

Union Park District Council

Board Meeting: minutes

June 1, 2022, 7–9 p.m., via Zoom

President Sarah Dvorak, Secretary Amy Gage

Griggs Midway Building, 1821 University Ave. W., room 330, St. Paul, MN 55104

Members present (9): Sarah Dvorak (Grid 7), presiding. Scott Berger (Grid 10), Ellen Fee (at-large), Kirsten Fryer (at-large), April King (Grid 5), Harmony Neal (Grid 9), Henry Parker (Grid 8), Claire Warren (Grid 4); plus, Bruce Corrie (Concordia University), Amy Gage (University of St. Thomas), Gregg Gridley (Desnoyer Park Improvement Association), Joe Hughes (business), Kent Treichel (Lexington-Hamline Community Council)

Members absent: Dan Elenbaas (Grid 11); open seats for Grids 1, 2, 3, 6, nonprofit, Skyline Towers and Macalester College

Staff: Abdulrahman Wako, executive director; Leah Timberlake Sullivan, program manager

Guests: Dean Cummings, CLUED co-chair; Bill and Lisa Jansen, 1671 Summit; Jenny Burton and Jeff Nicholson, Quartersawn Design Build; Jane McClure, *My Villager* reporter

Meeting

Call to order: Sarah Dvorak called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Consent agenda: Parker/Treichel moved to approve the June 2022 agenda. Berger/Warren moved to approve the June 2022 agenda. *All yea*

Committee Reports and Updates:

Committee on Land Use & Economic Development (CLUED): Co-chairs Bruce Corrie and Dean Cummings introduced 1671 Summit, a former church on the northwest corner of Summit and Pierce that new owners Bill and Lisa Jansen want to convert to housing. They moved from Bloomington and had been seeking a church or fire station for their new home. Bill Jansen grew up on Summit, two blocks away.

- They need a more functional garage and said the neighbors have no problems with the variances they seek: a rear-yard setback and a lot-coverage variance. This Saturday, June 4, they're having a gathering at 11 a.m.

Action: Parker/Gage moved to approve a variance for a 6-foot rear yard setback. Parker/Corrie moved to approve a second variance for larger "building lot coverage at 41 percent, exceeding

the 35 percent.

Neighborhood Involvement Committee (NIC) and Environment & Parks: Co-chairs Ellen Fee and Gregg Gridley said Cooperative Plating was the main topic of the May meeting. Community members were well versed and had good questions. The committee also increased its budget for microgrants totaling \$1,500. They're submitting applications for a variety of picnics, including at Desnoyer Park and Midway Peace Park.

- UPDC staff is soliciting discussion via email of a new committee name, plus objectives. They completed park improvement applications for Desnoyer Park and Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam, the annual event scheduled for Saturday, September 17.

Fee summarized three applications for microgrants:

- 1) A new garden fence for ARTS Us in St. Paul; they host a learning garden for youth and feature Afro-centric plants and culturally appropriate planting. They requested the maximum of \$400: <https://www.arts-us.org/>
- 2) Maintenance and garden planting on a traffic circle, sent by UPDC Transportation Committee co-chair Lisa Nelson. The request is \$400
- 3) Little Natural History Museum, a sidewalk-accessible project similar to a Little Free Library. They'd like \$300.

Two proposals came in after the deadline of May 15: adding and maintaining the fruit trees at a Marion Street community garden (accessible for neighbors) and another for planting more spring bulbs.

- *Action: Parker/Corrie moved to approve the fence. Passed with Warren abstaining.*
- *Action: Corrie/Gridley moved to approve the traffic circle. Passed with Warren abstaining.*
- *Action: Fryer/Gridley moved to approve the history museum. Passed unanimously.*
- *Action: Corrie/Gridley moved to approve the two community garden grants. Passed with Fee and Warren abstaining.*

Transportation: Co-chair Scott Berger presented a number of topics that the committee is discussing:

- The gap in the Wabash sidewalk by Lake Monster brewing. The city is in favor of the sidewalk, but Metro Transit says there's no money.
- Grand Avenue reconstruction in 2024: <https://www.stpaul.gov/projects/public-works/pw2024grandavereconstruction>
- On Saturday, June 11 at 10 a.m., the committee is meeting at the former CVS for a joint University Avenue cleanup with the Hamline-Midway Community Coalition. (The event got rained out.) The committee also planned to host a Slow Roll on Saturday, July 2.

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council (WSNAC): Parker said the University of St. Thomas had been approached by the homeowner to buy 2037 Summit, a private residence, with plans to use it for a veterans' center. The purchase would have required UST to seek a

modification of the 2004 Conditional Use Permit, and ultimately St. Thomas decided not to pursue purchasing the house.

Also: A housing task force is seeking to research the neighborhood effects of the Student Housing Overlay District, as well as the university's two-year residency requirement and the city's six-person housing occupancy rule, which went up from four people in April 2021.

- Gage explained that landlords are offering a month or two of free rent or, in some cases, dropping rent prices because the student properties are going unfilled.
- St. Thomas also spoke about its exploration of Highland Bridge, the former Ford site in Highland Park, for some of its D1 athletics facilities: hockey, baseball, softball.

Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (NUFC): Wako met with the St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation, which funds NUFC. They may examine paying UPDC and Hamline-Midway for administrative costs to manage NUFC. <https://spmcf.org/>

- Bruce Corrie met with a business owner who said his business got destroyed and he's never received compensation. Could NUFC be part of a package that St. Paul Foundation is putting together for businesses? He'd like those to complement the grants: the business owner comes up with one-third, and it must be matched.

Communications Task Force: Timberlake-Sullivan said the group wants to include an explicit process for amending the communications plan, allowing it to be a living document. The group wants to examine substantive questions before it brings the policy to the board.

Staff report: UPDC has about seven projects in the city's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process, and Wako requested board member input. Forty-five projects are seeking funding. / He has submitted the annual grant request to Macalester College for \$10,000 and will be submitting to St. Thomas for \$10,250 by this Friday. / He'd like to see a collaborative event at Midway Peace Park with Skyline Towers and Gordon Parks High School. UPDC is the responsible party for the park and has been advocating for accessible sidewalks to the park. / Interns will be starting in June.

- <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/design-construction/current-projects/midway-peace-park>

Wako and Dvorak would like to host a board event outdoors on Wednesday, July 20, 7 p.m.

Announcements: Gridley and his wife have purchased a home in Roseville, and this will be his last month with UPDC. They wanted a house on one level. They also live near I-94, and the noise — from trucks especially — has gotten worse.

- The Desnoyer Park picnic will be Tuesday, July 12.

Gridley/Parker moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m.