

Minutes

Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood NRP Meeting April 20, 2005, 7 pm at Luxton Park

A special meeting of the Prospect Park/East River Road neighborhood was held at Luxton Park Community Center on April 20, 2005. The meeting was organized by the neighborhood's NRP Phase II Steering Committee and was chaired by Dick Poppele, the co-chair of the committee at 7:03 pm. There were 73 adults present; 70 of whom were eligible to vote. (Two non-voters were interested observers and one was an employee of NRP.)

Agenda item 1. Dick introduced himself and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to get from the neighborhood input, opinions and ideas for the Steering Committee to use in writing a proposed Phase II Action Plan. The committee would explain some of the various program alternatives available in NRP Phase II and the attendees would vote, in a process to be described later, to prioritize general program categories and decide whether or not to allocate more than the required 70% of the funds on housing. Fans were adjusted to strike a balance between noise level and temperature control.

Dean Lund gave a brief overview of NRP' history. The Neighborhood Revitalization Program was established by the state legislature at the request of the city of Minneapolis. The intent was to revitalize the neighborhoods by giving them the opportunity to decide how a substantial amount of money would be spent in their own neighborhoods. The neighborhood is currently planning the 2nd phase of NRP. The Steering Committee was chosen at a neighborhood meeting some months ago and has been meeting twice monthly. Some program proposals have been received.

At this point, translation into Somali was provided. The translator was asked to give a sign when the speakers should pause to allow time for translation. After this point translation occurred regularly during the meeting. The meeting agenda was also made available in the Somali language.

Dean continued – After getting input from this meeting the Steering Committee will develop a proposed action plan. That plan will be considered at another neighborhood meeting where there will be the opportunity to approve, modify or reject the plan.

A question was asked from the floor regarding who makes the decisions. Dick said that the neighborhood would make the decisions but the final decision would not be tonight. The intent of this meeting was to get a sense of the priorities of the neighborhood. The question was asked, is the ultimate decision made by the Steering Committee? Dick said no, the committee will bring a proposal to a neighborhood meeting for consideration. More questions followed but Dean and Dick both asked the person to please wait until later with the questions since most of this would be covered later in the presentation. If it is still not clear, there will be time for questions later.

Dean continued - If the neighborhood says that all the money should go to housing, then no money would go to non-housing programs such as SE Seniors, air conditioning at Luxton, Pratt transition funding, etc. He said to keep that in mind when deciding how much money to spend on housing.

Betts Zerby then gave an overview of NRP Phase I. She said that in Phase I the neighborhood had about \$3,336,000 to work with. The action plan was broken down into main categories: Housing, Transportation, Environment, Education & Human Services, Safety & Security, Livability, Business, Jobs & Employment, Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture, and Administration and Staff Support. She asked that people look at the pictures around the room to see some of the things done with NRP Phase I. She noted that there were many more accomplishments, many of which could not be shown in a photograph. The neighborhood has only about 1/10 of the money in Phase II. She also had heard there may be a possibility of an NRP Phase III.

Agenda item 2. Dick then spoke of the process involved. The first step was a neighborhood meeting held on Oct 13, 2004. At that meeting, PPERRIA was designated the fiscal agent (as it was in Phase I) and a Steering Committee was appointed, with seats allocated to sections of the neighborhood based on attendance at that meeting. The Steering Committee has met twice monthly since then to study the guidelines and programs available and to receive and summarize proposals. The committee received help from student interns, especially in statistical analysis. The third step is the current meeting to review options, get neighborhood input into program priorities and to determine general funding allocations. The Steering Committee will then use this input to draft an Action Plan which will express neighborhood objectives and strategies. It is not intended to delineate specific programs. Another neighborhood meeting will be held to review and approve the action plan.

A question was asked from the floor, whether items can be added to the action plan at that time. The answers from Dick were yes, but why wait? Bring forward your ideas now. The committee has been asking for input for months.

Another question from the floor was asked as to how many students were at the current meeting and how many were on the Steering Committee. The only student to speak up was the translator. There is one student on the Steering Committee.

At this point an error was made and an agenda item was skipped. The error was noticed and corrected.

Agenda item 3. Steve Cross then spoke on the basic parameters. He explained that there will be three options to vote on for the allocation of NRP Phase II money. There are limits imposed by law on how the money can be spent. The original legislation mandated that 52.5% of the money be spent on housing. At the end of NRP I the city of Minneapolis as a whole did not spend enough on housing, perhaps about 49%. Now all Minneapolis neighborhoods must spend enough of their NRP II money to bring the total up to 52.5%. Since the Phase II allocation is so much smaller than in Phase I, 70% or more of the Phase II money must be spent on housing. In Phase I, this neighborhood spent about half of its money on Education, including the approximately \$500,000 reallocated from housing to fund Pratt School. The city will not let the neighborhood spend less than 70% on housing this time, so there are only three possibilities: 100 % on housing and no money for anything else, 70% on housing and 30% on other categories, or somewhere in between. Steve said that the Steering Committee would follow the recommendation that comes from this meeting. Steve repeated several times that 70% is the minimum amount to be spent on housing.

Steve pointed out that there would not be a vote on administrative funding at this meeting. Administration is a required expense and the amount needed would be determined by the Steering Committee when it is clear how many programs will need to be administered.

A question was asked from the floor about how much was spent on administration for Phase I. Steve said that Prospect Park had one of the lowest administrative costs of all the neighborhoods, perhaps 1% of the funds. This is largely because the neighborhood did not buy or lease an office. The percentage of funds used for administration will be higher this time, since the base is smaller.

Agenda item 4. Dick said there have been some specific proposals so far, most of which were for non-housing ideas. They have been broken down into three basic categories: Education and Human Services, Livability & Other, and Housing.
Education and Human Services

Jerry Stein spoke on his proposal for Pratt Transition Funding. He explained that Pratt is at a crucial time. When Pratt was included on the "to be closed" list, the future of Pratt was uncertain and the school did not reach full enrollment. Since school funding is based on the number of pupils, Pratt does not have enough funding for teacher support. He anticipated that this problem would resolve itself in two years, since they project that the school will be at full enrollment then. The request is for funding for the next two years, to keep the quality up until enrollment is up. He noted that Pratt and Tuttle are linked. Dick pointed out that there would be no decisive vote on any specific proposal, including this one, at this meeting. Those who wish to use NRP funds for Pratt transition funding should vote their preference for Education and Human Services.

Meredith Poppele spoke on her proposal to fund SE Seniors. She said that SE Seniors was founded 17 years ago by a group of nurses and has expanded to cover all three SE neighborhoods. It provides in home nursing and health care to help seniors continue to remain in their homes. SE Seniors also receives government funding and donations.

Dick mentioned another program, Food for Life, as an example of a possible type of program. The Steering Committee received this proposal from Greater Lake Country Food Bank. It provides nutritious food for the elderly.

Livability and Other

Mary Alice Kopf spoke on her proposal for Buckthorn removal funding. She explained that Buckthorn was widely planted in the area because it has beautiful leaves that stay green for a long time. However, it proved to be a woody invasive species, as it takes the water and nutrients from other trees. The thorns hinder it from being useful to animals. It spreads quickly, mostly by birds that excrete the seeds within a quarter mile of where they eat them. The neighborhood is in the fourth year

of a ten year program to eradicate it. She believes it is possible to eradicate Buckthorn in this neighborhood because the neighborhood boundaries, such as the river and the University campus, restrict its spread. Mary Alice believes the program can be completed in 6 years. This Saturday they will be working on East River Terrace and Parkway.

Other program proposals that were submitted include air conditioning for Luxton Park, community bulletin boards, and traffic control on Erie Street.

Housing

Hawa Aden spoke about a proposal put forward by SWIM, Somali Women in Minneapolis. Hawa is the coordinator for SWIM, which is part of East Side Neighborhood Services. She explained that Somali immigrants come from a place where no one owns homes. It is a hard task for them to understand the system here of home ownership. She said it took her three years and is a homeowner now. She said Somali immigrants need to move toward self-sufficiency. They want to own homes – they are Americans now, Minnesotans. The proposal is to fund an educational position at ESNS. The goal would be to educate Somali immigrants on rental and home ownership issues.

Joe Ring spoke on the proposal for funding the Phase 2 process to designate Prospect Park a Historical District. Phase 1 of the process was completed three years ago. Some of the results of Phase 1 are: it mapped the eligible area, changed the map of SEMI, was granted consulting party status for Department of Transportation projects, and designated Pratt School as a contributing property (helping to save the building from possible sale by the school district). Planning for the central corridor is now underway and because of the historic district, any plans must support the residential community in Prospect Park and on 4th Street. Those areas are not up for redevelopment in the central corridor planning process. Joe explained that Phase 2 is necessary to put the neighborhood on an even level with other forces which may not act in the best interests of the historic and residential nature of the community. For example, the city is trying to streamline the approval process for development, possibly removing citizen input in many cases. If neighborhood residents are unaware of plans, it could be too late to have any input. Phase 1 included the determination of the boundaries and how the neighborhood qualifies. Phase 2 would be the completion of the project – it would include the preparation of the documents and submission for approval.

Dick Poppele said there were housing funds proposed by NRP that the neighborhood could participate in. These funds would be administered by NRP, saving administrative costs. He summarized three of them.

MHFA Home Improvement Program – low interest loans for improving owner occupied housing. There is an income limit of 80% of the MMI (Metro Median Income).

Rental Property Improvement Loan Fund – loans to owners to rehab or improve their rental property. Residents must meet affordable housing income limits.

First Time Homebuyer Assistance Fund – low interest loans up to a maximum of \$30,000 to first time homebuyers with an income limit of 80% of MMI.

Dick stressed that there are other funds – he just used these as examples. They are a convenient vehicle to accomplish neighborhood goals. The neighborhood can set additional parameters.

Dick also discussed funding and other parameters that the neighborhood could use to channel the funding to their priorities. Possible parameters include: loans or grants, owner match needed (cash or sweat), amount of loan or grant, owner occupied or rental, type of work on housing (interior, exterior, maintenance only, no restrictions), and priorities on who gets the money, for example, income limits or substandard property first. He encouraged the group to think about what they feel is the most important and vote accordingly.

A question was asked from the floor about how defaults are handled. Jack Whitehurst from NRP was present and he said that during Phase I there were very few defaults.

Another question was can we restrict the loans to our neighborhood. The answer was yes.

Another question was can the neighborhood spend the loan money that is paid back on non-housing programs. The answer was yes.

Another question was if funds are provided to the owner of a rental unit, can that person then sell the

property for a profit. Yes, but stipulations could be made in the program such that the owner could not sell it for a designated period of time, for example.

Dick again said that the Committee was asking for input – where is the need? Do not vote based on how someone could cheat – stipulations can be made to handle that.

Another suggestion was made to possibly put the money into code compliance, and to prohibit additions on rental units.

Kari Simonson explained the voting process. Each person who registered was given a sheet of colored dots – 6 yellow, 6 dark green, 6 red, 6 blue, and 4 light green. There would be four voting stations set up on the bulletin boards around the room. Each had 2 large sheets of paper and each section was color coded. The yellow section was to allocate the money – 100%, 70% or an in between amount for housing. If a voter feels strongly about one of these options, all 6 dots can be put in that section. If the voter has no preference, the 6 dots can be divided evenly between sections. Voters should weight their votes according to what they feel is most important. The only rule is that only yellow dots will be counted in the yellow section, and all dots must be inside the lines. The same instructions apply to each colored section. Questions were asked and the directions were clarified until everyone understood the procedure. Kari said the Steering Committee will tally the votes to see what people feel strongly about in each category.

It was pointed out that not all the dots would fit inside the lines. Kari asked that people overlap their dots slightly. They would all be counted as long as a dot did not completely cover another.

Betts pointed out that the programs described as examples were listed on the back of the agenda.

Voters were asked to pick up their chairs and put them on the racks outside the door and come back to cast their dots.

Voting proceeded in an orderly manner. The voting was finished before 9 pm. To be sure the votes were counted accurately the votes were tallied in each section of each sheet by two members of the Steering Committee or staff and initialed by both people.

Vote totals are on the next page.

Results of the April 20, 2005 dot-mocracy

Money Options: **Yellow** – 6 dots/person. 378 dots were voted.

100% (\$340,000) for Housing, 0% (\$0) for all else. 32 dots = **8%**
70% for Housing (\$238,000), 30% (\$102,000) for all else. 328 dots = **87%**
Somewhere in between. 18 dots = **5%**

Housing Options: **Green** – 6 dots/person. 386 dots were voted.

Home Improvement 69 dots = **18%**
Home Purchase Assistance 20 dots = **5%**
SWIM: Guiding Somalis Toward Home Ownership 164 dots = **42%**
Prospect Park Historical District Phase 2 133 dots = **34%**

Other Options: **Red** – 6 dots/person. 348 dots were voted.

Education and Human Services 271 dots = **78%**

Livability 74 dots = **21%**
Other Programs 3 dots = **1%**
None 0 dots = **0%**

Housing Program Features: **Blue** – 6 dots/person. 334 dots were voted.

1. Financing
Loans 69 dots = **21%**
Grants 21 dots = **6%**
Owner match required 31 dots = **9%**
Limited amounts 24 dots = **7%**

2. Occupancy
Owner-occupied 53 dots = **16%**
Rental 4 dots = **1%**

3. Priority
Income limits 23 dots = **7%**
Sub-standard property first 33 dots = **10%**

4. Type of work
Exterior 31 dots = **9%**
Interior 16 dots = **5%**
No restrictions 4 dots = **1%**
Maintenance only 25 dots = **7%**

GENERAL SURVEY OF PRIORITIES **Light Green** – 4 dots/person

Housing 80 dots = **33%**
Education and Human Services 131 dots = **54%**
Transportation 11 dots = **5%**
Livability 19 dots = **8%**