

Bassett Neighborhood District Monthly Meeting
7:00 p.m., 10 September 2007
Meriter Retirement, Small Dining Room, 333 W. Main St.

Attending: Paul Brandl, Jonathan Cooper, Vince Jenkins, Griffin Klema, David Knuti, Rosemary Lee, Stefanie Moritz, Paula Oeler (minutes), Pete Ostlind (chair).

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Chair Pete Ostlind took agenda items out of order to allow for the possibility that Alder Mike Verveer would arrive after the city meeting he was attending ended.

(1) Introductions

(2) Approval of minutes

August draft minutes not distributed prior to meeting; will be sent out to Bassett list-serv.

(3) Report of Community Police Officer Mark Allen

None - Officer Allen was not present.

(5) Development Projects Status Report: Capitol West / Hyatt Hotel Update

Jonathan Cooper reported that the Steering Committee met with Alexander Company representatives in a lightly attended meeting a couple of weeks ago. A good discussion focused on two main items:

- (1) The drop off area, a U shaped area that pulls up to the sidewalk (not across it) with an overhang, and
- (2) The pedestrian bridge, a bridge that appears in the current approved General Development Plan (GDP) and was planned for construction with 333 W. Washington that the developer would like to delay to be constructed with 306 W. Main for economic reasons. The proposed hotel's footprint will require a re-design to move the pedestrian bridge. The pedestrian bridge does not appear in the plans for the requested amendment of the GDP.

The request to change the GDP will be heard at the Plan Commission meeting on Monday, Sept. 17 and, if approved, will go to the Common Council meeting the following night, Tuesday, Sept. 18. Jonathan stated that in his opinion, although it is not unanimous, the majority of neighborhood comments have been supportive of the change from a condo tower to a hotel. If the GDP is approved, then the Specific Improvement Plan (SIP) process will move forward with more neighborhood involvement.

A discussion about the pedestrian bridge and its importance to the neighborhood followed. The pedestrian bridge has always been part of the GDP so the consensus was that it should be addressed now instead of as part of the SIP. This bridge was a selling point of the project to create pedestrian and bicycle access through the block that, although private, would be open to the neighborhood. The bridge would be over Washington Place and is part of the access from Henry to Broom while the one-way Washington Place creates an access between West Wash and Main. There is concern that

without proper planning, the ability to create a workable re-design of the bridge will be difficult to accomplish in Phase III. Rosemary Lee noted that the private access ways would be controlled by the Capitol West Condo Association (once formed).

Jonathan confirmed that he would be speaking at the Plan Commission meeting and address two main issues:

- (1) The front entryway design, including the plan to use the terrace as part of the drop off area. While he feels that the current design is the best of all options discussed so far, he will indicate that the Bassett Neighborhood plan says the street grass and tree terraces should be preserved.
- (2) The lack of the pedestrian bridge on the newly amended GDP. He wants the Plan Commission and Common Council to be aware of this aspect before these bodies give approval.

Paula Oeler asked if hotel vans would be parked in the drop off area. The answer was no. A general discussion about the design of the drop off area and its impact on pedestrian safety included comments about the width of the drive (Urban Design Commission limited it to 12 feet which creates an increased buffer zone between the drive and the sidewalk), planting areas, and the impact of Washington Place as a one-way street (all drop off traffic will need to be directed down Washington Place and prevented from scooting through to turn onto West Wash.) Many of these items will be addressed during the SIP process.

(7) Other Items Brought Forth by Residents

(a) Chief Wray's Request for 30 more police officers

Rosemary Lee voiced her support for Chief Wray's request for 30 more officers and encouraged others to do the same. She noted that the number of police officers available for service is impacted by retirements, those on leave, light and/or administrative duty. She believes that safety is the most important issue for Madison. David Knuti commented that lots of things go into community and wondered how high is enough? David has not felt unsafe, but acknowledged that he is not out at bar time. There was some discussion about the Downtown Safety Initiative (DSI) and if it was in the budget for next year given that it was a one-year program. The answer is yes, but that the police chief controls allocation of resources.

(b) Downtown Living Tour, Saturday, Oct. 6th

Stefanie Moritz reminded everyone that the annual Downtown Living Tour is October 6th. The event is on a Saturday this year. The organizing committee is still looking for volunteers. There are two shifts: 11:00 to 1:30 and 1:30 to 4:00. Volunteers get a free ticket (\$10 value). If you volunteer soon, you will also be invited to a pre-tour reception (new this year). The reception will be at the Madison Club on Thursday, October 4th from 5-7pm. Please contact Stefanie (wiststef@yahoo.com) or Ledell Zellers (lzellers@mailbag.com) to volunteer.

(c) Quiet Zone Update

Paula Oeler gave an update and answered some questions on Quiet Zones 1-3. Quiet Zone 2 most directly affects the Bassett Neighborhood. It will likely be until the end of the year before the trains stop blowing their whistles. Paula spoke with Steve Sonntag at the City who indicated that there are a number of factors for the delay. She noted that the Bedford Street storm sewer project (itself at least a month behind) is delaying quiet zone construction because a pedestal needs to be added at Bedford and Wilson; that the vehicle crossing needs to be removed at Doty Street; and that the contractor encouraged the city to submit all three quiet zones to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) at one time for approval. In response to a question about the long approval process, Paula noted that there are two approvals required from the FRA – one for the plan and one for the actual creation once construction is complete. The creation approval process is still a mystery. Once creation approval is given, there is a 21-day window for everyone to put the quiet zone in place, including the installation of signs. Asked if a final site visit was necessary, Paula said she didn't think so and noted that Steve Sonntag has been in conversations with the FRA. The City's Engineering Department has a web site re: Quiet Zones and an update Steve Sonntag wrote will be online once it is reviewed by Larry Nelson. (<http://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/quietZone.cfm>)

(d) Badger Bus Use of Local Streets

David Knuti raised the issue again about how buses reach the Badger Bus terminal. He would prefer that they do not travel along a mainly residential street when there are different alternatives available (i.e. Proudfit). There was some discussion about the change in pattern while Main Street was closed and if the buses would stay off Bedford once the street re-opened.

(e) Distribution of Neighborhood Welcome Flyers

Stefanie Moritz asked if anyone had comments about the contacts they made during the distribution of welcome flyers. Jonathan Cooper commented that while he didn't make many contacts, his new neighbors were friendly. David Knuti has not yet distributed his flyers; Stefanie asked him to be sure to deliver a flyer to 114 S. Bassett.

(f) Façade Improvements & Building Maintenance

Griffin Klema asked about façade improvements. If a building is rundown or not maintained, then the report a problem link on the city's website can be used and Building Inspection will respond (generally within 2-3 days). Peeling paint is a code violation. If a building has a design issue (bad aesthetics), there are façade improvement grants, but these are not available for alleyways. Griffin was asking about the alleyway of the 100 block of W. Main. Trash and debris can be cited in both the front and back yards (although residential back yard citations are generally complaint-driven). Stefanie noted that the City's cycle for inspecting residential properties is long, so reporting a problem through the website is a good way to get attention. She recommended Griffin contact the Head of Building Inspection directly with questions (gthank@cityofmadison.com). Open citations are listed by census

tract; CNI has purchased a special sort that generates a report for all open violations within CNI boundaries. This report is distributed to Executive Council members (includes Griffin).

(4) Discussion of Mayor's Proposal to Close Bassett TID

Pete Ostlind had hoped that Mike Verveer would be present to explain this proposal. The Mayor is proposing to close the Bassett Neighborhood Tax-Incremental District (TID) as of December 31, 2008. This TID has funded a number of projects – street repairs, the sewer project, Bedford Court, Capitol West, Quiet Zone 2 improvements – but now there are no projects in the pipeline. Pete noted the growth in this TID possibly grew faster than anticipated and paid off its debt before all neighborhood projects that could or should be paid for by this TID were designed. He expressed concern that the Small Cap TIF program (discussed last month) is funded through this TID and that its closing would derail this pilot program due to timing (i.e. people would not be able to qualify and complete the project in time).

There was general discussion about why now since new debt can be incurred, how a TID works, and whether closing the TID is a good thing or not. Budgets are tight. Once closed, the money generated in the TID would revert to the general fund of all taxing authorities (in 2009). The closing of other TIDs has also been proposed.

There was some discussion about what projects the neighborhood would like to see funded before the TID is closed. Ideas included:

- Updating the Bassett Neighborhood Plan
- Conducting a Pedestrian Safety Study and then implementing appropriate infrastructure changes
- Conducting a Tree Survey (looking for volunteers) to track locations and species and to plan and pay for tree replacement in light of Emerald Ash Borer disease
- Replacement Tree Planting on Bedford and Mifflin Sts. (trees were damaged or lost during recent projects)
- W. Wash Corridor improvements
- Street Repair, Landscaping and Lighting on remaining streets
- Small Cap TIF (multi-year funding to allow for a viable demo project)

(6) Alder's Report

None – Alder Verveer did not attend.

(8) Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Next meeting: 8 October at Meriter Retirement, 333 W. Main St.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Oeler, 14 Sept 2007