

LPNA General Meeting Sept. 16, 2020 – Meeting Notes

Alex Bliss facilitated the meeting, 34 zoom attendees.

New Board member candidates announced themselves. Alex made a motion to vote the candidates in as a slate to fill the 3 board vacancies. Steve Liston seconded. The motion passed.

Presentation by ArtSpace on Northrup King Project

Becky Carlson St. Clair from ArtSpace gave a status update on the Northrup King Project. They are working on 3 buildings, converting to live/work art studio space. The plan includes a walkable area, with plantings and green space. They are also addressing the stormwater issue. This phase will take a couple years. They will need conditional use permits, and city, county & state funding. The 3 buildings by the railroad tracks will be a later phase and will be commercial use. In response to a question, Becky said that they include affordable housing in all their projects including this one. Councilmember Kevin Reich said the city is supportive of this project as it preserves and expands maker space. He views the collaboration with Art Space as providing a significant positive outcome for the Arts District.

Discussion on Long-Term Housing & Shelter

Sue Watlov Phillips, Executive Director of MICAH, gave a short presentation on the history of homelessness. 50% of the population are at risk of becoming homeless, live paycheck to paycheck. Less than 1% of housing is affordable. The government spends 4/5s more money on home ownership vs. affordable housing. Pre-Covid, between 1,000 to 1,200 people were living outside in the metro area. Shelters, Transitional House and Supportive Housing exist but it's not enough. More details on attachments.

Junail Anderson, site coordinator for the LP encampment, said that they need to be out of the park by 10/13. Strong Tower shelter will not be ready until 11/1. People from the Sanctuary Movement have agreed to put people into hotels. These are temporary solutions for the winter. She said there is a need for deeply affordable housing.

Pastor LaTonya Whitley, Strong Tower, said that they plan to have the people from the LP encampment in their shelter for the winter and will work with them to have housing by spring.

Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando said that encampments in the parks are a last resort. The county provides emergency shelters, transitional & supportive housing. There isn't enough deeply affordable housing which would be 30% AMI (= annual income of \$30,000 for a 4-person household). She said "On paper, we have the capacity but we're not meeting the needs of those in need".

In response to a question, Commission Fernando said that the system was designed for some to make money. Junail Anderson said that people don't want to go to the downtown shelters where they look at you as a paycheck. Sue Watlov Phillips said this is an example of why people affected need to be at the table when decisions about the design of what is needed and what will work are being made.

State Senator Kari Dziedzic said that at the state level they added 3.5million for FHPAP in 2019. The state spends \$100 million to help people stay in their homes by helping pay utilities. The goal during Covid was stabilization, keep people where they are. She agreed there needs to be a focus on more 30% AMI level affordable housing as there has been a big increase in people needing that level of affordability

over the last 55 years. (See attached information). Sen. Dziedzic said she and the county are aware of the situation Junail described (people not wanting to go to the current shelters). She said it will take all of us collectively to develop creative solutions and we need to think outside of the box.

State House Representative Sydney Jordan said the House is stuck trying to pass the bonding bill due to the GOP. She said folks need to contact people in greater MN. She also thanked LPNA for stepping up to prioritize housing and unsheltered neighbors.

City Councilmember Kevin Reich said the city needed new tools, more flexible enabling framework of the new zoning to allow for cluster developments like the tiny houses/intentional community model (passed by Council Nov 2019, though may need neighborhood consensus. He said now we need the resources to make those projects happen. There needs to be partnerships and programmatic resources. The city produces housing at all levels and is now finding the need to expand the lower level of affordable housing which will also need access to social services (partnerships).

In answer to a question about “Indoor Villages”, using the Kmart for this winter – CM Reich said he doesn’t know why the Kmart site isn’t being considered but he’ll find out. CM Reich said he’s been working with the Envision Project to find a site. Sue Watlov Phillips said that part of the Envision Project is that there needs to be a sense of community. CM Reich agreed that holistic solutions need to be community efforts, not just a bunch of buildings.

Junail Anderson said we need to try something new. Mental health workers need to be involved. Decision makers need to listen to homeless people and need to be put on boards that spend the money. Sue Watlov Philips said People Incorporated and Tasks Unlimited don’t have enough outreach workers. She said that access to mental health services are critical for those in camps and shelters. Rep Jordan said that issue is not really talked about. She’s not seeing enough investment at the state or federal level.

Sue Watlov Phillips said we need to make it an expectation of any entity that is funded by govt programs – that there needs to be board members from the community that the entity is serving.

Question – Winter is coming. What is the City Council Planning? CM Reich said the council is using federal funds to build 2 new shelters (could be done by Dec?). For emergency shelter, they may go back to a Navigation Center like has been done in the past. He said there is hotel availability that the county is using. He also mentioned “Heading Home Hennepin”, saying that the county is the lead on the homeless front. (<https://www.hennepin.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/heading-home-hennepin>)

Pastor LaTonya Whitley said as a Nurse Practitioner she has assessed many unsheltered people. She said many have mental illnesses (untreated diseases) and don’t have access to their meds. She said funds for medical help and security is necessary now, not just spending millions on housing. Sen. Dziedzic agreed, we need to put more funds back into such services.

Pat V makes a motion to pass the July meeting minutes, Steve L seconds. all vote in favor, motion passes.

Meeting adjourned.