

## **CAPITOL NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.**

### **MINUTES of Executive Council Meeting Held January 26, 2015.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Vercauteren (President), Plotkin, Stitt, Ingebritson, Ostlind, Montes, Broughman, Warman, Skrentny, Brabender, Fisher, Kamps, O'Brien, County Supervisor Mary Kolar, Ald. Verveer.

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Madison Police Officers Casey Charne and Alex Berkovitz.

- I. Meeting called to order by Vercauteren. There was no quorum at the outset.
- II. **DOWNTOWN POLICE REPORT.** Officers Charne and Berkovitz, members of the Community Policing Team, thought they were asked to attend this meeting to discuss a liquor license application. We explained that Madison police officers normally attend our meetings to update us on police matters of interest to downtown residents. In response to a question by Montes, Berkovitz said there did not appear to be a significant increase in burglaries when the students returned from holiday break but he has no firm statistics. Mary Kolar referred everyone to Jeff Vercauteren's recent article in *Madison Magazine* discussing issues related to homelessness. Kolar added that there has been a significant reduction in police and emergency calls at the City-County Building since people are no longer allowed to congregate in front of it.

Officer Berkovitz reports that police are enforcing pedestrian safety laws. He specifically noted police activity to protect pedestrians crossing at the intersection of E. Main and Blair Sts. Skrentny, who lives near E. Main and Blair, thanked police for their efforts. He has seen more cars stopping there to let pedestrians cross. Stitt commented that it is important to improve the culture regarding pedestrian safety. Mary Kolar expressed concern about drivers regularly running red lights at the controlled intersection on Blair, Wilson and John Nolen Dr. O'Brien agreed that people often run the red lights at that intersection. Officer Berkovitz said he would refer this to the police traffic team. Warman asked whether police could use video technology to catch those who run lights at intersections. Berkovitz answered that video technology will only produce a license number that will identify the vehicle, but not the driver. Police can't make an arrest based on the license number alone unless the person to whom the license is registered also admits to driving the car when it ran the light.

Stitt asked why a police officer no longer regularly attends our EC meetings. Vercauteren answered that it may be due to miscommunication after the change in officers downtown. Vercauteren has e-mailed our agenda to the new officer, but no one has yet attended. Berkovitz said an officer should be assigned to attend our meetings and he will see to it that an officer is assigned. Broughman asked Berkovitz if his report at the recent Miffland meeting, that UW will no longer sponsor an alternative party to the Mifflin Street Block Party, is still true. Berkovitz answered it is true that there will no longer be an alternative party on campus. He added that without an alternative event on campus, Mifflin Street may once again become an uncontrolled event.

- III. **REPORT OF THE COUNTY SUPERVISOR.** Ald. Mary Kolar reports, as discussed above, that police and emergency calls at the City-County Building have been reduced since

people are no longer allowed to congregate there. She also said that, contrary to some reports, deaths of homeless people have not increased since then. She noted that not all who congregated there are homeless. As the City/County Liaison Committee learned, drug dealers found buyers there and it became dangerous for everyone, resulting in numerous emergency calls. It is safer now, she said. Kolar has been fighting for a homeless day resource center for three years now. The Messner Building on E. Wash. was purchased for \$1.425 million. Many issues still must be resolved as the project moves through the committee process. Who will be the provider at the day center when it opens? Will that be decided before or after the city's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process is completed. Skrentny asked how problems like those that occurred at the City-County Building will be avoided at the day resource center. Kolar explained that the City-County Building was not a "shelter," and the day center will not be a place to "just hang out" She added that a security plan will be part of the project. Montes asked whether it is true that the homeless population has decreased now that people can no longer congregate at the City-County Building. Kolar answered it is true that a "bad element" left the city when they realized they could no longer hang out there.

A County Board Committee is reviewing proposals for the Alliant Energy Center. According to Kolar, three options are being discussed: (1) Do nothing and keep it as is. This is not viable because the center is deteriorating and is in deficit; (2) County Government will repair it; or (3) a public/private venture will completely redo the site to make it more of a destination. This would include a hotel and retail. Kolar said there will be many more meetings and she wants to hear our opinions regarding these options.

[There is now a quorum.]

IV. MINUTES of the November EC meeting (there was no meeting in Dec.), are APPROVED without change; on MOTION by Brabender, SECOND by Ostlind.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT. Plotkin forgot to bring his summary with our current bank balance, but reports that we are "in the black."

Plotkin sent out the Finance Committee's proposed 2016 budget and meeting notes. He reports there is not much new from last year. Only James Madison Park District spent the \$100 in "seed" money budgeted for each district last year (it was spent to save ash trees in James Madison Park). Skrentny said he thought the money would be allowed to grow over time if the district decided not to spend it this year, but instead wait for a more substantial use some time in the future. That, he said, is why First Settlement decided not to spend its seed money in 2015. In response to Skrentny's question, Plotkin said the money was allocated just for 2015, with any additional money coming from district fundraising, but the EC could vote to change that if it wishes. The committee recommends continuing with separate district budgets for 2016, with each district again being provided \$100 in seed money.

The budget committee addressed changes to the newsletter format. Proposed changes include: going to an all-electronic format, part electronic and part print format, reduction in the number of pages or in the frequency of production of the printed newsletter, a one-page mailer highlighting what is featured on the website, or letting members decide whether to receive the newsletter electronically or in print form. The Finance Committee recommends creating a survey for members to gauge interest in electronic vs. print format. The survey will

be posted on the website, sent out by e-mail and included in the next printed newsletter. Scott Kolar, Adam Plotkin and Davy Mayer will work on the survey. Scott Kolar will also speak to advertisers to see whether they would be willing to pay the same rates in a new format. Ostlind reports that a similar survey of Willy St. Co-op members revealed that only 10% opted for an electronic version of the newsletter. A similar survey of State Historical Society members revealed that “well below” 25% opted out of receiving a printed form of the newsletter.

Warman inquired about the large dollar amounts under the “Miscellaneous” line item for both income and expenses in 2015. Plotkin explained that this represents our decision to cash out our CDs and put the funds into our checking account. Warman next asked why there is such a large increase from 2014 to 2015 in the amount of funds under “actual membership” dues. Plotkin attributed the increase to Vercauteren’s membership outreach efforts in 2015. Vercauteren also noted that we received \$500 from MG & E as a business member in 2015 and, he hopes, they will continue as a member in 2016. Vercauteren also pointed out that printing and postage expenses decreased last year. Plotkin explained that this decrease was due to our conversion to Wild Apricot. Expenses for 2016 are also projected lower because of Wild Apricot.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of the budget as proposed. On MOTION by Stitt, with a SECOND by Ostlind, the recommended 2016 budget is APPROVED.

A James Madison Park volunteer, Ilse Hecht, received a \$250 charitable donation from Bank of America for the park’s gardens. The Budget Committee recommends that the donation be deposited in the account earmarked for James Madison Park Garden rather than into the CNI general fund. A MOTION by Montes, with a SECOND by Stitt, to authorize the Budget Committee to deposit the \$250 charitable donation by Bank of America into the “James Madison Park Garden” account rather than into the general fund, led to the following discussion:

Warman asked how the money would be spent. Plotkin explained that it would go toward the purchase of flowers, mulch and other garden supplies. He explained that the volunteers put in a lot of time and effort, adding that Hecht asks for donations, and Paul Hees donates mulch. This would actually go into the “Parks and Gardens” item in the budget. There are separate accounts under that item for the different parks downtown, including Period Garden Park. Blair Street Gardens is also one such account, but they are a separate 501(c)3 and do their own fundraising. Plotkin reports that Period Garden took in \$1,760 in donations in 2015, and James Madison Park took in \$708 in 2015. The discussion concluded and the motion to deposit the \$250 donation into the “James Madison Park Garden” account was APPROVED.

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

**Downtown Fire Station Update.** Vercauteren met with Assistant Fire Chief Lorenzi to discuss the department’s decision to no longer house an ambulance downtown. The Assistant Chief explained that he decision was based on more than a workload issue. The department considered issues such as response time, the availability of first responders and transport to the hospital. There will always be an additional paramedic at the Dayton St. fire station who

will respond with the fire truck dispatched to each call. A medic will be simultaneously dispatched from elsewhere to the scene. There is no change in the arrival time of the first responder. The only change will be in the arrival time of the medic for transport to the hospital in an ambulance. Vercauteren was told there are “glaring gaps” in response times in other parts of the city and these changes are designed to help close those gaps. Plotkin commented that he feels more comfortable knowing that these changes are appropriate for the city as a whole. Assistant Chief Lorenzi agreed to attend the February EC meeting to report on the data they found.

**Membership Growth Strategy.** Vercauteren is still waiting to receive a revised membership brochure from Davy Mayer before we go on to the next step of contacting condo owners, apartment managers and co-ops.

**CNI Holiday Party Report.** The party at Rigby’s was a well-attended success. Vercauteren thanked Cliff Fisher for arranging it. According to Plotkin, we spent \$1,000 on the holiday party last year (we had live music), and \$533 this year. Fisher said that Rigby’s would be willing to host it again this coming year.

**Madison College Relocation Proposal Update.** According to Vercauteren, recent press reports are that the college’s administrators are still discussing their options internally. Ingebritson added that Fred Mohs attended meetings yesterday to discuss this.

## VII. DISTRICT REPORTS

**Miffland.** Kamps reports an apartment building development will be proposed for Broom and W. Wash. It would involve the demolition of several houses there. More to come, he said. Progress continues on the Madison Development Corp. project in the 400 block of W. Mifflin. And, the “Uncommon” Building at the end of Mifflin St. is now “topped off.”

Kamps reports that behavior issues associated with the homeless in the district have moderated with increased police presence and colder weather. Broughman added that there was an “enlightening” discussion with police for an hour at the last district meeting.

Vercauteren reports that there have been back-and-forth e-mails regarding the flashing sign on the Henry St. façade of the “Freedom From Religion Foundation” building. The foundation did not tell the neighborhood of their intent to install the sign, and it is inconsistent with the historic nature of the building. Even so, Vercauteren reports, the Foundation was not receptive to any change and was instead “rather hostile” when neighborhood representatives complained. Their response surprised him. Vercauteren asked whether we should pursue this. Kamps, a member of the steering committee reviewing this project, also noted the lengthy e-mail discussion. He agreed that the sign was never mentioned and the committee “felt good” about the project. He believes the sign is an “eyesore” that is an “affront” to and violates the “spirit” of the review process, although there is probably not much that can be done formally. Fisher suggests that they be asked to tone down the brightness. In response to Skrentny’ question, Kamps said their proposal did not include a sign. Warman asked what the process is when a developer makes changes post-construction. Ostlind said that this issue raises serious questions regarding at what point after a building is completed is a change no longer deemed connected to the original construction. He does not have an answer. Stitt observed that this creates an opportunity for a “good

neighbor” conversation with the foundation. He is surprised that they would take such a stance and believes this is relevant to the dignity of downtown Madison. Stitt is willing to speak with them. Kamps answered that there has been a neighborly conversation, but it was not well received. Stitt believes this is worth pursuing. Warman suggested that we invite the foundation to participate as a member in CNI. Kamps agreed to continue the conversation with them. Stitt also believes the dignity of the downtown is threatened by projects such as the proposal to demolish homes on Broom St. and W. Wash. in favor of high-rise development, calling that a “travesty” that will “deface” W. Wash. He believes the homes should be restored and W. Wash. should be made into an attractive entryway to the Capitol. On this point, Verveer reports that a client of Urban Assets Consulting is only investigating the possibility of purchasing the properties on the site and then building there; the properties there have been on the market for several years, he added. Stitt remains concerned that there is nothing to prevent it from happening. Verveer added that the site is currently zoned as DR-II (downtown residential) and would require a “step back” of a new building on W. Wash. as well as a “setback” of upper stories. Ostlind explained that the zoning code would allow for four stories, with the possibility of two more for “exceptional” design. He referenced the Eric Minton project at 425 W. Wash as an example.

**Mansion Hill.** Ingebritson reports that the developers of the Shabat house want to demolish the home at 219 W. Gilman St. There is a meeting Wednesday night with city staff to review their plans.

The Texas developer proposing to construct a “huge” apartment complex at 126 Langdon St. presented their plans recently. Ingebritson is not sure what will happen next. The property is currently owned by Steve Brown. She said they want to build five-story townhouses in the existing parking lot that, if allowed, will cut into the lake view.

The sorority at 28 Langdon St. continues work on restoring and expanding their building inside and out. They are requesting a conditional use permit for upgrades and maintenance. They will meet with the neighborhood a week from Wednesday (Feb. 3).

There have been complaints about traffic on Wisconsin Ave. and Gilman St. making it difficult for pedestrians to cross. Curb bump-outs have been suggested to calm traffic. Stitt agrees that traffic calming should happen there.

Plotkin reports that the Cavanaughs (owners of the Esquire Club) have applied for a liquor license for the Masonic Temple. They would cater for events held on-site in the ballroom. There will be a neighborhood meeting to discuss this on Thursday January 28. Verveer added that the ALRC took this up last Wednesday, and it will be on their agenda at the next meeting. Plotkin noted that the Masonic Temple has always been a great neighbor and responsive to past concerns.

**James Madison Park.** Fisher reports that his development proposal is working its way through the city process. Rain gardens will be installed on the property. There is one more meeting before it goes to the UDC. Fisher is not sure what will be done with the statutes in James Madison Park.

**First Settlement.** Skrentny reports that the next district meeting is March 8, 2016. Work continues on the new apartment building in the 300 block of E. Wilson St. It will be

interesting to see how it looks once it is clad. The Progressive Building construction project at 409 E. Main St. is moving forward.

Stitt referred to the proposed state legislation making it impossible for cities to create more historic districts as a “tragedy.” Any property owner in a proposed historic district can stop it. The law would not, however, remove existing historic districts. Ingebritson said she was at the Capitol today with Fred Mohs to observe the debate. She said the historic preservation bill was “buried” in the landlord-tenant bill. It could result in the loss of federal money along with other complications. It does not mention villages, perhaps leaving those historic buildings unprotected.. She said the bill would require the approval of 2/3 of property owners before a historic district could be created. She believes the legislators do not understand the ramifications and are just “carrying water” for the Apartments Association and Steve Brown. This, she said, left historic preservationists “shaking their heads.” The bill has been “fast-tracked.” Verveer noted that the discussion included reference to a complaint by the owner of the Essen Haus, Bob Worm, that he was unable to expand the restaurant’s kitchen in the past because of restrictions in the First Settlement Historic District. Stitt explained that the Essen Haus building itself is not in the historic district, but the parking lot is. The kitchen expansion would have gone into the parking lot. Skrentny was surprised by this because the district had worked amicably with Bob Worm on his past requests to expand outdoor seating and install a volleyball court in his parking lot. Skrentny is unaware of any complaints by residents, especially those who live close by in Germania, about these changes. He does not understand where this is coming from. In response to Verveer’s question, Vercauteren said the bill will be heard tomorrow (1/27) by a senate committee for a vote on the original bill along with any amendments. It will then go back to the full assembly as amended for a vote.

**Bassett.** Ostlind reports that the first steering committee meeting for the Urban Land Interest development proposal for 222 S. Bedford, across from WORT and Fourth Ward Lofts, was held last night (1/25). The proposal is for a four-story, 83-unit apartment building with underground parking. Ostlind said it fits within the neighborhood plan and the zoning code. A full neighborhood meeting will be scheduled in the future.

Ostlind reports that construction at Anchor Bank and Inn on the Park continues. The antennas on the roof of the AT & T building on Fairchild St. were a topic of discussion at the last district meeting. Capitol Lakes residents want them removed. He also referred to the recent news story that Capitol Lakes is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Stitt responded to this report by informing everyone that he is President of the Board of Directors for the Capitol Lakes Foundation. He acknowledged that they are filing for bankruptcy but, according to a representative of the owners from Oregon, “all is well.” This should not adversely affect day-to-day operations and the residents’ assets will be protected. Stitt explained that this was done to protect Capitol Lakes from bank financing fees. Last year’s fees were \$5 million. They were trying to negotiate a solution with the banks, but it didn’t work out.

#### VIII. REPORT OF THE ALDERPERSONS

Verveer announced that the memorial service for long-time downtown resident and activist Rosemary Lee will be held at the Central Library Monday, February 1, 2016, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Verveer told Madison Police Capt. Gloede that we need a police representative to attend EC meetings and Bassett district meetings. He announced that the new downtown Police Lieutenant is Brian Austin.

Verveer reports there was a “very productive” meeting with the Mayor yesterday (1/25) regarding Madison College’s proposal to leave its downtown campus. There was input from former UW Chancellor John Wiley and from former Dane County Executive Jonathan Barry. He reports the good news is that the mayor is taking steps toward getting more involved in this process. The college’s board will vote in May on the future of its downtown campus (DTEC).

Two Chicago firms have submitted bids for the Judge Doyle Square project. They will be interviewed by city staff this Friday (1/29). Staff will then issue a report February 15 to the city’s Finance Committee.

Now is the time to apply for city grants. Any district that wishes to receive a city grant must apply by February 22, 2016.

The City Council adopted a resolution last Tuesday (1/19) to hire architects to do a feasibility study for the future of the city garage on Fairchild St. This is to guide its future either as a homeless shelter, or for other uses. This study will take most of 2016. Verveer does not foresee relocation of the police parking that is currently there for at least three years.

Capitol Square reconstruction from Wisconsin Ave. to both E. and W. Wash. Ave. will begin in April. Reconstruction on the other half will take place in 2017. The city council approved a contra-flow bike lane on the Square. Although State DOA staff seemed to support the contra-flow lane as well, the heads of DOA do not and the plan appears to be dead for the foreseeable future, according to Verveer. Vercauteren noted that the plan was to add three feet to the width of the street on the city side of the Square to accommodate a contra-flow bike lane. Will that still be included, he asked? Verveer answered that the city will have to decide and some city staff members believe they should go ahead with the plan to add three feet. Stitt commented that the contra-flow lane should still be added on the city side of the street. Vercauteren likes the idea of angled parking on the Square. Skrentny asked how the additional three feet would be used if there will no longer be any immediate use for it. He believes it would be an unnecessary expense to add it now without any specific use for it. Ostlind believes that biking around the Square as it is now is unsafe and a dedicated bike lane would be a big improvement. It should be part of the reconstruction plan. Verveer noted that under Mayor Dave there were painted bike lanes on the Square that did not work out well at all.

A public hearing to discuss the future of the downtown post office will be held Wednesday February 10, 10:00 a.m., in the Municipal Building Post Office lobby. As Verveer explained, the Municipal Building will be remodeled in the last quarter of 2016, displacing city employees and the post office temporarily. The post office will need to relocate temporarily, but is also considering whether to move permanently out of the downtown. One option being considered is to move all operations to their Annex at 700 E. Wash. Verveer believes it is “wholly unacceptable” to move the post office outside the Central Business District. He said that renewed efforts are underway to convince the post office to reconsider

before the February 10 meeting. The city is searching for other possible locations downtown. Verveer suggested that CNI issue an official statement opposing the proposed move of the post office outside the central business district for presentation at the February 10 meeting.

A MOTION by Stitt, with a SECOND by Warman, that the CNI Executive Council issue a formal position statement for presentation at the February 10, 2016 public meeting, opposing relocation of the post office outside of the Central Business District, is APPROVED. Skrentny will draft the position statement and send it out in the next few days for critique and an e-mail vote of approval by EC members.

MEETING ADJOURNED; on MOTION by Warman, SECOND by Brabender.

**NEXT EC MEETING: Tuesday, February 23, 2016, 5:15 p.m., Central Library, Third Floor.**

AGENDA\* for February 23 EC Meeting

- I. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM (Vercauteren).
- II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY, 2016 EC MINUTES.
- III. DOWNTOWN POLICE REPORT.
- IV. COUNTY SUPERVISOR'S REPORT (Super. Mary Kolar).
- V. TREASURER'S REPORT (Plotkin).
- VI. ACTION ITEMS/NEW BUSINESS.
- VII. OLD BUSINESS:
  - Report on Feb. 10 County Board Candidates Forum;
  - CNI Membership Outreach/Growth Strategy Next Steps;
  - Update on Website/Membership/Communications System Upgrade;
  - Proposed Post Office Relocation Update;
  - Madison College Downtown Campus Update;
  - Other.
- VIII. DISTRICT REPORTS:
  - Mansion Hill, Bassett, Mifflin West, First Settlement, James Madison Park.
- IX. ALDERPERSONS' REPORTS.
- X. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Vercauteren).
- XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Program (open), Membership/Media/Development (open), Policy (Vercauteren), DROC (Ostlind), Finance (Plotkin), Physical Linkages (Mayer), Garden (open), Education and City Issues Monitoring (open), Judge Doyle Square (Plotkin).

XII. ADJOURNMENT.

**\*Agenda subject to change by Vercauteren.**