

Heritage Hill Association Board Meeting
October 20, 2021 Minutes

In Attendance via Zoom: Richard App, Wes Beck, Suzanne DeHaan, Amy DeMott, Kate Diedrich, Wendy VerHage Falb, Jeffrey Fawcett, Carolyn Ferrari, Sarah Green, Laura Joyce, Jeff Martin, Wayne Norlin, Scott Opperman, James Scozzari and John Walendowski

Absent: none

Staff: Amanda Cormier, Barbara Draughon

Guests speakers: Commissioners Senita Lenear and Joe Jones

Other/Minutes Recorder: Tom Truesdale

Public: None

1. Call to Order: 7:05 pm
2. Motion to accept September 2021 Minutes: minutes approved.
3. Public Comment – none
4. Special Q&A Session with City Commissioners Senita Lenear and Joe Jones.
 - Senita Lenear – Lived in Grand Rapids' 3rd Ward since she was 9 years old. She's been 3rd Ward commissioner for 8 years.
 - Joe Jones – Was appointed to 2nd Ward Commissioner in 2016, then ran and won the seat in the 2017 election.

From Carolyn F: Speak on GR Public Safety Commission and monies for new police officers.

Comm. Lenear: The monies available for new officers are part of a grant. We lose about 20 officers annually, so though behind right now, we're hoping that once fully staffed, officers will be assigned to neighborhoods in the effort to improve officer/resident relationships.

From Barbara D: Address the \$500,000 that was denied for the police.

Comm. Lenear: The usage for that money was to cover back salaries, NOT addressing crime, etc.

From Scott O: How can neighborhood associations partner with city in achieving mutual goals?

Comm. Jones: Neighborhood associations could and should play a greater role in many facets of neighborhood safety. I would like to see a realignment of funding to pull in the participation of more neighborhood associations.

Comm. Lenear: It is somewhat happening already with commissioners rotating in and out of City Commission/Neighborhood Association meetings, but more could be done.

From Suzanne D: Tell us a little about this ShotSpotter technology.

Comm. Lenear: That particular piece of crime fighting has not come up for a vote yet. It is understood that the city would need to be saturated with the beacons for it to prove its worth. Also talked about drone use to investigate some gunfire investigations. ShotSpotter requires no calls from residents.

Drones would need a call/report to deploy.

Comm. Jones: Current Chief (of Police) has been working with the ACLU on analyzing methods for determining areas of crime.

From Wayne N: (After talking briefly about a recent four-park tour of the neighborhood with city park personnel) The subject came up of needing more help in park maintenance.

From Comm. Lenear: Some of park staff is seasonal, but a city imposed hiring freeze during the height of Covid might be driving some of that concern.

From Wayne N: And how about lead pipes in the water system?

Comm. Lenear: We have funding to address the lead pipe issues/replacement in Grand Rapids. Planning phase is starting now and it's projected to be about a year from planning to construction. The dollar amount allocated has increased due to budgeted costs.

From Amanda C: Can you talk about ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding for Grand Rapids?

Comm. Lenear: This is federal dollars and will be set up to involve residents in spending decisions. Currently there is \$600,000 allocated for the 1st Ward, \$400,000 for the 2nd Ward and \$1Million for the 3rd Ward.

Comm. Jones: The process is moving at snail pace and that is not to all's liking, but each ward's residents should have the opportunity to voice their needs/concerns.

Comm. Lenear: There will be set parameters to the process, but monies are not limited to number of projects or needs.

Comm. Lenear: I do want to mention an issue I know is important to you. We recommend you continue to check for state legislation regarding short term rentals. We all know that short term rentals undermine the need for affordable housing.

From Rich A: Do you have advice for this group (HH Board) in how to help you help us?

Comm. Lenear: Personal engagement gives me more incentive for a cause. Things like on-line petition drives and other non-personal methods are non-starters for me personally.

Comm. Jones: A continued effort to mine things that work from other cities, other communities – and make us aware of those things. We need to be creative and to do that, we need more minds to search for those innovations for solving issues.

From Wendy F: We would also like to ask you commissioners to direct issues to us when you think we may be able to help.

From Scott O: We would like to know if the neighborhoods can help move the needle on city issues.

From Wendy F: Good questions everyone. Thank you to commissioners Lenear and Jones.

5. Treasurers Report:

The 2nd PPP (Covid relief) loan has been forgiven.

The 2021 projections show that due to the PPP loan forgiveness and a successful Garden Tour and added walking tours, we are operating in the black.

James S talked briefly about updating some finance policy issues with regards to streamlining financials.

This will be discussed in financial/executive committees and presented at later date to board.

Work on the 2022 budget is in progress and will be presented at November board meeting.

6. Committee Reports:

Administrative: Naming the park space at the Central High School campus after Mayor John Logie will be discussed at the next executive committee meeting.

We have six residents who asked for board member candidate applications for the 2022 slate.

Crafted diversity and equity statements, as well as safety statement, and they will be discussed/voted on at next board meeting.

Fundraising: Appeal letter going out this Fall. Asking/expecting 100% board participation in these donation efforts.

Exploring 3rd party involvement in Home Tour process (i.e., event planner).

Community Engagement: Still conducting walking tours. No other updates.

Land Use: The city park walk went well. Good weather, good feedback from city Park Staff.

355 Paris Ave SE – empty lot – building/house planned – no other information.

Conducted one-on-one with family planning an addition on back of home, Prospect Ave SE.

345 Washington SE – requesting addition of a 7th unit to building. Will not affect outside footprint – no action from land use committee at this time.

(Per Commissioner Leneer’s recommendation we keep tabs on state legislation regarding short term rentals) We should check where legislation is regarding short term rentals. (Barbara says she knows a resident who may be able to/or would enjoy digging deeper into that.)

Barbara wondering if a neighborhood tour of the new Madison Lofts would be possible (will check).

7. Staff Reports:

Amanda – no questions from board regarding her report. She adds Kate D has started the painting of her designated utility box on Madison/Cherry.

Barbara – Nothing to add to her report. Continue to follow us on Facebook/Instagram.

8. Old/New Business:

Kate D asked about a new Heritage Hill logo for letterhead/signage. Barbara mentioned branding and logo change has been talked about for the last 5 to 6 years, at least. Should talk become more serious?

Meeting adjourned 8:21 pm.

Submitted by Tom Truesdale