Menlo Park Neighborhood Association Meeting

Pima County Housing Center, 801 W Congress

March 14, 2019

Board Members present: Zach Yentzer, President; Wendy Sterner, Vice President; Isabel Doe, Treasurer; Steve Brown, Parliamentarian; Matt Perri, Historian

Meeting called to order at 6:06 pm

**1. Introductions**: Neighbors, guests, and Board members introduced themselves. Zach pointed out that the Banco building were this meeting was taking place has a place in Menlo Park history, that Helen Erickson PhD from the UA and her students will be gathering information about historic structures in Menlo Park, and that when you see homes and walls around Tucson built with the lava rock, all of that rock was quarried from Sentinel Peak, which shows that resources in Menlo Park literally built Tucson.

**2. Minutes from February MPNA meeting:** Motion was made to approve the minutes from the February 2019 meeting, seconded, and approved unanimously.

**3. Treasurer’s Report (Isabel Doe):** The current balance in the MPNA bank account is $1,015.26, which included a deposit of $78.78 from Menlo Park t-shirt sales at the February meeting.

**4. Traffic Report (Steve Arnquist from Ward 1 City Council Office):** Traffic counts were conducted by the city on January 23rd and 24th, per Menlo Park neighborhood’s request. Steve noted the following items of interest:

- study shows that traffic volume has decreased by about 2% since 2017. Steve noted that there was a 25% increase in volume from 2016 to 2017. It was suggested that traffic may have been heavier in 2017 due to work being done on the La Cholla/I-19/Ajo interchange, but he noted City of Tucson traffic engineers didn’t think so. Unfortunately, a traffic count was not conducted in 2018.

- the data shows traffic volume spikes at rush hour times (no surprise)

- most drivers are staying under 25 mph; speeders make up less than 1% of total traveling through MP

- there have been 2 traffic fatalities and 2 collisions with serious injuries in the past two weeks

- Steve Brown pointed out that we requested the traffic count now to compare to future traffic counts, because it’s very possible traffic will increase with additional development along Congress

- Zach suggested we look at traffic counts before and after the Mercado opened, and make some predictions from that data

- Zach noted that Caterpillar employees will start moving into the new building tomorrow, an open house is planned for some time in late April

- A discussion of which roads CAT employees will use to get to their parking, the hours CAT employees will be working, and where most CAT employees live followed. It was noted that the employees from out of state worked with a non-local transition firm, which encouraged employees to live in Oro Valley and Marana. This means they will likely use Congress and Cushing St to access their worksite. It was noted that about 900 residents are estimated to be moving into the neighborhood with the construction of the workforce housing, Monier, Flynn, and other planned developments.

- Steve Arnquist noted the City of Tucson was promised 600 jobs paying six-figure salaries from CAT

- Traffic signals are supposed to be going in at Cushing & Linda and Cushing & Avenida del Convento when CAT opens

- Zach appreciated Steve Arnquist’s quick responses and his active role in the neighborhood

**5. Committee/Focus Area Updates:**

**A. Development of a Neighborhood Plan (Steve Brown):**

- Steve stressed that the committee meetings are open to anyone interested in helping work on the plan.

- Thanks to everyone who has been working on this committee over the last nine months, especially committee chair Wendy Sterner, who has been keeping everyone organized and on track.

- Steve highlighted four sectors of the committee’s work. 1) Why a neighborhood plan is necessary: to gain ownership of development in the neighborhood, to preserve neighborhood historic and cultural resources, maintain affordable housing and keep property taxes stable, and to get to “yes” with all stakeholders including residents, business owners, property owners, and developers. 2) What can the plan accomplish: create a unified, cohesive vision of the future Menlo Park; preserve cultural and historic assets; engage a broad cross-section of neighbors; create a community we all want to be part of; and maintain livability and workability in Menlo Park. 3) What’s the timeline? We have charted out the next year to accomplish information gathering, information synthesizing into a workable draft, and submitting a final draft for adoption into the City General Plan by Mayor and Council. 4) How are we engaging the community? We are communicating with other MP committees concerned with traffic/transportation, development/historic preservation/open space, housing affordability & gentrification, promoting children/youth/families, water & environmental sustainability, engagement & outreach, fundraising, events, and clean & beautiful. We are also working with Helen Erickson PhD and her students at the UA in their study of historic preservation and collecting information from neighbors about Menlo Park. We are planning to conduct “listening tours” with MP neighbors, starting with a gathering after the April MPNA meeting which everyone is invited to – the committee will provide pizza. We also plan to meet, as a committee or individually, with Ward 1 neighborhood liaison, Rio Nuevo representative, business owners, developers, property owners, and other stakeholders.

- Steve noted that most importantly, we want to engage neighbors in this process, in person, by email, or any way that we can effectively gather input from as many neighbors as possible.

- Zach noted something Helen Erickson said at the open house for her students’ project, which was “what is documented gets recognized, protected, and worked on”

- Steve Arnquist noted the money from the Menlo Park park cell tower project has decreased to $75,000 because they are going to use additional $25,000 for lighting the sports fields. Steve said he has talked to many different people about the cell phone tower money going to MPNA for use to improve the neighborhood (including developing a Neighborhood Plan), and so far nobody has said “no”, and they do find that this use of the money is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the use of the money.

**B. Development & Preservation of Open Land (Zach Yentzer):**

- Primary concern at present is the A Mountain landfill. At present the conversation is between County Administrator Chuck Huckleberry and Rio Nuevo Board Chair Fletcher McCusker about putting the soil dredged from the Santa Cruz river bed on the landfill, which is on again/off again. The latest plan is to put the dirt on the landfill, and the most recent dredged soil is to go into the Nearmont landfill that’s being remediated now. They want to develop part of that land into low income housing.

- Matt asked if we could include solar paneling and water harvesting in the Neighborhood Plan.

- Zach noted that MP partnering with the 2030 District could be a tool in our toolbox to influence new development, especially to encourage new commercial buildings to incorporate sustainable features.

- Gilbert noted some of the CAT development looks to be getting close to the Convento ruins and burial grounds, and asked if CAT was aware of the historical significance of the area.

- Zach said Roger Pfeuffer was going to call the contractor about this concern.

**C. Clean & Beautiful (Gene Einfrank):**

- Gene, Mary Lou Brashears, and Andrew Stocker have been brainstorming ideas to clean up the neighborhood, and have discussed dealing with trash in the streets, and possibly a tree planting project.

- The committee has organized a clean-up effort for the northwest corner of Menlo Park park, to take place this Saturday, March 16th. This corner is undeveloped, and tends to be used as a camp by homeless folks and possibly others who may be up to no good. They have at least 12 confirmed volunteers, everyone invited to participate. Bring hat, gloves, water, if you plan to help.

- Gene noted that Brush & Bulky pickup was coming in another week, it’s now “brush & bulky plus” in which you can submit to the City areas that need attention for weeds, potholes, etc. Gene said he and Mary Lou had riddent their bicycles around the entire neighborhood and documented areas of excessive weeds and trash, and identified locations of potholes that need fixing. They identified 58 items, and noted the City staff became concerned about the volume of work requested. Gene said they prioritized the work and the City will be working on the highest priority areas first.

- They are working on possibly doing a tree planting later this year.

- The committee has established a small team of volunteers to clean up other areas of the neighborhood.

- Karen Greene noted the neighborhood can request a “rolloff” dumpster if MP cleaning up a large volume of trash.

**D. Events (Gene Einfrank):**

- The Dia de San Juan Fiesta committee will be starting meetings very soon and plan to meet every two weeks.

- The event will take place at the MSA Annex again this year. The 2018 Fiesta was very successful, with a great turnout.

- Liza Grant is chairing the committee again this year.

- The DdSJ Committee would like to form a stronger relationship with MPNA for this fiesta and future events.

- It was pointed out that the Santa Cruz River should have water in it for the fiesta this year, due to the scheduled recharging project.

- Zach noted that this cultural event is unique to Menlo Park.

- A sign-up sheet for those wishing to volunteer will be available at the April MPNA meeting.

**E. Engagement and Outreach (Pat Saito, Janice Gross):**

- Janice and Pat proposed that signs announcing the MPNA meetings be created to put up around the neighborhood the week before meetings, to encourage attendance.

- Estimates for heavy-duty corrugated plastic reusable signs were presented: $127.00 for 10 signs, $152.00 for 13 signs

- The hope is that neighbors will volunteer to put them up, take them down, and store them.

- The corrugated plastic is similar to political signs, they are durable & will withstand weather, and are made locally

- Janice and Pat also made up a general information flyer to be put up around the neighborhood to raise awareness of the MPNA, announce future MPNA meetings.

**6. MP Business for Approval (Zach Yentzer):**

- Meeting Signage: Matt Perri moved to use MPNA funds to purchase 13 signs, Wendy Sterner seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

- MP Website: Zach explained that neighbor Danny Pagano is working on a website for Menlo Park which will be a “one stop shop” for Board Member contacts, neighborhood association meeting dates, MPNA meeting minutes archive, and other neighborhood information. Expense would be $70 for the domain name for the first year, and $140/year after that to keep the domain name. Zach noted that up to this year, Gene Einfrank has been paying for the current wordpress website. Zach requested that the neighborhood approve a payment of $80.39 to for the domain name and web posting. Gene Einfrank moved to approve this expenditure, Pat Saito seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. (Danny offered to help any committees with posting their information to this website)

- Zach asked the neighborhood what the feeling is about hosting an event to hear from the Ward 1 and mayoral candidates. He said he has been contacted by various candidates about coming to MPNA meetings, and some candidates have already attended MPNA meetings. Zach suggested perhaps hosting a tabling event, or a forum in which the candidates each speak and answer questions, or inviting candidates individually to meetings throughout the year.

Zach noted that the MPNA Board decided to hold “gatherings” in the summer months, for neighbors to attend. These would be less formal than the MPNA meetings. The candidates have until the end of May to submit enough signatures to officially run for office. Suggestions were made to consider partnering with Barrio Hollywood’s planned forum, or with the YWCA.

Mary Lou noted a popular forum format she took part in with another organization was to invite all candidates to the same meeting, provide them all with the same set of questions prior to the meeting, and at the meeting, have the candidates wait in a separate room, and invite them one by one into the meeting to answer the questions directly to attendees. She said this format allowed attendees to hear each candidate’s position on topics without spurring debate or argument among candidates. There was general agreement with this format.

Logistics of hosting a meeting were discussed, and it became clear that more information, discussion and thought was required before a decision could be made. Zack said he would synthesize what was discussed and send email this to the neighborhood, and this would be brought up again at a future MPNA meeting.

**7. Public Safety Report:** skipped, as Lt. Leotaud was unable to attend the meeting.

**8. Call to the Audience:**

- Karen Greene announced a number of events and opportunities happening through the Pima County Public Library

- Gilbert asked for an update on security measures at the Garden of Gethsemane, and suggested the site could be integrated somehow into the Dia de San Juan fiesta. Ward 1 rep Steve Arnquist said they are still looking at options, Parks and Rec, Ward 1, and MPNA need to coordinate and get on the same page. Steve noted that Nathalia is now the Parks & Rec coordinator for Ward 1.

- Aaron noted that he recently learned that he was being charged an additional $11 (on top of the $16 everyone pays for an individual dumpster) on his City of Tucson water/sewer/environmental services bill because the back fence on his property has a gate that could allow additional access to the alley, so the city is also charging him for the much larger community dumpster located in the alley. Aaron was not happy about this, and wanted to alert others to this possible additional charge on their bill. He also said getting rid of the giant dumpster is not an option because some neighbors on his block do not have any other option for getting their trash picked up. Steve from Ward 1 suggested Aaron talk with his neighbors and the city to try and come up with a creative solution.

Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Wendy Sterner