

Regent Neighborhood Association Meeting, February 26, 2014

Members present: Jon Miskowski, John Schlaefel, Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, LD Oakley, Mary Sarnowski, Ronnie Hess, Ron Rosner, Dan O'Callaghan, Betsy Greene, Eric Steege, Lorna Will, Jessi Claringbole, Marcia Vandercook.

Guests: Jeremy Levin, David LeZaks.

1. **Minutes** of January 28 approved.
2. **University Avenue Corridor Plan.** John Schlaefel distributed a summary of meeting results so far. Joint West approved the plan tonight. Gary Brown offered an amendment that specific heights in the 1600 block be taken out in favor of the C-1 zoning heights, which passed.

Upcoming meetings: landmarks, urban design, transit and parking, economic development, and plan. Jon said to expect pushback on heights, recommending more parking than code. We hope the landmarks committee will balance the push for height, recognizing University Heights and the spillover effect on the neighborhood. The message is that the plan allows for redevelopment and greater density, but with a concern about balance.

Jon said Ken Golden's written comments to the transit commission suggest there's a tension between the neighborhood and students, and it was referred to today at Joint West, so we need to address it. There's a proposed response from the RNA being worked on. Eric asked if it was possible that the plan simply wouldn't pass. Jon said probably most committees will pass it or pass it with recommendations. The Plan Commission is the lead agency so their view is most important. We haven't seen the city staff report, which will give us a better sense of their concerns. We may be able to sit down with the staff and agree to accept their suggestions, or we may need to disagree. There is a good chance the staff will say the heights are too low. At that point we may ask people to write letters to the plan commission members and alders, and we are starting to organize that effort now. In the meantime board members should write letters to Shiva in support of the plan, talk to neighbors and solicit support. Ronnie suggested reaching out to the Dudgeon-Monroe neighborhood since they recently went through a similar fight on heights.

Jon said that asking for heights lower than zoning and more off-street parking will be the main points of contention. Dan said the city is trying to discourage car traffic and they're not sure that our plan is the best solution. We need to say that we're not afraid of development, but we want to achieve the balance that's right for our neighborhood. Our process has been good and people are respecting that. People have heard about our tension within the board, so it's important for them to know that the strong anti-development views did not prevail.

3. **Elected official report.** Jeremy Levin reported on county board issues. He referred to recent news articles dealing with the 9-1-1 center and county-city conflicts. He thinks we're moving in the right direction and have improved computer-aided dispatch in the last year. He is still hopeful

that city won't do its own dispatch and communications center. The airport had 1.68 million passengers last year, so more parking is under consideration. Mary C-L asked about the state trying to undo city living wage ordinances, and Jeremy said the county and city are lobbying on it. The county will go on paying it but won't necessarily be able to require it from contractors.

The April ballot is very light. Jeremy is running unopposed and will look to stay on the Health and Human Needs committee, which is half the budget. They will be getting an audit report on contracting with service agencies. They are also hoping for a homeless day shelter in next couple of months. They didn't have sufficient funding for an isthmus location, so they're looking in Town of Madison off Fish Hatchery. Saving money on acquisition allows more improvements and services, but they will still need to provide transportation to other services, storage, showers, so people can get ready for work. LD recommended making it clear that it's a resource center and not a full-service solution.

4. Garden grant application for SW bike path and Commonwealth. The executive committee met last week to discuss and endorse a grant application by David and Jeanette LeZaks. Jon, Marcia and Karen authorized the LeZaks to submit the grant application on behalf of the RNA by the deadline, which was two days before this RNA meeting. The land is a triangular piece currently just grass, located at the intersection of Commonwealth and the SW bike path, on the NE corner next to LeZaks' house. It's owned by DOT and maintained by the city. The garden will be about 1000 square feet of native grasses and flowers, with a path where people already cut through. Lorna noted that the city won't approve the grants until June, but the LeZaks have to buy plants now, so RNA has agreed to commit \$1000 to cover them. If they don't get the grant, we'll consider later how much additional support there might be from RNA and Dudgeon-Monroe.

The LeZaks had a similar-sized rain garden at Hilldale and maintained it with a group. They saw this grant opportunity, talked with city staff, gardeners, volunteers from Dudgeon-Monroe who maintain the other bike path gardens, went door-to-door and on Hillington Green listserv for support and comment. Commonwealth will be under construction this summer and they have talked with the city about not having heavy equipment park there this summer and compress the soil. David said there's another grant they are eligible that will cut the cost of the plants in half. They plan to hold a couple of place-making events to kick it off with food and work days. A later phase or another grant may be an art installation. Robbie suggested it might be a good place for a neighborhood sign, and Lorna said this grant is often used for signage, so that could happen later. She said they'd talked with the city about installing a bench or a bubbler, but benches are often an attractive nuisance and a bubbler is apparently a "big deal".

Maintenance will take watering and weeding for first two years, then it gets easier. The LeZaks plan to head up the volunteer effort and do recruitment. Volunteers from Dudgeon-Monroe may be available since their gardens are more established and will need less. RNA has also agreed to pay \$200/year for water. David said that they are experienced gardeners and will have someone

else draw the exact layout and the plan will be approved by the city. Jon expressed appreciation for the hard work by the LeZaks and the quick action by the new sustainability chairs.

Mary C-L moved to approve the endorsement of the executive committee, seconded by Dan, adopted unanimously. The board also approved a request from the SW bike path volunteers for \$200 this summer. So moved by Ronnie, seconded by Dan, adopted unanimously.

5. Other work of the sustainability committee. Jon said he has asked the sustainability committee to take a look at mapping gardens and traffic islands. If some exist that are lagging, people should let Lorna and Jessi know so they can survey them. Betsy said that when Steve Arnold was greenspace chair he may have attempted to do this. LD said that she would like the entryway by Breese Terrace improved, but Ron said we gave up on that because there was so much construction there. We managed to give it to city, so they maintain it now. The neighborhood sign was damaged and the legs are too short. Other land to look at: Ronnie mentioned a triangle of land on the other side of Blessed Sacrament that is a city park. Ron said RNA funded a stone bench that is still there. John noted that the Corridor Plan recommends a rain garden to the west of the Mullins parking lot. Ronnie noted that Pridham House is for sale on the south side of 1900 or 2000 block of Van Hise. It has a beautiful garden with a gazebo, but it can be partitioned because it's a buildable lot. Ron reported that this year's Olbrich Garden Tour will be in University Heights and he volunteered to write a newsletter article about it.

Lorna said the sustainability committee can do research on topics of interest to the neighborhood. For example, if people are interested in solar panels they can look into them, publish information, maybe look at collective buying power.

6. Communications committee. Mary reported that the winter newsletter was mailed out and we have a few new advertisers. May articles will be due at the end of March. There will also be a June edition, so the garden tour article can go there. She is considering raising advertising rates now that the newsletter is delivered more reliably. John recommended looking at mailing the directories also.

7. Meeting leadership, by-laws. Jon asked for suggestions about who should lead the meetings when he has to travel for work and said that Dan is willing to lead meetings if that's agreeable. He could be appointed as president-elect, since we no longer have a vice-president position. Betsy moved that for the remainder of year (until May), Dan will be designated person to stand in to chair the meetings if Jon can't be here. Ron seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved, with Jon abstaining. Jon said we will need more board members in May and we should be reaching out to people to join. John recommended that the bylaws revision be undertaken in time to be approved by the May membership meeting. Everyone should read bylaws and send suggestions.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30. Minutes submitted by Marcia Vandercook.