

DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Minutes from the Board Meeting on Monday, August 17, 2020

Via Zoom

(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8e8R9gMWTLn>, Passcode: @Hi%gj9)

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Pamela McCrea called the Board meeting to order at 5:45 p.m., and asked Board members to introduce themselves.

Board members in attendance were:

Max Erickson
Kevin Frazell, Vice Chair
Tomek Rajtar
Laurie Rice
Carletta Sweet, Secretary
Joe Tamburino
Dianne Walsh, Treasurer

Staff member Christie Rock Hantge was also present.

McCrea expressed gratitude to those who came to the two cleanup events on Saturday, August 8th and Sunday, August 9th, as well as those who came to the Mill City Farmers Market this past Saturday to sign up people for voters' registration. She also thanked Hantge for being an excellent staff person who makes herself available 7 days a week despite her other obligations.

Zoom guests in attendance included:

Deb Clapp, Bridgewater Lofts	Thomas Novak, American Trio Lofts
Rick Crispino, Bridgewater Lofts	Lisa Olson, Park Avenue Lofts
Larry Dole, The Legacy Condominiums	Wanda Ortiz-Maysonet, Bridgewater Lofts
Anne Forsythe, Park Avenue Lofts	Brian Pietsch, Park Avenue Lofts
Steve Fletcher, Minneapolis Ward 3	Susan Plimpton, Stone Arch Lofts
Ron Gersdorf, Park Avenue Lofts	Nancy Reed
Denise Holt, Park Avenue Lofts	Kevin Ringdahl, Park Avenue Lofts
Casey Hudek, Working Partnerships, Twin Cities Hospitality Relief Program	Rachael and Steve Scherer, Park Avenue Lofts
Penny Hunt	Thomas Schmid, Washburn Lofts
Karl Lambert, Lambert Dickenson Group	Nancy Solhaug, Park Avenue Lofts
Annette Lee	Mary Suilmann, Bridgewater Lofts
Quentin Misiag, Ironclad Residences	Karen Wald, Park Avenue Lofts
Alisa Mulhair, Sonder	Wendy Wells, North Star Lofts

II. Consideration of Agenda

After McCrea moved Council Member Fletcher's update to later in the meeting because he'll be joining the meeting a little late, added Casey Hudek who will provide an update on the Twin Cities

Hospitality Relief Program after consideration of the consent agenda, and removed the Land Use Committee Report because they did not meet in August,

Sweet moved and Rajtar seconded a motion to approve the agenda as amended. McCrea called for discussion. The motion passed.

III. Consideration of the Consent Agenda

Treasurer Dianne Walsh advised she reviewed all the financial documents received from Hantge and found no issues.

Frazell inquired about Mayor Frey's proposed adjustments to the City's budget due to loss of revenues related to COVID-19, and how it might impact neighborhood funding, particularly NRP dollars (reference 2020 Budget Update from David Rubedor that McCrea forwarded). Hantge advised there wasn't any specific information given but it's her understanding it will not impact the DMNA's contracted or uncontracted NRP dollars; the plan is to take the dollars from cash reserves. The City will also save dollars through staff furloughs and voluntary leaves and will likely reduce funding to the new Neighborhoods 2020 Program, which is scheduled to replace the Community Participation Program in 2021.

Sweet moved and Rice seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda which included the July Board meeting minutes; F2020 Budget vs. Actual for the period ending July 31, 2020; and the Neighborhood Coordinator / Finance Coordinator staff report for July (Invoice #067). McCrea called for discussion. The motion passed.

IV. Chair's Report

A. Strategic Planning Task Forces Updates

1. Branding. Walsh reported on the three activities they've worked on in the last month:

- *DMNA branded face marks* were distributed to all Board and LUC members who expressed interest, at the recent neighborhood cleanup event, at the DMNA hosted voter registration booth at the Mill City Farmers Market, and to interested neighbors who have contacted her. They are also holding some for future events.
- *Greening Lab*, in partnership with the Downtown Improvement District and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, is being done differently this year. They're using a different method of tree watering which is why we don't see the green bags on all of the trees, and they haven't done any tagging yet with the DMNA brand but they'll let us know when that happens.
- The *DMNA website refresh* is being worked on by Hantge and they've reached out to the task force for input. Walsh and Erickson have provided input on the Word Press theme they prefer, but others are welcome to offer feedback if they have an interest.

McCrea then introduced an idea to have them purchase parking meter hoods to educate people about the appropriate use of the parking spaces along South 2nd Street, specifically that they should not be used for idling. Tamburino stated he tried to get this implemented previously but did not receive any support from the City. Walsh indicated they were successful approximately 5 years ago at getting no idling signs in front of the Bridgewater and Gold Medal Park. McCrea noted she has already asked CM Fletcher and that he should provide an update tonight.

- 2. HOA Advisory Group.** Rice reported this group will meet again on August 27th at 5:30 p.m. The agenda includes a presentation by the Downtown Improvement District about what it does and the possible expansion further into Downtown East and the Mill District; they'll finalize other agenda items this week.

McCrea noted they'll ask the HOA Advisory Group to select someone to sit on the Public Safety Task Force. They're also asking one board member from every residential building within the DMNA district to come and start sharing information about everything.

- 3. Outreach and Collaboration.** Frazell stated after the July 20th Board meeting when MPRB Commissioner Jono Cowgill gave an update on homeless encampments in Minneapolis parks, McCrea asked this task force might meet with him and perhaps a MPRB staff member to discuss mutual interests and ways we might be helpful on downtown parks issues. Cowgill is amenable to doing so and Frazell hopes to have this scheduled towards the end of this month.

McCrea mentioned the increase in tents on Boom Island parking lots and how the MPD called the Park Police over there.

Alisa Mulhair from Sonder who lives in St. Anthony West neighborhood advised the MPRB just recently approved a permit for up to 20 tents on Boom Island, and the ability to permit on BF Nelson Park (<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/encampments/>). Their neighborhood group isn't comfortable with it but at this point they don't have a voice.

- 4. Public Safety.** Chair Thomas Schmid gave an overview of how the DMNA went about seeking members for this new group, i.e., via email blasts, a piece in the *Mill City Times* (<http://millcitytimes.com/news/dmna-seeking-members-for-public-safety-task-force.html>), and Facebook with an application deadline of August 12th. After reviewing the pool of prospects, they now have 14 extraordinarily talented members with a wide range of experience, including McCrea who will be the Board Liaison, and Tamburino, so they're optimistic about this task force going forward. The initial meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 26th.

Schmid said the group will work to advance the Guiding Principles for Police Reform and Public Safety (<https://www.thedmna.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Minneapolis-Downtown-Council-Guiding-Principles-for-Police-Reform-and-Public-Safety.pdf>) that the Board adopted on July 7, 2020, within the general framework of the DMNA mission and goals. The general objectives of the task force are to encourage downtown residents to respond to public comment

opportunities on public safety issues; to advise the DMNA on board responses to community safety issues; collect and report relevant neighborhood data; develop and distribute public information materials; and develop recommendations to the DMNA Board on how the neighborhood association can actively contribute to public safety in our neighborhood. The goal will be to have recommendations regarding possible reforms ready to present to the public at the DMNA Annual Meeting in October.

B. Public Safety Forum

McCrea is working on this with the North Loop Neighborhood Association. At this point, her counterpart at NLNA, Tim Bildsoe, is still working on securing speakers and he hasn't heard back from two of the three he has reached out to. The hope was to have the event around National Night Out. If McCrea doesn't hear back from Bildsoe within the next 2 weeks, she'll talk with CM Fletcher about the DMNA hosting its own forum.

C. Renters Advisory Group

McCrea advised a few renters have contacted her and Hantge to express interest in participating in a Renters Advisory Group. She is looking for someone from the Board to lead, similarly to how she and Rice are leading the HOA Advisory Group. Erickson asked if the group would function in the same way and have the same goal as the HOA group. Rice said renters most likely don't have the same interests or concerns as the HOA group has. She is thinking that they may be more interested in civic engagement activities and is wondering if we should direct the interested renters toward a civic engagement committee. Erickson expressed an interest in getting more renters on the Board. Rice suggested meeting one-on-one with the renters who have expressed interest in participating in an advisory group to find out what their interests and concerns are, and how they see themselves getting involved with the DMNA. Mulhair from Sonder said most rental buildings have a means for communicating with their residents through email or postings on a common area bulletin board and suggested the DMNA draft a welcome to the neighborhood letter and get it out to the residential building managers.

V. Twin Cities Hospitality Relief Program Update

Casey Hudek, Campaigns Manager for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation (https://www.minneapolisunions.org/cluc_about.php), the umbrella organization for unions in Minneapolis, and core partner of Twin Cities Hospitality and Event Workers' Relief Fund (<https://www.twincitieshospitalityfund.org/>) for which Working Partnerships (<http://workingpartnerships.org/>) is the fiscal agent, thanked the DMNA for generously supporting the TCHRP with a contribution of NRP dollars. The purpose of the program is to help workers who have lost income due to business closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer support navigating complicated and sometimes daunting challenges such as unemployment, childcare, food assistance, housing/rent/mortgage support, utilities, healthcare, and worker protections.

They have connected 500 people with resource navigators, two-thirds of which have received micro-grants. He recounted a story of how they successfully helped a young couple that works in the downtown hospitality industry obtain financial assistance.

Anyone can make a donation to the program, just go to <https://www.twincitieshospitalityfund.org/donate/>.

VI. Annual Meeting Update

Erickson noted the annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 27th and since we don't know what the future holds, we should consider a virtual meeting and record it so we can send it to our constituents.

Hantge is working with the City's NCR Department to determine the best process to follow for Board elections and she'll give an update at the September 21st meeting.

Responding to hosting the event at Gold Medal Park or The Commons, Erickson noted for an organization with fairly limited resources, we'll get more bang for our buck to have one plan where we can reach the most people, i.e., via Zoom because there are enough constituents who would rather not gather in person.

VII. Ward 3 Update

Upon Council Member Fletcher's arrival, McCrea advised one of the major things the Board wants to talk with him about is crime and safety concerns in downtown, and streets that have become troublesome, specifically, South 2nd Street, Washington Avenue, and Nicollet Mall. McCrea is getting a ton of phone calls from Mill District residents complaining about cars parking in the streets, teargas and firecrackers going off in the middle of the night, and scooter joyriding after 10 p.m. and left abandoned in the middle of the sidewalk.

To give CM Fletcher a big picture of what residents are experiencing, McCrea first introduced Wanda Ortiz-Maysonet, a 13-year 1st floor resident of the Bridgewater facing Gold Medal Park, who narrated the photos she took of what she sees and hears from her condo, i.e., trash (although a Zenith resident picks it up by 7 a.m.), abandoned scooters, fireworks, yelling and screaming, showing a complete disregard for the neighborhood. These last 3 months have been completely different from the previous 12 years; these problems are growing, and she doesn't see anything being done. A few times she has confronted them from her patio but gets no reaction.

McCrea then asked Board followed by community members to talk about the problems they're seeing and experiencing. Walsh who stays up late every night said the noise starts around 11 p.m. and gets louder with full blown activity at 1:00 a.m. She believes two things bring them to the neighborhood, Gold Medal Park and the scooters and bikes. By 11 a.m., the bikes parked by the MS parking lot are all rented, and everybody is in the streets riding back and forth making a lot of noise. It started last year with just a few young people, and now it's a party every night and she doesn't understand why the noise ordinance (<http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/environment/environmental-complaint>) isn't being enforced.

Rachael Scherer, who lives on the 4th floor of Park Avenue Lofts, talked about what she and her husband experience between 1 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. They've been spending most of their COVID time up north, but four out of four nights she's been back in the city, there's loud noise and slamming of doors that wake her, car loads of people moving things from trunk to trunk, some going in and out of The Vicinity but she's not convinced it's all Vicinity traffic, but what is really concerning is the last two times it's been young women who have been moved from car to car and so she's concerned

about sex trafficking. They never saw this before in their 5 years of living there and maybe this goes on a lot more in other neighborhoods and we just haven't seen it so she's shocked.

Kevin Ringdahl, who lives below the Scherers at PAL, said he's lived here for 13 years and loved almost every minute of it except the last few months. It's been shocking to witness first hand everything that's been going on, i.e., an armed car-jacking in front of his patio in broad daylight around 6 p.m., he's called the police on numerous occasions for people who are overdosing, he's been threatened on his patio with four neighbors, men and women fighting on the streets, cars sitting for days and weeks and the City never tows or tickets. People are fearless and know they can get away with just about anything.

Anne Forsythe asked CM Fletcher about his arrangement with Sonder going forward on the Short-Term Rental ordinance (<http://www2.minneapolis.gov/news/WCMSP-205764>) because he knows they didn't want it and now, we have a very different neighborhood because it happened. She's been at PAL for 8 years and it's a very dramatic change to the neighborhood and it's sad.

Ron Gersdorf, who lives on the 3rd floor of PAL facing South 2nd Street for 13 years, said he's never seen this area look like this or people behave like it. It's deplorable and the fact that the City allows it to happen is beyond him. Both he and Denise Holt, who lives below Gersdorf and is on the DMNA LUC, said they witnessed The Vicinity security guard sleeping on the couch in the lobby, but the most noticeable change is they now close the drapes in the lobby.

McCrea asked the owner of Kindee Thai Restaurant if they saw any issues and she was told they thought the housing above them, St. Anthony Mills Apartments, was causing problems and wanted to close earlier some nights because it gets that dicey.

Brian Pietsch of PAL stated this is a safety and economic issue. According to his real estate agent, his condo is worth about one quarter to one third less before this all started. This is directly impacting us as investors and taxpayers, and you're going to drive people out and decimate a tax base you need if you want this city to have an economic engine to pay for all the stuff you want us to pay for. We pay far too much in the city to have this sort of response to how our neighborhood is handled and it's getting outrageous.

After hearing Board and community members input, CM Fletcher was asked to express his thoughts on what he can do and what we as citizens can do to address these issues. He began by thanking everyone for sharing their experiences. He was aware of some of the issues, but other information was new to him and he wants to problem solve together.

Fletcher then addressed the comments regarding The Vicinity by first summarizing the history of how Sherman Associates decided to pursue short-term rentals with Sonder, and asked people not to jump to conclusions and blame renters or specific properties. He has been working with Sherman Associates and Sonder to increase private security and is in the process of writing an ordinance that will further regulate short-term rentals.

He went on to describe weird social patterns that have emerged because of COVID. A lot of the

activity we're seeing out on the streets are activities that would happen in indoor spaces where they were never visible to any of us. A whole underground economy essentially got pushed out into the open air and people's addictions and hobbies have not gone away and they now have a lot more free time because they've been laid off, so they've seen in several parts of town flash gatherings which were perplexing and overwhelming. Hearing the way this is persisting, it's important for us to start problem solving and using whatever tools we can think of to make it an uncomfortable place for them to hang out and diminish the quality of life for everyone else.

He encouraged residents to keep eyes on the street and suggested residents, if they felt comfortable, could intervene. He also talked about working with the City to establish a neighborhood watch program.

Tamburino completely disagreed with encouraging neighbors to intervene; it's reckless and dangerous. There's this atmosphere the police aren't going to do anything. You can't blame COVID which we've been living with since March and this behavior started in June. We don't have a traffic enforcement contingent anymore with MPD, we're about to lose 100 officers, they've been told don't engage crowds, they can't use mace cans, when we want our officers to do street enforcement City Council said no, and Fletcher has been an advocate for not pulling people over for their license plates don't have tag and lights on project because it has disparate impact in certain communities. He represents the North Loop bartender who on July 28th was pulled from a fiery vehicle on Washington Avenue (<https://kstp.com/news/man-rescued-from-burning-vehicle-in-north-loop-shares-ordeal-police-still-investigating-august-17-2020/5830560/>) because of speed racers careened into him in his parked vehicle. Thinking out of the box, let's get our police back and give them the authority to make these arrests.

After more discussion and comments from residents regarding The Vicinity, Mulhair talked about how they monitor the 25 units they have and said they are not seeing what neighbors are seeing, e.g., signs of sex trafficking. She described the types of renters that they have and encouraged people to let Sonder know about suspicious activity; they will respond immediately. When they know about problems, they take action. She then provided their phone number for people to call with issues: 617-300-0956. On behalf of Sherman Associates, it has stepped up on many ways, e.g., they put in a free of charge police substation, added additional security cameras that looks both on South 2nd Street and Park Avenue, hired full-time onsite security and holding them accountable, and she personally followed up on the gray Dodge Charger that was getting multiple tickets and it's finally towed.

Tamburino clarified there is a police substation but there are no decals because the MPD didn't want to be attacked or invite vandalism during the recent mayhem. There are two MPD officers who operate the Homeless Initiative, and a Park Police who operates out of there. Walsh added the substation is sponsored by the DMNA with Tamburino leading.

In conclusion, Fletcher committed to the following:

- Speaking with Regulatory Services about the activity with cars parked around Gold Medal Park, and on Park Avenue and South 2nd Street.

- Speaking with the 1st Precinct Inspector Peterson to request all shifts make a point of driving along South 2d Street, with an eye toward inappropriate activity around Park Avenue and Gold Medal Park.
- Meeting with Public Works staff to discuss scooter and bike share issues, signage on meters, and strategies to deter dangerous driving behavior and nuisance parking activity.
- Speaking with the MPRB about some camping and other activity around the I-35W Bridge Memorial that people have noted on another email thread.

VIII. New / Old / Other Business

A. Civic Engagement

Quentin Misiag (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/quentinmisiag/>), who lives at the Ironclad Residences and moved from the North Loop where he led engagement activities, provided an update on the Community Cleaning Event on August 8th and 9th. These were staggered purposefully during the Mill City Farmers Market so that out-of-neighborhood guests could see the cleanup. Studies have shown when people are seen maintaining their neighborhood it lowers crime rate and raises a sense of community. No one showed up on Sunday, but there were 21 people on Saturday a group from the Minneapolis Downtown Next Generation Lions Club (<https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/minneapolisnext/>). They worked with the City to get trash bags and picked up all sorts of stuff.

Other ideas he would like to implement include a few little free libraries (<https://littlefreelibrary.org/>); they're in the North Loop and South Minneapolis and some have transitioned into donation centers. We could have one at Gold Medal Park, The Vicinity, MacPhail Center for Music, and The Commons, all high traffic area.

Regarding neighborhood identity, now would be a good time to involve local artists like Adam Turman (<https://adamturman.com/>), Dogfish Media (<https://www.dogfishmedia.com/>) to design banners to install on South 2nd Street and Washington Avenue so when events safely resume at U.S. Bank Stadium and Guthrie Theater people will know who we are. He's noticed discrepancies between multiple real estate listings, Meet Minneapolis, and the City on what the neighborhood was called. We could also do some murals.

In terms of crime and safety issues, several communities, including his own, have done socially distancing movies. You can make the Guthrie and Gold Medal Park as safe as you can to take back the neighborhood.

He doesn't think COVID is a good excuse to not do anything and cities being creative are thinking out the box.

B. Outreach and Collaboration

For a complete listing of the organizations and committees in which the DMNA is engaged, please reference the Outreach and Collaboration Chart prepared by Sweet included in the August 2020 Board materials on the DMNA's website.

IX. Next Board Meeting

Monday, September 21, 2020, at 5:45 p.m. via Zoom.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business,

Sweet moved and Walsh seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. McCrea called for discussion. The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 2020

Chair

Secretary