

Citizens for a Loring Park Community  
**Livability Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Those present: John Novak(co-chair), Bob Hansen(co-chair), Renee Allen (CCP-SAFE), Ron Martin (Inspector/Taxi Cab licenses), Jeff Miller (Traffic Control), Sgt. Johnny Mercil (MPD), Dennis Boe (resident), Lawrence Phillips (resident), Joseph Finley (resident), David Neller (resident), Diana Pierson (resident), Gary Gliem (resident), Jana Metge (CLPC Coordinator)

I. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. The June agenda and April minutes were approved. Gary/Bob M/S/C

Introductions were conducted and the following announcements made:

- Community Sing-Along – Tuesday, June 21<sup>st</sup> @ 7:00 p.m. @ Loring Park Com. Center
  - Land Use Committee – Mon., June 27<sup>th</sup> - 7:00-8:30 p.m. @ Loring Office Bldg/Rm 207
  - Master Plan Steering Committee – Wed., June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7-9 p.m. @ Loring Park Community Ctr.
- TOPIC: Synthesis of Discovery Phase-Plan Development
- Downtown Court Watch – Fri., July 8<sup>th</sup> -10-Noon–Dwntwn Central Library–2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
  - A Concert for PRIDE – Wed., June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Free Admission – Galactic Cowboy Orchestra @ New Harmony Church at Wesley! 7:00-Art Show @ Wesley; 8:00-Concert; 9:30-Reception @ Loring Theater
  - PRIDE Festival – June 25<sup>th</sup> & June 26<sup>th</sup>!!!
  - PRIDE Block Party – Fri. June 24<sup>th</sup>@ LK & B 5-11 pm
  - Loring Park Future & Funding– Meeting! Wed., June 29<sup>th</sup>; 6:30-8:00 pm @ Loring Park
  - Aquatennial Family Fun Event – 5:00-7:30 – Wed., July 20<sup>th</sup> @ Loring Park!!
  - National Night Out Party!!! The Woman's Club of Minneapolis – 410 Oak Grove!!
  - Loring Park Art Festival – August 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> @ Loring Park!!
  - Jana announced the “Swatch Team” at Walker Open field and passed around Christine’s invite.

The following handouts were distributed:

- CLPC June Newsletter
- 15<sup>th</sup> Street Bike Lane Overview
- Park Meeting Flyers for posting in buildings – Wed., June 29<sup>th</sup> – 6:30-8:00
- Loring Park Art Festival cards for distribution
- Walker Open Field Press Release

## II. Taxi Cab Licensing – Ron Martin, City Inspector

CLPC has entertained months of discussions and resident frustrations with taxi cab issues on Nicollet & Grant. Last month we learned that horn honking, unnecessary noise, and noise violations are Livability Crimes which could be ticketed and forwarded to our Restorative Justice Program. We also learned that the horn honking stops temporarily when enforcement is present, but then begins again as soon as enforcement leaves the area. Our goal this month is to develop a strategy to stop this negative activity and livability ordinance offenses (horn honking, blocking traffic, endangerment to pedestrians, noise violations). There should not be double parking, interference with Metro Transit buses, or noise which disrupts the livability of residents.

Ron introduced himself, he has been with the City of Minneapolis for 7 years – 4 years in Traffic Control. He reported that since the 1940’s to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, the City of Minneapolis has always had a cap on the number of licenses that they would award annually. The Institute for Justice filed suit against the City of Minneapolis charging discrimination due to a closed market on taxis (medallion system). A cab license is valued at \$20-\$25,000 and can be used in collateral for a loan. The Institute of Justice charged that certain cab companies had a monopoly on obtaining these licenses. So, as of Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, a 45-year policy to cap annually the number of licenses awarded, was lifted. 100 new taxi cab licenses have been issued. There no longer is ANY cap on the number of licenses which may be issued by the City of Minneapolis. Ron reported that by Ordinance, the only place a taxi cab can park is in a taxi cab stand. With no license cap in place, there are inadequate number of cab stands. There is no ordinance requirement for the City of Minneapolis to create additional cab stands. There is a requirement that 10% of any company’s fleet has to have ability to transport a wheelchair. The City will be looking into new licenses compliance to this requirement. Additionally, they are reviewing and amending the taxi cab ordinance. One of

the new inclusions will be that you may not converse on a cell phone while driving a cab. A license could be revoked for violating this once in place. Conversing on a cell phone while driving a cab endangers the passengers, as well as other vehicles on the road.

Ron noted that by law, drivers are only allowed to work a 12 hour shift 4 days in a row. He noted that when he observed the activity on Grant and Nicollet, horn honking seemed to occur because drivers had fallen asleep. Drivers can also only work for one company.

Ron was joined by Traffic Control staff Jeff Miller. Jeff reported that once a citation is written, many drivers go to HN County Violations Bureau, appeal, and take it to Traffic Court. Judge Corcoran was moved from Traffic Court due to complaints by the City Dept. that cab fines were consistently being dismissed.

Suggested were to 1) form a workgroup to resolve this issue, 2) work with the City Attorney to issue Restorative Justice tags with citations/face to face conversation with drivers may help, 3) contact the NCR department and see if the Somali liaison can walk the street with CLPC and talk 1:1 with the cab drivers, 4) a group to attend Traffic Court and monitor Judge's actions with regard to Cab Citations, 5) relocate the staging area for cabs away from the resident properties, 6) identify any jurisdiction policy which needs changing, add it to the Implementation Plan of the Loring Park Master Plan presently being developed, 7) tag repeat offenders and show a pattern with particular companies then take action against the license, 8) community to testify at any and all public hearings related to taxi cab issues, 9) place the DID camera and photograph/record violators, 10) place signage which says "no horn honking" in the area just like they have signage around the Lakes stating that "violators will be fined \$1,000 for noise ordinance violations", and 11) contact Councilmember Lisa Goodman and policy aide Doug Kress. Jeff reported that a citation is \$46, but if not paid can increase up to \$200 and then to \$2,000 and then if not paid, the license can be revoked. Ron encouraged us to think out of the box on this issue and come up with a plan to stop the behavior and this revolving door. Also, there are no cameras in this area of DID by the Hyatt & Millineum.

### **III. Loring Park Art Festival – Erin McLennon**

Erin is the volunteer coordinator for the Loring Park Art Festival. This year's festival will be on Sat., August 6<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. and Sun., August 7<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Scheduled are 140 visual artists. Due to transit budget cuts, there will be no Art Hop this year. The Art Hop was bus service which transported and connected attendees to all three Art Festivals – Loring – Uptown – and Powderhorn. Erin encouraged interested folks to contact her and volunteer. Confirmed was the CLPC sponsored artist breakfast. CLPC will arrange for and schedule the volunteers needed. CLPC will also have an information booth to be shared with Friends for Loring Park.

### **IV. Nicollet Ave. Safety Issues – Sgt. Johnny Mercil**

Sgt. Mercil introduced himself and that he is the Sgt. in charge of our Beat Officers. We have two (2) Beat Officers scheduled for 40 hours each on the midwatch shift, which is 5:30 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. After 3:30 a.m., there are squads to respond to 911, but no car in Loring. Resources are limited at MPD, and in the 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct they are stretching them as best they can. Downtown resources are stretched after 10:00 p.m., especially after Downtown bars close.

Sgt. Mercil reported that over Memorial Day weekend there were 5 people shot Downtown and 2 on Nicollet. One of the shootings on Nicollet was a death. 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct put extra patrol on the Street in the Loring Park Neighborhood following this Nicollet shooting. The individual suspected in the shooting was arrested and charged. It appears to be gang related and that the 2 individuals knew each other; an ongoing dispute.

Jana reported for the minutes that it has been reported to her from Stevens Square neighborhood, that this incident arose out of Ganchen Restaurant. SSCO has been having a lot of problems with this restaurant and Inspector Matt Clark has forwarded action to the City's TAC/Technical Advisory Committee. The neighborhood is moving to shut the restaurant down. Jana noted that Ganchen owners are the same owners as The Great Sun Buffet (now under a new name) and put folks on notice that if they see an increase of negative activity to call 911 and to let CLPC know so that we can monitor it. Sgt. Mercil noted to share with the beat officers to keep an eye out as well, so that any negative and / or gang activity doesn't just move from Stevens Square, down Nicollet, to Loring area.

John stated that he wanted to see more Officers walking the Beat, talking to folks. He also requested Beat presence on Loring Hill – Oak Grove, Groveland, Clifton. Renee reported that she attended the Code 4 meeting and that there will be extra Officers assigned to Loring during the PRIDE Festival. Sgt. Mercil also reported that DID had purchased an electric Rancher ATV. This vehicle is quiet, can go up on sidewalks and around traffic. Very useful in the Downtown area.

With regard to the Taxi Cab issue – Sgt. Mercil recommended that residents note which cab company is honking and call the Company Office to complain. Jana suggested that a group of folks attend Traffic Court and note how often cab citations are dismissed or reduced. Renee suggested that a working group form to deal with this issue and structure some approaches. It appears to have the same circular pattern as our chronic offenders did prior to the creation of the Downtown Court Watch. Jurisdictions involved with situation are: Hennepin County Violations Bureau, HN County Court, City Attorney, DID/SafeZone, Public Works (staging area/cab stand), and Traffic Control & Inspections. Dennis requested that we set a September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline to have this situation remediated and under control. The constant horn honking by cab drivers parking illegally in the area and violating misdemeanor ordinances, needs to be resolved.

Sgt. Mercil's enthusiasm and informative nature was applauded by attendees. He said that he is soon to be promoted into the MPD Gang Unit, but that he will stop by The Woman's Club of Minneapolis National Night Out Event in August.

Renee Allen (CCP-SAFE) reported that she has conducted 2 personal safety workshops at 1355 Nicollet. Residents from the building stated that they were very helpful. She now wants 1-2 folks from that building to attend a block leader training. It can be at the 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct or in Loring. Jana reported on outreach to Booth Manor and passed around photos. Musician Mark Stillman played Russian songs and there was singing and dancing by residents. 30 residents participated and Booth management wants us to come back in the Fall. Renee suggested that we have the Fall session be a Safety Workshop. Renee stated that a couple of other Loring Park buildings have expressed interest in a Safety Workshop. Noted is that we should check our Neighborhood Policing Plan and see what our goal is for the number of Vertical Block Clubs to create in 2011.

Renee reported that the youth Crime Prevention Interns will soon be trained. There are 30 youth and they are looking for places to gain experience in Community Engagement. She stated to contact their Director, Rick Maas at [richard.maas@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:richard.maas@ci.minneapolis.mn.us). The group suggested involvement by the Youth at the upcoming Aquatennial Event on Wed., July 20<sup>th</sup>.

## V. Reports - Outreach

- *Booth Manor* – Covered earlier; photos distributed
- *Aquatennial Update* – John distributed a budget handout for Committee review and reported on 2011 Sponsors and commitments. Sponsors will be Eli's, Lotus to Go Go, CLPC/NRP Phase II funds, New Harmony Church at Wesley. Loring Theater is donating graphic work to create the handbills and flyers and Media Express will be printing the materials. Prospective, but not confirmed sponsors for 2011 are: The Woman's Club of Minneapolis, Laurel Village, Loring Kitchen and Bar, and Joe's Garage. Activities will be: Music by Kidsdance, Facepainting, Food Vendors, Pony Rides, Childrens' Games, Inflatables, and Stilt Walkers by In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theater. **Loring Park Associated Aquatennial – Family Fun Event is – Wed., July 20<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-7:30 in Loring Park! FREE ADMISSION!!!** John encouraged all to help spread the word!
- PRIDE Volunteer Schedule – CLPC Info Booth – Jana reported that only two (2) shift openings remain.

## VI. *The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.*

*Respectfully submitted, JLM*