one could pick up an envelope of direct seed seeds.

There are also tons of local classes on gardening happening in the near future.

Dawn also shared contact information for a local landscape architect. Pete Widin 651-216-4229 – pete@artisanenvironments.com

- **Grants for admission to environmental conferences or other related events**
- Dawn Lamm

No update – item will be withdrawn from future agendas.

- **Lake Como aeration information signage** – Teri

The watershed district is working on providing information for us to share about the aeration system.

Also, Michael gave us an update on the data buoys. There are several buoys in Como Lake gathering information, and they will be working with us on how to share the information.

- **Como Curb Cleanup update** - Janna Caywood and Mike

No update yet on the phosphorous that was kept out of the lake. The leadership team for the clean up is looking at how to partner with organizations to make this go beyond home owners.

Michael will reach out to the new city administration to see if there are alternatives to how the streets are swept in the fall.

- **Best Practices for Pollinators Summit on February 8 Update** – Dawn

Dawn and Mike attended the summit and found it very informative. Topics included integrating large herbivores and educating different stakeholders. Milkweed is delicious.

The summit is an annual event, and free – but register early, seats fill up quickly.

- **Sky Rise Bronze Bee Sculpture Sign** - Dawn Lamm

Dawn started mock ups of signage possibilities. She brought information that could go onto the sign and also visuals that would work well. The committee agreed that the sign should be temporary, so the size is fairly limited, so we need to be mindful of how much we put on the sign. How should we include information should we include? How much text? How many photos? How do we show the location of both the bronze bee and the sky rise?

Dawn provided samples.

Michael will put together a survey for the committee to get everyone's opinion.

- **Sunday Series Update:**

- 2/25 State Fair History Part II (1920-present) was well attended

- 3/18 St. Paul Proposed Pedestrian Safety Plan at the Como Zoo and Conservatory Visitor Center

- 4/15 Crime Prevention Through Landscape Design at TBD

- 6/3 Como Park Tree Trek with arborist and former Tree Advisory Panel member Tim Morgan meets outside the Como Pavilion

- **Miscellaneous Stuff** - Mike

- Climate Generation's Talk Climate Institute
March 12-13 at Wilder Center

The group is looking for personal narratives on climate change and attempting to come to consensus for next steps.

- Reaching outside the Environmental committee for assistance with single one-time efforts

- **Brainstorm events and activities with dates for the year** - what the committee should focus on in 2018

- Possibilities: leaf sweep/collection in the fall – timing, method
- Composting as part of organized trash pick up (the compost site is just a stop-gap)
- Lake health
- Garden Tours/exploring different approaches to community gardens (bring back)
- Tree appreciation program (bring back)
- Supporting citizen science projects
- Possible Sunday Series: How to use Citizen Science technology (i.e. The Great Sunflower Project, MN Bee Atlas, etc.)??
- How to make St Paul more pollinator friendly
- What are the parks dept/environmental services/public works doing to reduce their footprint?
- How can we, as residents be more pollinator friendly/reduce our footprint?
- Golf course ponds; settling ponds could help to uptake salt before it hits Como Lake, and the salt could be sequestered into the plants – team with Watershed District?
- St Paul company making recycled plastic floating bogs that can filter water in lakes
- Adina suggested having a volunteer pool sign up at Sunday Series. We may stick to soliciting via the website. Maybe create a data base for volunteers that can be used for one-time needs or annual needs?

COMMUNITY SECTION – a time for anyone’s input or concerns

PARTNER UPDATES

- **Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom** - Teri Heyer and Susan Jane Cheney

There was an advisory committee meeting today. They are working on Eco Stewards program for invasive abatements. There is a training coming up for those who are interested in taking part in this program. Thursday March 22nd at 5:30.

City Nature Challenge is coming up – bioblitz, April 27-30th. On Saturday, April 14th there will be a training on iNaturalist at 2:00. iNaturalist will be used in the City Nature Challenge

Como AP environmental will be having their annual field day in May.

Susan Jane requested that these be in the newsletter.

- **Como Park Pathfinding subcommittee** - Teri, Andrew and Michael

On-line and print survey, in multiple languages, is on the way. The committee is trying to find a way to get a lot of information without it being cumbersome for survey takers

Members are also looking into park amenities and assessing the existing signage.

- **The Mapping Tool** (twincities.geopoi.us) - Andrew Gustin

There is an agate hunting map now available via the website subscription

- **Churchill Gardens** - Erin, Maren Swenson, Sandra Peterson, and Bonnie Youngquist

The sign is up near the paisley perch. Erin will keep her ear out for a spring clean up and share info with the committee.

- **Como Organic Compost Subcommittee** – Michael Kuchta

Going well, there are never enough bags. There is info on how to purchase bags. The site is at capacity or beyond most weeks.

- **Capital Region Watershed District** - Mike MacDonald
- **Como Active Citizen Network** - Janna Caywood
- **Como Lake Pollinator Garden** - Angie Sechler

There will be a volunteer opportunity coming this spring for the annual spring clean up.

- **Como Community Seed Library** - Dawn Lamm
- **Clean Energy Resource Team** – Bill Devroy

No updates at this time. Renewables are becoming a more affordable option than coal plants, which may lead to the decline of coal plants. Now the infrastructure is in place to move wind electricity around.

- **Master composter/recycling program** - Teri Alberico

Zero Solid Waste group is having a meeting next Wednesday, with many different speakers. Mike mentioned that it would be held at a local brewery.

- **Extend the Greenway** - Mike - Campaign Kickoff on Thursday, April 5, at 6 p.m. at Anne Sullivan community school. RSVP at <https://extendthegreenway.eventbrite.com/> if you are interested.

The event is free and will feature a crowd funding opportunity.

- **Como Connect: A Neighborhood Resource Fair** – October
- **Transition Twin Cities** - leveraging resources and people

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **March 4** Yoga, 9:30-10:30 a.m. at the state ion
- **May 5** CCSL's Green Thumb Kickoff - 11 am to 2 pm at the station
- **May 6** Yoga, 9:30-10:30 a.m. at the station
- **May 19** Rain barrel workshop from 1 to 3 pm at the German Immersion School
- **June 9** St. Paul City Clean Up
- **June 23** Como Neighborhood Rain Garden Workshop 9 am to noon at the station
- **Spring** Storm Grate Mural painting at the east parking lot on Lake Como
- **Fall** Como Community Parade

ADJOURNMENT

- **Next Meeting:** March 28 at 7 pm (last Wednesday of each month)

Land Use Committee - District 10 Como Community Council – 3/7/2018

1. **Call to order 7:01pm (Holy Childhood Church)**
2. **Present:** Kevin Dahm, Maggie Zimmerman Joe Mueller (board members), Michael Kuchta (staff), approximately 40 neighbors
3. **Amend/Adopt Agenda - Approved**
4. **Residential Business**
 - a. 1086 Como Ave Variance Request
 - i. 6 unit apartment building requests to add a 7th unit by converting an existing 3BR into a 1BR and a studio. At least one illegal unit was installed before they bought it. Was turned into a group home at some point. Unit in question has two separate entrances, so belief is that it once was two units. Owners do not see need for three bedrooms in the area. Rented currently as a two bedroom. More need for 1 bedroom and studio apartments. Neighbors generally see owners as positive influence on the area. Adding bike rack for children. No parking issue at present.
 - ii. **Variance request approved by committee**
 - b. 1290 Snelling (former fire house)
 - i. Tom Betti of 292 Design Group presented plans to convert fire station building to a residence. Goal is to keep it the way it is while bringing it up to code: new windows that match existing, big front door will convert frosted glass overhead door – maintain same shape.
 1. New garage would be added to building in rear. Workout space also added to garage. Introduction of a loft level for additional bedrooms and bathroom. Will turn it into a three-bedroom residence. Upgrades from the outside, but little change to feel of building
 2. Variances will include setbacks and height variances (which currently exist) and garage. Access off the alley like other residential.
 3. Answers in response to community concerns: No change to dead end street. The building is already owned by the person planning the remodel. Garage door in front will remain a door, but with frosted glass. It will not have car traffic; it will be a living room. There is room for a garage; plan pulls the garage back a little from the alley space (6'8" off the alley). Owner has had no interaction with owner of Shalom Home, which is across the street. Firehouse is zoned for multi-family; owner wants it as a single-family building.
5. **Ongoing Business:**
 - a. Motion to form sub-committee to investigate off-leash dog area in Como. **Motion approved.**
 - b. Lexington Parkway Updates
 - i. Pedestrian crossing at Pavilion – encourage people to take survey
 - ii. Restriping from Front to Horton, primarily in northbound lanes. City and county designers are attempting to consider both resident desires and traffic control south of the tracks. Merge point likely to move south of the tracks. Steers traffic to the center of the bridge and gives more elbow room to people

on the sidewalk if you are walking under the sidewalk on Lexington. Long slow process, but some progress being made. More info forthcoming in late spring/early summer.

1. Resident concerns about light timing at that intersection.

a. 1554 Midway Parkway – Shalom Home.

iii. Travis Bistodeau from DSI

1. 700 vacant buildings in the city of St Paul right now; historically more like 2,000. Shalom Home is one of the biggest buildings and largest footprint.

2. Current owner took over in 2016.

a. Hazardous material removal (of lead and asbestos) took place during 2016/2017.

b. One contractor had installed a fence (not the owner), but removed it after a business falling out.

c. City requested current owner re-install fence. City will mandate fence and will assess cost of fence to owner or to property if it is not maintained. Construction fence is about \$20-30k

3. Current owner would still like to turn this property into senior housing. Shell of building is in good shape, and building is gutted. Under vacant building program, city has the power to remove a vacant building, but city has about \$300,000 a year to spend on removing vacant buildings. Demolishing Shalom Home would take that entire amount. The Met Council provided \$800,000 grant to remove hazardous materials, with condition that building be used for residential purposes. Likely would have to be paid back by city if building is removed. Debt would be assessed to any future owners if current owners forecloses.

4. Bistodeau believes property owner is actively looking for financing options. Current owner paid about \$3 million for property.

5. Night checks by police and twice weekly property checks by DSI. Residents with complaints should call 651-266-8989 to ensure complaint gets into system.

a. Residents concerned about lack of police patrol in this area.

b. How long until this property can be declared a nuisance property? What can residents do to speed this process up? Depends on nature of issues: Graffiti vs. Squatters or fire

c. Are there current services in the building (electric and water)? DSI says no, but residences report that interior lights have been on; unclear if these were construction lights.

d. Does active fire protection exist in the building? DSI believes not. DSI understands there to be not much combustible materials.

6. Residents question why we have money for stadiums but not for this building. DSI reports that stadium owner has deep pockets and says this owner does not.

7. How can the city get behind the developer? Community would like to see the city support the developers. DSI says getting this project back online is a priority. Some residents would like to see city incentivize someone to come in. That requires policy changes in City Hall.
8. DSI says owner is generally responsive; they have issued 25 work orders for the property with many more letters issues without action.
9. Owner is looking for \$30 million in financing.
10. Property has been vacant since 2012 (according to city), but the Shalom Home has been out of the space since 2007.
11. Residents ask what happen with a vacant lot that size. DSI states that it would be unlikely to be rezoned from multi-family
12. PED may assist grant finding and solicitation.
13. 9 years ago residents came up with a list of uses for the space
 - a. One idea: Veterans rehab center, a mix of short-term residential stays and day programs for veterans. Senior living or senior assisted living remains the most ideal use for the neighborhood based on traffic and parking.
14. Change of use would require whole building to come up to code.
15. Are there talks with Lynblomsten in process? Lynblomsten is not currently interested – they remain interested, but not at the current price point. Lynblomsten believes the price is too high. Current model for 1558 Midway is “blue-collar assisted living” and banks aren’t anxious to participate in a model that depends so heavily on public “senior waiver” dollars. Lyngblomsten would make it assisted or independent living. Tear down and rebuild would be in the realm of \$30 million for them as well.
16. Has student housing been considered? John Knox reports that, yes, that was one of the top 10 list for building in 2009. Some vetting took place for graduate housing, but no schools were interested.

Adjourn: 8:40pm