

**Westside Neighborhood Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Minutes – March 21, 2013**

**In Attendance**

Joshua Boehme, Danielle Casavant, Cathy Bacille Cunningham, Keith Kris, Jen Long, Sara McCormick, Cassandra Nelson, Nic Piechotte, Paul Pratt, Michael Schury, Ellie Wong

**Excused**

Dan Boutell and Julie Durham

**Absent**

Suzanne Knight, Jackie Payne and John Stratton

**Guest**

Melissa Lott, Ingham County Land Bank Garden Program Coordinator  
Pat St. George, neighbor who attended Reuse Working Session (GM/RACER)  
Jessica Yorko, 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Lansing City Council Person  
Ted O'Dell, Candidate for Lansing City Council At-Large  
Spencer Austin, Campaign Manager for Ted O'Dell

**Call to Order**

Schury called the meeting to order 6:03 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Schury asked if there were any additions or changes. Casavant asked to have the storage shed at St. Joe Park added. Schury asked for the item to be added to New Business. Schury asked St. George and Yorko if they had specific items they wished to have added to the agenda. St. George indicated she was present to report on the Reuse Working Session regarding RACER Trust properties. Yorko indicated she had no specific agenda items but would be able happy to answer any questions about the City prior to her departure at 6:30 p.m. Kris moved, seconded by Boehme, to approve the agenda as amended.

**Approved**

**Approval of Minutes**

Boehme moved, seconded by Cunningham to accept minutes of February 21, 2013 as presented.

**Approved**

## **Guest Presentation**

**Melissa Lott:** Lott explained that her role as Garden Program Coordinator is to connect neighbors with vacant lots owned by the Ingham County Land Bank for use as community gardens. Once gardens are established the Garden Program provides soil testing, plant starts, equipment and other gardening resources. There are currently 54 community gardens in the City of Lansing with a wide range of sizes.

Lott wanted to let the neighborhood know that there are plans to put ground cover on vacant lots that are not being used as gardens. The idea is that groundcover plants will be less maintenance and less environmental impact (emissions). Currently, there is one lot within the neighborhood boundaries being considered (corner of Olds and Riverview). Lott will be in contact with neighbors before implementing any changes on the property. She is still researching plant types and wanted to be sure to explain that this could be a trial and error process in order to see what plant types might be most successful and attractive to neighbors. She was not asking for the WNA to take any action at this time. It was suggested that if Lott needs help in contacting these neighbors that she draft a small article for the summer WNA newsletter and/or join our Facebook group to make posts there. It was also suggested that neighbors from that area often attend the Crime and Safety Committee meetings and that the committee chair, Payne, may be a good conduit for communication. Schury provided Payne's email address.

**Jessica Yorko:** Yorko realized that she did have items that she would like to update the board on and asked to take a few minutes.

- The Westside Commercial Association is hosting a spring planting on Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. The group will meet in the parking lot of Shanora's and will plant annual flowers in the planters located between Pine Street and MLK Blvd. The planters from Stanley to MLK Blvd are planted in the fall. They may also stain some of the planters and the sign located near Fork in the Road.
- On April 20<sup>th</sup> Yorko will be competing in the local Dancing with the Stars fundraising event in support of Care Free Medical. She will be salsa dancing. Tickets can be purchased at [www.carefreemedical.com](http://www.carefreemedical.com). Schury suggested she post this to the neighborhood Facebook group.
- The Financial Health Team report is posted to the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward website: [www.lansingsfourthward.com](http://www.lansingsfourthward.com). A super brief summary of the recommendations is "sell everything." Budget hearing meeting times and locations are also posted to the same website.
- Yorko is participating in an exciting new group called Let's Save Michigan with State Representative Andy Schor. This is a statewide effort to rethink how municipalities are funded. The group is sponsored by the Michigan Municipal League.
- Lansing now has a Financial Empowerment Center funded with a grant from the Bloomberg Foundation. Lansing was one of four cities (other cities are Philadelphia, Los Angeles and San Antonio) to be awarded funding for a center. The purpose of the center is to help people learn about and regain personal

financial health. The center is being run by Capital Area Community Services. For more information, residents can call 211.

**Pat St. George:** St. George will present during the RACER Trust portion of the agenda.

**Ted O'Dell and Spencer Austin:** Both arrived about halfway through the meeting and did not present to the board. Austin distributed business cards to board members.

### **New Business**

**Westside Spring Cleaning:** Cunningham reported that there will be a Westside Spring Cleaning on Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. Originally, this was planned to coincide with the MSU Global Service Day. Unfortunately, you have to be a registered alumni group in order to be listed on their website. Cunningham will promote this as a neighborhood event through the Facebook group and with an article in the Spring Westsider newsletter. Cunningham is hoping neighbors will volunteer to take a section or sections of various streets. She has called Home Depot to request a donation of trash bags and is working with Letts and the City of Lansing to coordinate disposal of waste. The Letts Library has been reserved to distribute clean-up supplies beginning at 9:00 a.m. Volunteers are expected to do clean-up from 10:00 a.m. to noon. If there is a good turnout, there may be pizza at Letts after the clean-up, thanks to a donation from Schury. Casavant suggested that clubs at Sexton, like National Honor Society, might be a good source of volunteers. Cunningham is hoping to have bags for recyclable items and for trash, with info sheets on what can be included in Lansing's Single Stream Recycling. Yorko noted that she has trash bags to donate and gloves that volunteers may borrow for the clean-up.

Cunningham noted that all costs may not be covered if donations of bags do not come through or are not enough. Kris moved, seconded by Nelson to allow Cunningham to spend up to \$100 on any needed supplies for the clean-up.

**APPROVED**

### **Old Business**

**Storage Shed at St. Joe Park:** Casavant explained that she met Emily Stevens, Director of Leisure Services, Lansing Department of Parks and Recreation, at St. Joseph Park to look at possible storage space for the WNA. There are two options. One is accessed from inside the building and requires going through a space used by another organization that may still have access to the space. That space was minimally adequate in size. The second space is accessed from outside with no accessibility from other organizations using space in the building. The space is about 5x20 (although it was hard to tell as it was packed with football equipment). It is painted cinder block with likely a vinyl floor. It has an overhead light. Stevens stated that her boss, Brett Kaschinske, would like something in writing from us about how we would disseminate keys for the space and control access. Casavant suggested that the four board officers

have keys to the space and that a letter be sent to Kaschinske each year after the election of officers and in the event officers change during the year.

Long moved, seconded by Cunningham, to request use of the external, larger storage space and that, if the space is approved for WNA use, that keys be issued to the four board officers with written updates of the officers and their names and contact information whenever those officers change. St. George asked who would prepare a letter asking for use of the space. Casavant responded that she would do so.

**APPROVED**

### **President's Report**

***Advent House Ministries:*** Schury met with Susan Cancro, Executive Director of Advent House Ministries, to discuss the Garden Tour and the Home Tour. He noted that currently the WNA receives no revenue from the Garden Tour and 10% of the net revenue from the Home Tour. Schury told Cancro that the 0-10% was a very small return for a significant amount of work on behalf of volunteers recruited from the neighborhood. Cancro stated that she would go back to her board to ask about increased support to the WNA. Cancro noted that a consultant would not be used in future as it ate too much into the profit for the Home Tour event last year.

Casavant stated concerns that there is fatigue for this event. She noted that she contacted a significant number of homeowners personally, repeatedly asked for homes for the tour on Facebook and ensured inclusion of an appeal for homes in the newsletter. With all of this and door to door cold calls from the event coordinator, they barely had enough homes to have a tour. In addition, the ad sales are what really bring in revenue and if a consultant will not be hired again, she asked if that would fall back on the neighborhood volunteers. Casavant believes it will be very difficult for the WNA to fulfill any commitment to either event without a champion for the event who is willing to volunteer a significant amount of time to the cause. She stated there may be other, less time intensive ways to financially support Advent House.

St. George suggested they consider Garden and Home Tours on alternate years.

Wong suggested Cancro talk to other groups with successful home tours, like the Country Club area.

Kris also emphasized the amount of volunteer time needed to pull off a successful home tour.

Schury asked what the WNA is willing to do for these events. General consensus was that we can promote through all of our channels, ask for a champion, and ask for volunteers to work the day of event. It was suggested that the onus should be on

Cancro to tell us what she needs and let us know what her board and staff are willing and able to do.

Schury also noted that permission has been given to digitize all past Home Tour booklets. Cancro stated that she has all but 2001. Nelson and Pratt both thought they had a copy from 2001. Schury needs to get a copyright release letter signed by Advent House.

***Westside Commercial Association:*** Schury met with Rory Neuner who was recently hired to work for the commercial association on a public art project and community outreach. They discussed an idea to create a business discount card featuring member businesses along the commercial corridor. The card would offer discounts to consumers to help promote fraternization of these local businesses. It would cost about \$700 for 5000 cards. No motion for approval at this time, just the need for a volunteer to work with Neuner on this concept. Wong volunteered to be available for this after April 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Boehme reported that there were some snafus getting the new officers listed as signers on the checking account. He expects it to be resolved soon.

### **Fiesta Committee Report**

Casavant explained that there are serious concerns that the Irish Pub will be closed permanently prior to the Fiesta event date and needs the board's input on whether we can, in good faith, continue to plan to host there with this knowledge. Casavant presented two alternatives, MBC Downtown and the Nuthouse Sports Grill. Both locations provided an event proposal plan at similar cost to that of the Irish Pub. MBC is comfortable with between 175 and 200 (but verbally indicated 175 would be their comfort zone). Nuthouse capacity is 250. Cunningham moved, seconded by Wong, for Casavant to check-in one final time with the Irish Pub and if she is not confident that they will be open on April 28<sup>th</sup>, she should move forward with hosting the Fiesta at the Nuthouse Sports Grill based on its larger capacity.

**APPROVED**

Casavant asked that anyone who volunteered to solicit Silent Auction items please do so soon and to report back to John Putnam, Silent Auction Coordinator. Additionally, if any board members think of businesses/individuals they would like to solicit, to please coordinate with Putnam.

### **Yard Sale Committee Report**

Kris reported that the Neighborhood-wide Yard Sale will take place June 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> and that an article was submitted for the Spring Westsider newsletter.

### **Grants Committee Report**

Nelson reported that the WNA was awarded the following Mayor's Grants through Lansing Neighborhood Council:

- \$650 for playground improvements at Riddle Elementary School
- \$100 for summer social event
- \$100 for Crime & Safety committee

Kris stated that he thought WNA should consider supporting the efforts of the Lenawee Crime & Safety group since their grant was not awarded. There was general consensus to move forward with this idea and that any specific expenditure would come to the board for approval. Nelson noted that last she knew the group still needed approval from the City of Lansing in order to erect a sign, which was a major part of their grant proposal. Nelson will be in touch with Payne to determine if the Lenawee group would still like a sign and if they have permission from the City of Lansing yet.

### **Riddle Liaison Report**

Long thanked Piechotte and Casavant for coming in to read to students at Riddle Elementary School in honor of March is Reading Month. Both expressed that it was a very positive experience.

Long noted that Nelson and Casavant had asked her to check with Riddle to see if they would be interested in a little free library, as had been discussed for Letts at past meetings. She plans to check in with the principal.

St. George added that there is a lot of pressure from the community for "Marilyn" to stay on as principal at Riddle since she has really turned things around at the school. She noted that "Marilyn" had only committed to one year.

St. George also asked if Long could inquire about necessary repairs to concrete stairs at the main entrance which is visually unappealing and dangerous. Long will also speak with the principal about this matter.

Long noted that Riddle participates in Box Tops for Education and that she would gladly collect from board members/neighbors to bring to school.

### **Sexton Liaison Report**

McCormick reminded the board that the bottle/can drive for the Sexton Prom is this Saturday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> – donated bottles and cans will be picked up from stoops between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Donations of cans/bottles can be dropped off at the Sexton Counseling office during school hours.

McCormick brought up the idea of a staff appreciation event at the end of the school year and maybe another to welcome back the staff in the fall. This is still just a working concept. Long noted that Riddle PTA does an appreciation day and perhaps they should discuss if there can be a joint event.

### **Community Center Liaison Report**

Durham not present, but Schury noted that she has been working to ensure that WNA regularly scheduled meetings are on the Letts calendar and that staff are expecting our groups. It sounds like they were expecting us this evening.

### **Communications Committee Report**

Kris noted that he has not been able to resolve the alias problems with the board@ and other WNA listservs. He will be entering the board members addresses manually and will inform the group when that listserv is up and running so communications for all board members can once again be sent to [board@wnalansing.com](mailto:board@wnalansing.com)

Schury noted that the newsletter had been delayed for a number of reasons, but most importantly is the issue of Fiesta location. Also, the Lansing Neighborhood Council will begin to charge us minimal copying costs beginning with the summer edition. Copying costs will be \$80 for a four page newsletter and \$120 for a six page newsletter.

### **Voter Education Committee Report**

Cunningham reported that the Absentee Voter ballot is scheduled to be mailed on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, so the primary election candidate's event will be held in early June. Cunningham is waiting until the candidate filing deadline to determine what offices will be covered. City elections this year include our 4<sup>th</sup> Ward and two At-Large council seats, as well as the Mayor's office.

### **Westside History Committee Report**

Schury noted that we received Gerich's resignation by email, leaving a void for this committee's chair position. Schury has volunteered to chair the committee. He also reported that Matthew Miller has interviewed Ann Kron, who was instrumental in starting our association. Schury asked if we have received the Gannett check for Miller's volunteer work. Boehme stated the check had not been received. Cunningham will look into the status of the payment.

### **Summer Social Event Committee Report**

McCormick noted that she is thinking about a Pickin' in the Park idea for this summer's social event and considering the location of EC3 again this year. Nothing is official yet. She will be asking for help in planning as summer approaches.

### **Community Engagement Committee Report**

Durham submitted a board report about parent engagement in schools and healthcare.

### **Crime & Safety Committee Report**

Schury noted that police are investigating a series of incidents in which bb guns have been used to shoot out windows in parked cars throughout the city and township. So far none have been reported in our neighborhood boundaries.

## **MLK Garden**

No report

## **GM/RACER Trust Liaison Report**

St. George and Ron Callen attended the Reuse Working Session for the former GM plants. RACER reported that they have found the contaminated areas and have made recommendations of what they believe can be built at which locations on the property. With the current commitments to clean-up, residential would only be allowed on second story and above, with all ground level being light industrial. St. George presented a map handed out the meeting that shows the contamination and building recommendations. Schury asked if Pratt could get a digital version to share with neighbors on Facebook and our website. There was discussion of possibly hosting a neighborhood input meeting. Schury asked that Pratt work with RACER to get, minimally, quarterly reports on what has taken place in the past quarter and what is planned for the upcoming quarter.

## **Scholarship Committee Report**

Pratt reported that applications are in and the committee needs to review and make recommendations for the award. Casavant reminded Pratt that the winners and their families are usually invited to the Fiesta as our guests, therefore this process needs to be concluded in time so that the invitation is not too last minute.

## **Business Promotion Committee Report**

Schury asked that a first draft of the business directory be available for submission for the summer Westsider newsletter.

## **Places of Worship Committee Report**

Schury requested that the places of worship directory be ready for the fall newsletter.

## **Fun Committee Report**

Casavant asked if there would be interest in a Westside group outing to a Lansing Lugnuts game for a Sunday afternoon in August. General consensus was yes and Casavant will pursue.

## **Good and Welfare**

There is a meeting of the Westsiders with Wee Ones on Saturday.

Kris motioned, Boehme seconded, to adjourn.

**APPROVED**

**Next meeting – Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at Letts.**



## **Action Items:**

**McCormick** volunteered to call Sexton and see about volunteers for the clean-up.

Yorko indicated she had trash bags to donate and a large number of work gloves that can be borrowed for the event. **Cunningham** will follow-up to get these items.

If warranted, **Schury** will provide refreshments for after the clean-up.

**Casavant** will draft letter to Kaschinske requesting use of the space, outlining the key policing and providing the current officer names and contact information.

**Schury** will request from Cancro a definition of the WNA's role, as she sees it, for the Home and Garden Tours so that the board can better determine its involvement with these events.

**Schury** needs to present a copyright clearance request to the Advent House board of directors via Cancro.

**Nelson** or **Pratt** is to provide Schury with their copy of the 2001 Home Tour booklet.

**Wong** will work with Neuner on the business discount card concept AFTER she finishes school on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Casavant** will contact Irish Pub and then determine ultimate location of Fiesta, working with Nuthouse if necessary.

**Nelson** will contact Payne to determine if the group is moving forward with seeking permission – or if they would do so in light of WNA board interest in trying to support their efforts.

**Kris** will implement work around for listserv and notify board when complete.

**Long** will connect with the principal on the Little Library and inquire about the steps in ill repair.

**Cunningham** will look into Gannett check.

**Pratt** will contact Grant Trigger of RACER Trust and ask for a digital version of the map document, ask for quarterly reports and follow-up on RACER's planned public meeting for the spring.

**Pratt** and committee will make recommendations to the board via an email vote in time for the recipients to be invited to the Fiesta with ample notice of the event.

**Wong** will work with committee to have business directory for summer newsletter.

**Long** will work with committee to have places of worship directory for fall newsletter.

**Casavant** will investigate Lugnuts outing for the neighborhood.