

Menlo Park Neighborhood Association Meeting
April 11, 2024, 6-8 pm
Sentinel Building, 320 N. Commerce Park Loop, Tucson AZ

Board members present: Kylie Walzak, President; Laura Dent, First Vice President; Anthony Nelson, Second Vice President; Wendy Sterner, Secretary; Mamta Popat, Parliamentarian; Liza Grant, Historian & Newsletter; Keren Torres, Kara Harter and Celina Soto, Members at Large

Welcome and Introductions: The Board and neighbors introduced themselves.

March minutes for approval: Armando moved to approve the February minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Steve and it passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Kylie presented the balances in the accounts, which were provided to her by Treasurer Liz Martinez, who was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Current balance in MPNA savings is \$25.04, and checking balance is \$3506.93. The balance increase is due to a donation check from Rio Nuevo for \$1,017.28 for the 2023 Dia de San Juan Fiesta. Per Liza Grant, Rio Nuevo was responsible for the delay in getting the donation paid.

Westmoreland Affordable Housing Progress Report

Johanna Hernandez is the new Deputy Director at City of Tucson Housing & Community Development. She is replacing Ann Chanecka, who is now the head of the department. Johanna has been with HCD for many years, and has been in this role for 5 months. The Westmoreland Affordable Housing Project is still moving forward, it is a priority this year. They are still in pre-development due to the need to identify what action may need to be taken to mitigate the scattered debris under the surface on the site. They are currently assessing where debris is, what type of debris it is, and if it will need to be removed. They should get results of the tests conducted on the site in a couple weeks. Once the state of the soil is determined they will have a better idea of how soon construction can begin. If the buried debris needs to be removed, that will delay the start of construction by possibly many months. The debris is mostly from the demolition of the previous apartment complex. If they determine that the soil is stable enough to build on without removing the debris, construction can begin a lot sooner. Regarding the design of the housing to be built, because HCD is still in the pre-design phase of the project, they have not finalized architectural plans, but still have the conceptual design which was presented to the neighborhood at a meeting on site, which took place over a year ago. When they have a more formal design, it will be presented to the neighborhood before any site development begins.

MPNA 501c3 Nonprofit Structure Discussion and Vote to Proceed

The committee working on forming a Menlo Park nonprofit consists of current MPNA officers Liz Martinez (Treasurer), Laura Dent (First Vice President), Wendy Sterner (Secretary) and Kylie Walzak (President). Laura reminded everyone that we have secured the services of an attorney who has volunteered to help us with this endeavor for free. So far committee members have taken a free training available from the City of Tucson Planning Dept and gotten input from other neighborhood associations on how they formed and manage their nonprofits. Committee members envisioned three priorities to use nonprofit funds to continue or to improve:

- Public Art and Cultural heritage and events, such as the Dia de San Juan Fiesta
- Pedestrian and Traffic Improvements, like crosswalks, pedestrian infrastructure, clearing sidewalks
- Environmental Protection & Open Space

The committee considered two different ways that the nonprofit Board could be structured: either maintain four officers elected to the MPNA Board (President, First Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary) and have them serve as the officers on the nonprofit Board, or create a “Friends of Menlo Park” type structure in which the nonprofit Board members do not necessarily have to be MPNA Board members. The City recommended that we retain MPNA officers to be officers on the nonprofit, and tonight the question for the MPNA membership is what type of structure they would like the nonprofit Board take.

There was a discussion about some benefits of having a nonprofit, such as the ability to fund projects important to the neighborhood like speed humps/traffic mitigation; nonprofit status would allow donations to MPNA to be tax deductible, meaning other entities like Caterpillar would be willing to make larger donations to the neighborhood; nonprofit status will allow us to apply for more grants for larger amounts; we would be able to purchase supplies at discounted rate from some vendors; and we would have complete control over the money donated to the neighborhood as compared to now when we must rely on a fiscal sponsor to tell us what’s happening with our funds.

There was a request that the committee itemize the projects that the neighborhood could apply for grants on. Wendy clarified that the Board would not be making any decisions about what projects to spend funds on, but that all proposed grants to apply for and all proposed projects to spend funds on would have to be approved by the membership first.

Kylie called for a motion on how the neighborhood would like to structure the nonprofit. Kara moved to structure the nonprofit Board keeping same officers that serve on the Neighborhood Association Board. David seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Dia de San Juan Organizing Committee and Annual Event Announcement

The Fiesta is held every year on the same date, which is June 24th, which means this year it will take place on a Monday evening from 6-10 pm at Mission Garden. Liza Grant is looking for volunteers to help set up on the day of the Fiesta, to be on hand during the event to serve in various roles (such as running the pinata event), and breaking down afterward. Liza asked people who would like to volunteer to contact her in person, by phone (520-269-0840) or email (stoneszoom@yahoo.com). She is already meeting with Mission Garden to get the ball rolling. Liza noted that Mission Garden is asking MPNA to pay a fee for the use of their space this year, which they had not done in the past. A neighbor who lives in Barrio Sin Nombre brought up the issue of parking and how it affects their area of the neighborhood the most. He requested that the same crew who helped with parking last year be used this year, as they did a very good job. Another neighbor asked if there is any money left over this year from the amount DDSJ received from the Ward 1 Budget de la Gente. Liza said because DDSJ must use a fiscal sponsor she does not have any idea how much money is in the account. She is waiting for the accounting from the fiscal sponsor at Mission Garden. A neighbor asked what the fiesta has been like on Mondays in the past. Liza said in the past the fiesta was well attended no matter what day it was, but that was pre-COVID and the fiesta was held in different locations. She wasn’t sure what it will be like this time because it’s only the third year to be at Mission Garden. Fiesta attendance at Mission Garden has been consistently lower than when it was held at the Mercado. A neighbor asked Liza to look into making sure emergency responders have good access to the venue. Liza said she will do that and mentioned that they usually have TPD volunteer presence there during the event. Liza also noted that volunteers receive a free DDSJ t-shirt.

Urban Wildlife Refuge Letter of Support and Discussion

Kylie introduced Logan and Maxie from Tucson Birthplace Coalition to answer questions. Kylie advised the membership that the MPNA Board was asked a couple weeks ago to sign on to a letter of support for the

Urban Wildlife Refuge project. She noted MPNA is already on the letter, and tonight the Board is asking the neighborhood if they would like to have MPNA sign on to the letter of support. Kylie put the letter up on the screen and read it aloud to the membership. Steve moved to have the neighborhood sign the letter of support. Neto seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Logan updated neighbors on the project: Recently the Wilderness Society has been helping them gain access to the right people with US Fish & Wildlife. They all met at the open space site, the meeting included the Chief of USF&W. Based on that meeting, the proposal to allow formal submission has received the green light. They are continuing to gather support from neighborhoods and individuals. You can add your signature of support online at santacruzriver.org; there is an online contact form you can use to submit documents including memories and history of the land. The coalition is moving quickly while the political winds are in our favor. Anthony said he walked the land with a big group of people recently and saw lots of plants, birds, even a baby horned lizard. He said the open space is a huge asset to our community and sets us apart from any other community in the country. He said he even pulled buffelgrass and planted wildflowers.

Maxie invited everyone to their informal meetings every Tuesday at 5:30 in the Mission Garden parking lot.

Barrio Sin Nombre Update

Anthony announced BSN residents voted unanimously to continue pursuing the split from MPNA, and that BSN residents would like this to be on the MPNA agenda to vote on in May. He clarified that only BSN residents can vote on the split. Raul noted that this is only the beginning of the splitting process, and there are a number of things they would have to do, including writing their own bylaws. He stressed that BSN plans to continue to work in coalition with MPNA, and that there are multiple items in the MPNA draft neighborhood plan that refer to BSN. He said they do not yet have a consensus for the split in BSN community, and that it's not easy to mobilize people to come to meetings. There was a question about how BSN residents will be notified of the vote at the May MPNA meeting, the answer was that the City will send postcard to announce meeting and vote. Raul mentioned that BSN residents apparently don't like to attend MPNA meetings and would prefer to meet in their neighborhood, however MPNA sets its own meeting times and locations. Kylie noted that the MPNA bylaws do not appear to require that the vote take place at a regular MPNA meeting, and that we could set up a special meeting in May specifically for this vote, and hold the meeting in a location more comfortable for BSN neighbors.

The MPNA bylaw regarding a split states "A vote is taken for the split but only those in the proposed new association vote on whether they wish to form a new association. In other words, although all are in attendance, the pre-existing association cannot prevent a new association from forming." Kylie pointed out that the bylaws only require a majority of BSN residents/property owners *in attendance* to pass a vote; there is no threshold of residents in attendance that needs to be met for the vote to be valid.

There was conversation about BSN proposed boundaries and stakeholders, in particular Caterpillar and Mission Garden. The proposed BSN boundaries are: north = Cushing St, east = Santa Cruz River, west = Grande Ave and south = 22nd St.

There was a question about Keren and Anthony needing to resign from the MPNA Board once BSN has voted to split from the neighborhood. There was no guidance on this point in the MPNA bylaws.

Kylie asked for suggestions for date, time and meeting place that would work for BSN residents, and she pointed out that City of Tucson Planning Dept needs to know asap due to the need to announce the meeting and vote to BSN neighbors by postcard.

Call to Audience & Neighborhood Announcements

Neto announced an upcoming road closure at Congress/Silverbell Monday and Tuesday Apr 15 and 16.

Anthony requested more clarity in bylaws regarding requests for letters of support from MPNA membership.

Keith Bagwell from Pima County District 5/Adelita Grijalva's office announced the county finally secured more federal funding for assisting asylum seekers with shelter and transportation, - \$21.7 million. The county is hoping the money will last through end of year. Opioid settlement money is coming in piecemeal, and the county is working on a resolution w/City of Tucson for how best to use the funds. The Pima County Health Dept will be involved, the funds will be spent on addiction treatment and prevention, including the use of fentanyl. Most of the money will be spent in city limits since most people suffering from addiction live in the city. The Board of Supervisors will be naming a new treasurer to replace Beth Ford. They are considering two candidates. Keith noted that Representative Matt Hines is working on a resolution to express opposition to the Arizona Supreme Court decision that an 1864 anti-abortion law takes precedence over more recent Arizona legislation.

Kara announced the workshop Building Neighborhood Resilience is being supported by the City, they are willing to come to our neighborhood meetings to talk about how to make plans to work with neighbors if power or water goes out in extreme situations.

Isabel requested that Kylie explore getting someone from TPD or Pima County Health Dept to come to a meeting to educate neighbors about fentanyl addiction.

Benny Gomez from Ward 1 was asked when Menlo Park streets will be paved. Neighbors can go to the Tucson Delivers website for information. The website has a list of priority projects but not necessarily dates due to many entities need to sign off . Benny advised that people can report potholes on the SeeClickFix ap, or call 311, or on the website tdotconcerns@tucsonaz.gov. The Ward 1 Budget de la Gente voting starts on Sunday 4/14 through the end of April. Safe Streets mini grants grantees have been selected and notice will go out soon. Non selected applications will stay on the list for 3 yrs. Open house events are being planned for proposed changes to the Congress St/Grande Ave intersection. Ward 1 will reach out through MPNA to notify neighbors.

Steve moved to adjourn.

Next meeting Thursday, May 9, 2024.