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Citizens for a Loring Park Community (CLPC)

LIVABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

6:30 – 8:00 PM

Loring Park Community Center

Attendance: Bob Hansen (1355 Nicollet), Jan Sandberg (1201 Yale Place), Dick Sandberg (1201 Yale Place), Tommi Stevens (AccessWorks), Jana Metge (CLPC Coordinator), Mike Katch (111 Marquette), Eric Sandberg (1501 LaSalle), Rose Cotton (1501 LaSalle), Pam Costain (Minneapolis School Board), Monica Nilsson (St. Stephen's), Brandon Sanford (St. Stephen's), Lam Truong (St. Stephen's), Irwin Thompson (St. Stephen's), Richard Anderson (Loring Way), Don Davis (Whittier neighborhood), John van Heel (110 West Grant), Diane Moe (Loring Park), Cindy Ouehl (Loring Way), Ellen DuBuque (Loring Way), Gary Gliem (St. Mark's), Judy Farmer (Minneapolis Schools), Liz Cutter (Hennepin County attorney), Inez Bergquist (St. Mark's), Luther Krueger (Minneapolis Police)

6:30 - 6:45 Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions (Bob Hansen)

Bob Hansen led introductions of those in attendance.

Approved the agenda. (Motion Dick Sandberg, seconded John van Heel).

Approved the June 18, 2008 and July 16, 2008 minutes. (Motion Richard Sandberg, second John van Heel)

Announcements and Reports

- The Jeremiah Program Bullfrog Bash is set for November 1. See http://www.jeremiahprogram.org/?page_id=34
- Women of Nations is having their 25th Anniversary at Nicollet Island Pavillion.
- Copies of the PowerPoint used to present the Phase II Ten-Year plan are available. Also copies of the Downtwon 100.
- Community Sing-alongs led by Dan Chouinard at the Loring Park Center: Thursday, September 18 and Tuesday, October 14, 7:00 to 8:30 pm
- The Park Board will not be laying off any park police following the loss of the contract with Minneapolis Public Schools.
- St. Mark's is hosting a "Hot Salsa" benefit concert on October 18, 2008. For details see <http://www.saintmarks-mpls.org/>

II. 6:45- 7:20 p.m. The Strong Schools Strong City Referendum- Pam Costain

On November 4, Minneapolis voters will be asked to approve a property tax referendum to support strong Minneapolis public schools. The schools must go to the voters to request increases in the property tax referendum.

Judy Farmer noted that the District has cut expenditures over the past few years but face new challenges including unfunded mandates. The last referendum for \$30 million was passed eight years ago with over 70 percent approval. This year's \$60 million referendum represents about

DRAFT

\$17 per month increase for the “average” homeowner. Currently the amount levied per student ranks low compared to other school districts. An independent committee will review how the Schools spend the dollars raised by the referendum. The committee will be chaired by John Gunyou and Jay Kiedrowski.

The district developed a strategic plan last year -- a serious commitment to raise student performance. If the referendum does not pass the District may have to lay off nearly 10% of teaching staff. There has been decreasing enrollment over the last few years (possible factors include charter schools and decreased immigration) but this year enrollment is up.

QUESTIONS:

? What is the greatest source of opposition? According to the mandatory hearings held each year most of the opposition comes from those on fixed incomes; many are seniors. However, many seniors are supportive. There appears to be no organized opposition. The business community is very supportive – they are concerned about maintain a supply of skilled future workers.

? They only need a majority of those VOTING on the issue but the question will be near the bottom.

? Are there buttons? There are stickers and lawn signs. The campaign office is in a strip mall across from the Lake Street Rainbow.

? What about other publicity? They have been in 250 public events throughout the summer. They are willing to attend any gathering especially those with no children in the schools. The condo buildings are a target. There is also a Web site at <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Referendum.html>

Approved a resolution supporting the referendum. (Motion Richard Anderson, seconded Dick Sandberg).

Whereas: *In November, Minneapolis voters will be asked to approve a referendum to support strong Minneapolis public schools. The annual referendum size is \$60 million. The referendum would go into effect during the 2009-10 school year and run for eight years through the 2016-17 school year. It would replace the current referendum that provides \$30 million annually to our city’s schools.*

Whereas: *The referendum will provide resources to help students develop early reading skills. It will help our schools meet the goal of having all children reading at grade-level by 3rd grade.*

Whereas: *The referendum will provide resources for math and science programs to give students a foundation in these basics for the 21st Century. It will help our schools meet the goal of having all children ready for algebra by 8th grade.*

Whereas: *The referendum will ensure students will have the learning materials they need by funding technology and up-to-date textbooks.*

Whereas: *The referendum will help manage class sizes. Parents, teachers and students agree that smaller class sizes result in a better learning environment. Today, all referendum dollars collected are dedicated to managing class size. The proposed referendum will dedicate half of the funds collected each year to assure that the commitment to managing class size is not diminished.*

DRAFT

Whereas: *The referendum will have built-in accountability measures like annual audits and an independent Referendum Oversight Committee to ensure that money is spent as promised.*

Whereas: *After the state funding of public education has for the past 17 years has grown at rates less than half of the rate of inflation and local property taxes have become a necessary source of funding school districts throughout Minnesota.*

Whereas: *If the current referendum expires without being replaced, the district will need to make \$30 million in cuts to its annual budget. That could result in layoffs to as many as 350 teachers, significant reductions in programs and significant increases in class sizes.*

Whereas: *Strong public schools are anchors that hold our neighborhoods together and make our city strong.*

Be it Resolved: *That Citizens for a Loring Park Community endorses the Strong Schools Strong City referendum campaign for our Minneapolis Public Schools.*

III. 7:20– 8:00 p.m. St. Stephens’ Street Outreach project - Monica Nilsson, Director

Monica explained that Minnesotans in need of shelter come into Minneapolis for services. The financial pressures that push families and youth out of their homes have increased in the past few years. Youth are only 5 percent of the shelter system, are particularly vulnerable and represent 10 percent of chronic offenders. The homeless represent 4/10th of one percent of Minnesota population. Women are particularly vulnerable (one in eight homeless are female). Another challenge is that many homeless are profoundly disabled by substance abuse or brain injury.

Their work came out of Heading Home Hennepin. It is cheaper to put homeless folks into apartments than to take space at HCMC or shelters. With support from the City of Minneapolis, the State Department of Public Safety and St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, the St. Stephens Street Outreach Team has been created to develop a coordinated street outreach response to homeless individuals and the public as one of the 6 target areas of Heading Home Hennepin. The office is located in the Nicollet Towers building, near Ichiban.

Modeled after national best practice designs, Outreach workers will work with homeless individuals who are unsheltered or in need in public areas, decrease police time by being available as a dispatch for 311 or Downtown Safe Zone radio network calls and assist citizens who encounter a homeless person in need in finding solutions. Additionally, the team will focus on a target population identified by the MPD, the Courts and City prosecutors of homeless individuals with a high number of arrests and help them gain access to housing and supports. The program will have a volunteer component in which a community member can be trained to partner with an Outreach Worker on the streets.

Luther studied those arrested who had no address and identified hot spots (focal points for panhandling and public consumption) that outreach caseworkers can target. When a resident or business sees someone possibly homeless they should call the outreach program who can connect with those persons. The police have also been frustrated that all they can do is to issue tickets. The Outreach staff are part of the SafeZone radio link program. In order to build trust and address immediate need, staff start with small steps such as socks and small food items, and moving the homeless to a place less threatening to the public. The long term goals go beyond these small steps to permanent housing.

DRAFT

They are also working with the courts and police. Luther gave them a list of chronic offenders – the top offender is a homeless youth. They may be able to use the social service model to meet the needs of the homeless and avoid incarceration.

Panhandling – do not give anything of value to those panhandling, buskers or not. Many of those who panhandle are chemically dependent and unless something changes, their lives will not improve. Some church groups have come to the park to distribute food (no longer allowed according to Diane Moe) and socks and the Outreach staff would like to connect with these groups to help better guide their efforts. The green card that Monica distributed can be used by citizens to give to panhandlers. One idea is to give the cards to liquor stores.

QUESTIONS

?He likes the green cards. Need to get more of these. Many years ago there was a pink version developed by Luther.

?Were there earlier programs that eventually fizzled (StreetWorks) based on a national model for homeless youth. Luther noted that until the Commission to End Homelessness put together a plan, many groups (including churches) were uncoordinated and may even have made things worse. Those participating in the commission were serious about making things happen— getting to a solution and not just a holding pattern. The work of the commission led to Heading Home Hennepin and now there is Heading Home Minnesota (headed up by Kit Hadley).

The occasional programs by the churches and Temple Israel have created some confusion among the homeless who end up hanging around them all. There is some work toward dividing up tasks among the institutions and possibly using one institution

?Why don't the homeless have to be sober to participate. They take people where they are today and try to move forward. Luther suggested reading article by Malcolm Gladwell on "Million Dollar Murray." http://www.gladwell.com/2006/2006_02_13_a_murray.html

?Is homelessness a preferred way to live? Monica said that the homeless will say this in the face of the choices that they think that they have (a limited list of options). It benefits society to have sex offenders in stable housing and may require a bigger solution.

?Jana noted that there will be funds through the Phase II plan that might be used by an agency like St. Stephen's Outreach. Monica said that Lam is the outreach worker funded by St. Mark's and other dedicated staff are needed.

?What is the solution for the homeless and consumption in Loring Park? Monica said to call and leave a message with detail on clothing and location.

The undocumented, chemically dependent are a special challenge. Amazing how even if deported, they manage to return.

?What percentage of homeless just don't care? There seems to be a perception that this is a large percentage. Monica thinks this is not the case and the percentage is almost nonexistent.

?She walks by the church early in the morning and has been harassed – what should she do? She should call. The St. Mark's plaza is preferred for sleeping compared to the park because there are no mosquitoes. Luther said that she should call 911 if she feels threatened. Jana added that the non-normal business hours are an issue and might be a way to use NRP dollars – the homeless are out and active very early in the morning.

DRAFT

? He has worked on suppers at St. Mark's for several years and attendees seem to have lots of stuff. Are these efforts reaching those who really need help? He has seen homeless given new gloves who then go outside to try to sell them for drugs. Monica said that the St. Mark's supper is mostly feeding low income folks who need an extra meal. Volunteers need training on boundaries and working with manipulative folks.

? He works with Temple Israel which has several programs to help provide temporary shelter. Monica hopes that they would instead help provide rent subsidies. The money that St. Mark's spends on meals could help move 10 folks out of the park into housing.

Suggestion -- perhaps CLPC could help facilitate discussion among the institutions to identify "best" ways to help.

Luther said that there are resources (apartments and other housing) that could help house the homeless in Minneapolis. Landlords are willing to work with homeless tenants because they are guaranteed the rent and work with the case manager.

The percentage of folks at shelters that are working is currently 25 percent; it was higher in the past.

IV. Agenda Items for Future Meetings:

- Bicycle Issues
- NRP Phase II/10 Year Neighborhood plan

Adjourned 8:07 p.m.