

Minutes

Prospect Park East River Road NRP - 2 Steering Committee Meeting of January 17, 2005

1. The meeting was called to order by Steve Cross, co-chair of the steering committee, at 7:30 pm in the multi-purpose room at Luxton Park Community Center. There were 17 people present.
2. Chair asked if everyone had time to look over the minutes from the last meeting, which was distributed by e-mail. There were several paper copies available. Approval of the minutes was deferred to the end of the meeting to allow people time to read the minutes.
3. The Somali translator asked that time be allowed for translation. Chair directed her to give him a signal whenever time was needed. Translation followed.
4. Chair said that the main business of the meeting was to review the packet of proposals received. (See attached.) He asked that discussion be limited to allow all the proposals to be reviewed and stated that prioritization would begin at the next meeting, the first Monday in February. He noted that there were several categories of proposals, and similar proposals would be reviewed consecutively. They will be referred to by order in the packet, title, and lead proposer. Translation followed.

There were 2 kinds of housing proposals: those concerning affordable housing and those concerning housing improvement.

5. **Affordable housing:**

p.3 New Affordable Housing Demonstration Project, Steve Cross. Steve said this is a proposal for new affordable housing on lots in the neighborhood, constructed by a contractor and managed by Glendale.

p.8 Stabilize Affordable Housing in the Motley Neighborhood, Dick Poppele. Dick said the proposal centers on Motley since neighborhood demographics show that most of the affordable housing in the neighborhood is in the Motley neighborhood. The incentive now is for housing to degrade due to pressure from student renters and absentee landlords. The incentive in this program would be to provide low interest loans for upkeep while increasing the enforcement of housing codes. Another provision would be to assist home buyers to purchase affordable housing (convert rental to owner-occupied). Translation followed. Translation followed.

p.14 Affordable Housing Proposal, Steve Ficker. (Chair mistakenly summarized Steve Ficker's other proposal, so what follows is the written summary from the proposal itself.) "Generate affordable housing within the Prospect Park Neighborhood. Glendale Community residents who transition from Section 8 housing could particularly benefit if they were able to relocate close by, and maintain valuable community roots." Translation followed.

The question was asked, what do NRP and the city now say we must do, what options do we really have for using our housing money? The answer was that it now appears that the city and the mayor are backing down from their previous stand that housing money go to "affordable housing". It appears that

anything housing related will qualify, including home ownership/home maintenance education.

Discussion followed on Dick Poppele's Motley proposal. 80% of the neighborhood's affordable housing is in Motley. There is pressure from students, corporations (e.g. Cargill,) and the University of Minnesota, all acting as incentives for the downward trend of the housing. This can be taken in one of two ways. First, why bother? All the housing will go anyway. Second, why not stabilize the housing for as long as we can?

Point: When Prospect Park had its first NRP program, there was a similar program for Motley and there were very few takers. Translation followed.

Dick said he found out that few people knew about it and that at the time, Cargill had been telling people that they would be bought out very soon. Evidently this is no longer the case. This time, offer money for upgrades and at the same time, threaten enforcement of housing codes.

Question: Why give limited public money to landlords, who presumably have the money to fix up the property but don't?

Suggestion: For the purpose of discussion, perhaps the rent programs should be separated from the grants to people.

Note: The Como neighborhood might be interested in splitting the cost of enforcement.

Suggestion: Perhaps a city resource person could be brought in to speak to the committee on housing – how to avoid mistakes, etc. It is assumed that this committee will not have to administer the programs. It is likely that one of the many NRP programs proposals will suit our purposes and they have chosen CPED for the administrator. Translation followed.

Suggestion: Get a local bank to come in and ask them how to stimulate housing the most with \$100,000. This would be as a public service, not with the expectation of any resulting business for the bank.

6. Housing Improvement:

p.4 Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Program, Steve Cross. Steve summarized his proposal: loans up to \$5000 for exterior improvements must be matched by homeowner (sweat equity qualifies for the match), loan term of up to 10 years. 25 – 50 loans could be available. It was intended as a revolving loan program so the money would be recycled. It was not stated if there would be an income limit, but the money could be offered first to the lower income applicants. The rationale for limiting the fund to exterior improvement was that all residents would then benefit, even if they did not/could not participate directly. Translation followed.

p.15 Home Improvement Loan Proposal, Steve Ficker. This was summarized by the Chair, since Steve Ficker was not present. This is a loan program based on financial need (moderate income). It offers up to \$5000 loans for home improvements and repairs. It is really a grant program, not a loan, since the loans are forgiven if the recipient remains in the home for 5-7 years after the loan is granted. The proposal refers to a program proposal put forward by Andy Mickel in 2002 (see attached) and asks for something similar. Translation followed.

The Chair thinks that since money is limited and the neighborhood is already built up, the money should perhaps go to improvements, but remains open to new affordable housing if space should open up.

Comment: Housing values in the neighborhood have gone up dramatically so there is no moderate, let alone affordable, housing here, so \$250,000 is not enough – possibly it could provide down payments for people who can otherwise afford the payments.

Comment: Maybe we can't build new affordable units, but there are other "affordable" needs, for example fixing up existing housing to keep it from degrading, so there is really no difference between affordable housing and home improvement, if we target lower incomes. Translation followed.

Harrison Nelson said he and Dick Poppele and Andy Mickel had spent a lot of time on housing in Motley. A comment was made on the prices of houses recently sold - \$750,000 for one on University Ave that needed many obvious repairs.

Suggestion: Get an expert to come to the committee to give suggestions.

At this point the Somali women from Glendale brought up some problems they have been having with their housing, such as broken stoves, paint needed, cockroaches, excess garbage, etc. They were hoping to get NRP help to deal with these issues. A discussion, with translation, followed. The women seemed to have been under the impression that they would have to pay for the repair, even though Glendale is a city-owned public housing project and the city is responsible for repairs. The prospect of the housing being bought by another party and the rent raised was a scare to them, and they wanted to learn how to do repairs themselves to become more self-sufficient.

Suggestions made by committee members more experienced with both housing repairs and city programs. It appeared that being new to the United States and having language and cultural differences, they needed help to address the issues. It was suggested that PPERRIA could help, and through their contact with council member Paul Zerby, the issues could be addressed right away rather than wait for NRP funds. Steve Cross and Joe Ring both offered to get PPERRIA to help document the problems and report them to the city. In the process, PPERRIA could put together a list of who to contact for each type of problem, prepare a flyer with that information and have the flyer translated into Somali. It could be distributed in both English and Somali. Translation was provided during this discussion.

7. **Education:**

p.10 SWIM: Moving On – Guiding Somali Families Toward Home Ownership, Shukri Dire. With translation, Shukri explained that she and her neighbors agree that they need education to be self-sufficient and to move from affordable housing to ownership. They have designed a 12 month program, with once/month sessions, which is the timing with the best attendance. The requested funding is for education costs. Jane Hanger-Seeley explained that they need hands-on education in how to do home projects (Home Depot), how to make good housing decisions (a realtor), etc. This education must be repeated for each new group of immigrants.

p.11 Transitional Funding for Pratt Elementary, Scott Johnson. Scott was not present. It was pointed out that about 1/3 of the neighborhood's NRP Phase 1 money was spent on Pratt. This time the need is for administration and clerical help. Help is still needed because, though spared by the school

board, the school is still in a transitional state and not at full enrollment (partly due to the uncertainty of the last year). It was stated that no resource is more important to the neighborhood (though some may tie) and that it is in the best interests of all to ensure its success. More explanation is needed that was given in the proposal, but it should be considered seriously. Translation followed.

p.13 Somali Literacy Learning at Luxton Community Center, Ladan Bashir Yusuf. The Somali women present had not seen this program proposal and do not know the proposer. The Chair asked them to look it over and talk it over among themselves before the next meeting. Translation provided.

p.2 Neighborhood Scholars Demonstration Project, Steve Cross. Steve said this program was motivated by the fire which killed 3 students in the Como neighborhood last year, and by the hope to minimize party houses. The program aims to hire 2 part time people to work with student renters and landlords. Translation followed.

p.1 Sober Scholars Demonstration Project, Steve Cross. Steve said this program proposal was motivated by the “head-in-the-sand” attitude Steve felt was displayed by the University. The idea is to teach moderation, rather than either ignore the problem or to just police it. Translation followed

8. Other Proposals:

p.5 Helping Frail Elderly Neighbors: Southeast Seniors Service Coordination Support, Meredith Poppele. Dick Poppele explained this proposal, in his wife’s absence. This project was supported in the last round of NRP. SE Seniors is a home care program which allows the infirm to remain in their homes. It covers all of SE Minneapolis, including Prospect Park. Most of the cost is paid for by the state, but the states mandates that part must be donations and part community funded. It provides nurse visits, trips to the grocery store, etc. It was noted that this should be available everywhere, and that the cost of putting an elderly person in an institution rather than providing home support would be more than triple. Services are provided on a sliding scale. The question was raised whether this could be considered housing, since it keeps people in their homes. Perhaps the name of the program could be changed to emphasize housing?

p.6 Prospect Park Historical District Phase 2, Joe Ring. Joe said this program would complete the work begun in Phase 1, documentation and completion of the application. According to Bob Miller, this qualifies as “housing, under item 4 of the NRP’s definitions of housing, since historic designation has been shown to benefit housing. He noted that Pratt was to be sold by the school board, but since Phase 1 work showed Pratt was qualified on its own as historic, it could not be torn down. Thus historic designation is a tool for long term planning, so save neighborhoods from the whims of short-term planning. Translation followed. Joe explained the work that has been done and what remains.

p.7 Throating at Erie Street SE and Dartmouth Ave SE, Jolee Madl. Chair said this proposal was evidently due to a problem of traffic going the wrong way on a one-way street (Erie). Decorative throating was proposed to reduce speeds and discourage wrong-way traffic. Translation followed.

p.9 Administration, Steve Cross. This proposal is to provide what it will cost PPERRIA to implement Phase 2 – Staff, office supplies, any cost not built directly into any particular program. After the programs are decided, staff and material cost can be determined. Translation followed.

p.12 Fighting Buckthorn Before It’s Too Late, Mary Alice Kopf. Buckthorn is the most common

noxious weed in the neighborhood. Buckthorn removal has been underway in the neighborhood for some time. This proposal would provide for a major effort in what will probably be an ongoing effort.

p.16 Food For Life, Carl Kroenig. This proposal was received from outside the neighborhood and appears to be a special high nutrition food shelf for the elderly. Translation followed.

9. Chair stated that at this point, all the proposals had been gone through and that at the next meeting, the committee should try to establish priorities.

Question: How can we get the community involved in prioritizing and not leave that just to this committee? Setting a date for the next neighborhood meeting was urged.

Point: Information on how quickly the money can be spent is needed before assigning priorities.

Note: Barb Lickness should be asked to attend the next Steering Committee meeting to answer questions.

10. There was then discussion on future meeting times, whether meeting should begin at 7 or 7:30 pm. The consensus was for 7:30. The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on Monday, February 7 at 7:30 pm, in the same room at Luxton Park.

11. Steve asked if there were any corrections to the proposed minutes of the last meeting. Hearing none, a consensus was assumed and the minutes were approved. (See attached copy.)

12. Dick Poppele will chair next time. He asked what the committee wished to accomplish at the next meeting.

Suggestions: Go over housing proposals

Refine the proposals, since some overlap

Decide what the committee/neighborhood wants to accomplish, not just refine the mechanisms.

Determine what will change, what benefits will the community receive, by spending the money, rather than just pass out money. (Money should go to those who can least afford it, exterior improvement benefit all, not just the recipients.)

Firm up proposals and alternatives – don't throw raw proposals out to the community.

Make sure public money does not go to the landlord – put in a provision that landlords who receive money can not take the money to make improvements and then raise the rents on the improved properties.

It was requested that the committee now set the date for a community meeting to let the community prioritize the proposals. The meeting should be about two months from now (to allow time for public notice) and the committee should work to be prepared for it. It was hoped that the committee would be finished by late spring.

After noting that it would be important to look for scheduling conflicts when setting the date, it was agreed that the co-chairs would come up with a proposed date to bring to the next meeting.

13. The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.

14. The meeting attendees were:
- Zahra Oaman
 - Mana Abdullahi
 - Shukri Dirie
 - Shamso Ahmed
 - Kari Simonson
 - Dean Lund
 - Joe Ring
 - Dick Poppele
 - Steve Cross
 - Harrison Nelson
 - Joyce Barta
 - Hawo Shiikh Farah