

Friends of Tower Hill Park (FOTHP)
Minutes of Community meeting at Luxton Park, April 15, 2023
Susan Larson-Fleming, recorder

The group was welcomed by Joe Ring, president of FOTHP, a non profit, incorporated organization. From the bylaws:

Section 2 — Purpose: Friends of Tower Hill Park is organized exclusively for charitable, scientific and education purposes. The purpose of this corporation is to protect the views of and from the Prospect Park Neighborhood's Witch's Hat Tower and to protect, preserve and maintain the beauty and character of the surrounding park, known as Tower Hill Park.

Vermillion project update:

Joe noted that the organization was founded because of the so called Vermillion Project, a proposed 14 story luxury high-rise, near Tower Hill, which as designed would reach or surpass the Tower viewing platform and block views of the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis from the Tower. The project was approved, over objections, by the city of Minneapolis, receiving two extensions. Joe detailed the several failed lawsuits brought by the Board and the effect of Covid in delaying the project until the Chicago developers pulled out of the project. Treasurer Gary Gardner noted that over \$84, 000 was raised to fund legal action in these lawsuits. As of March 2023, the developers have reached the end of the two extensions provided them by the city of Minneapolis and have pulled out of this project.

However the properties involved continue to be available for development. The Vermillion plans were purchased by their local representative, who no longer works for Vermillion.

Current Condition and Status of the Tower.

The legal address of the Tower and Tower Hill Park is 55 Malcolm Ave. S.E, which refers to

the small pump house on Malcolm Ave. , across from Pratt School. Use this address for any 311 reports of graffiti, break-ins.

The Tower is owned by the City. The Park is owned by the Park Board. Both the Tower and the Park are on the National Register of Historic Places and designated locally as a Minneapolis Historic resource.

Due to a break in, the Tower entrance has been sealed, with a bar secured against the entry door. The Park is severely infested with buckthorn, visibility of the Tower is compromised and graffiti has begun to reappear on the Tower surface. The light in the Tower is out and must be replaced.

Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) between the City, Parks Department, FOTHP and PPA on operation and maintenance.

Our Council member Robin Wonsley, and her staff are very supportive of bringing parties together to development and agreement and plan for preservation and maintenance of this

valuable local and national resource and to reopen the Tower at least 3 times per year. To that end meetings have begun to develop a MOU. The City must also evaluate the physical condition of the Tower address any maintenance issues preventing public access. Joe posted several images of the Tower and surroundings and meeting participants were asked to add their comments and recommendations. These were collected and will be part of the MOU discussion.

Reopening the Tower.

This is the goal of the neighborhood and Council member Wonsley. We envision potential spring (during the City wide program Doors Open), summer and fall openings. In fall, opening would be paired with voter registration and a welcome to new neighborhood residents. However this cannot happen until the city has evaluated Tower condition and executed repairs.

Volunteers are necessary for any opening. Phil Anderson (phil.ann.anderson@gmail.com) is the coordinator for volunteers. Please let him know if you wish to help with future Tower openings.

Actions Needed: Volunteer opportunities

1. Development of MOU between the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park Board, Prospect Park Association and The Friends of Tower of Tower Hill Park.
2. Working group to join with the PPA Land Use Committee to address development issues before our only recourse is to react.
3. Line up those interested in volunteering for future openings and
4. Landscape maintenance on Tower Hill: Addressing the buckthorn problem; clearing the area around the Tower to assure visibility
5. Reporting graffiti, vandalism (see Tower address above).