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Citizens for a Loring Park Community (CLPC)

Livability Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 29th, 2006

6:30-8:30 pm

@ World Mission Prayer League

Attendance: Dick and Jan Sandberg (Loring Green East), John van Heel (110 West Grant), Neil Carlson (Summit House), Jana Metge (CLPC Coordinator), Faye Youmans (Summit House), Pat McCarten (510 Groveland, now 400), Kate Suchomel (MPIRG), Pat Havenstein, Mike Koski, Mike Mingo (400 Groveland), Daniel Koski, Gale Koski, Jonathon Koski, Beth Campbell (Restorative Justice), Dave Hile (410 Groveland), Kristen Dulac (Summit House), Mary Turner (1225 LaSalle), Mike Maderus (230 Oak Grove), Janet Grady (Summit House), Becky Gullickson (301 Clifton), Mary Ellen Pawalta (301 Clifton), Ed Bawalta (301 Clifton), Anna Marie Jones (301 Clifton), Keith Jones (301 Clifton), Luther Krueger (Minneapolis Police SAFE), Lt. Mike Kjos (Minneapolis Police First Precinct)

I. 6:30-6:35 p.m. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Approval, Minutes—Dick Sandberg

Livability Chair Dick Sandberg led introductions of the 30 or so persons in attendance. The minutes from February are deferred to the April meeting.

Issues raised by attendees:

- Jana referenced issues raised during Loring Hill meetings
- Concern about a recent evening robbery
- Walking safety, crime and traffic
- Perception vs. reality and how it gets out of control
- Bike thefts
- Dealing with homeless persons
- Number of police officers and city and county attorneys and the court system
- How to encourage people to get out on the street
- 180 degrees staff has been finding used needles and condoms when they patrol at the evening

Announcements

- Mike Maderus, Luther, and Lt. Kjos described the Community Emergency Response Team training, funded through federal funds, that is available in April 21-23. Call Deputy Chief Rollwagen at 612-673-2648.

II. Take Back the Night –Kate Suchomel (Minnesota Public Interest Research Group--MPIRG)

Kate described MPIRG. [Dick noted that he was involved in the first year of MPIRG.] PIRG is in the 9th year of running the Take Back the Night rally in Minneapolis. The rally has always been held in some capacity in Loring Park. Kate is seeking input for designing this year's event. The event deals specifically with sexual and family violence against women. This year's rally is scheduled for April 27th at 6:30 p.m.. There will be speakers from several organizations that deal with violence against women. Participants will then march at 7:30 p.m. in the street down Hennepin into the Uptown Area. The rally is deliberately held at night since it is considered a more forbidding time for women to be on the street. There will be community information resources available at that time.

III. 6:35-7:00 Neighborhood Safety – Luther Krueger (Minneapolis Police Dept.(Crime Prevention Specialist for Loring Park)/Lt. Mike Kjos (Minneapolis Police Dept. Sector Lt), Lois Conroy (Assistant City Attorney 1st Precinct Community Prosecutor), and Beth Campbell (Restorative Justice Program)

Participants took turns addressing the issues raised at the beginning of the meeting.

Lt. Mike Kjos

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Lt. Kjos described the use of computer maps to locate crimes downtown and passed around the citywide statistics for the last week, including comparisons with previous periods. The first precinct (it includes Loring Park) is doing fairly well except for shoplifting and theft from vehicle (there are 65,000 parking spaces). The last week was remarkably crime-free despite large numbers of people in town for the NCAA and high school tournaments. Lt. Kjos also noted that robbery has become the crime of concern for Minneapolis and robberies are up citywide although less so in Loring Park. For the last two weeks there were two robberies, one a purse snatch in the afternoon. Lt. Kjos described the purse snatch event--the two offenders were walking VERY close behind the victim. Two citizens observed this behavior, one in his car laid on his horn and chased down one of the offenders, a fifteen-year old male. The "good Samaritan" was punched but will be nominated for an award. The kid has confessed and will probably be given geographic restrictions, an effective technique in much of downtown.

Question--what should the victim have done--go toward people, don't stop, don't give them an opportunity to size you up, look at them, use a cell phone. Most of the downtown robberies are victims who are intoxicated or looking for drugs.

The second robbery in downtown met a pattern that has been seen elsewhere--a small group of offenders, evening (around 11 PM), approach the victim, and say "you know what is going to happen, give me your wallet." It is recommended that you handover the wallet.

Lt. Kjos mentioned that Neil is the key neighborhood watch person. Neil attends the CODEFOR meetings that are televised. CODEFOR meetings are held every other week, every commander must describe and answer for the crime occurring in the precinct.

Bike thefts are up from underground parking usually walking/riding in after a driver. As the weather gets nicer, some buildings will leave their doors open. Some people will come into the garage and sleep in cars. Often they will upgrade their bikes. Drivers must watch out. One suggestion was a separate bike room.

Question about a lost cell phone found in Loring Park. The finder tracked it down and was told that the person's purse had been stolen. Should she have called the police rather than sending back the phone? What is crime in the park? Most cell phones are stolen from bars.

Question--concern that there are people drinking in the park--call the police if they are drinking. Lt. Kjos reminded them that the shelters empty out at 7 AM by law but with the new committee they hope to get some progress. The ordinance changed to allow them to stay later but there is no funding.

Luther Krueger described the difference between panhandling and aggressive panhandling. About a year or so ago the panhandling ordinance was struck down and rewritten in two months defining aggressive panhandling. Anyone can ask once, but cannot ask within certain distance of bus stop or ATM or do anything to impede progress. There is no prohibition against standing at the side displaying the sign but the person cannot interfere with vehicular traffic. While there are not good statistics, Luther thinks not all of those panhandling are homeless, some are chronic offenders, some may wear military uniforms but have never been in the military. As to robbery of a person--most are not homeless but come from outside the first precinct. The biggest area for drug dealing is 8th and Hennepin and 7th and Hennepin.

Luther described his virtual block club that sends out information to individuals and helps neighborhoods address problems. For example, neighborhood action in partnership with the city helped close down the saunas on Lake Street. Luther also described when to call 911 (burning building) vs. 311 (burning question). If you have problems getting through to 311, call 673-3000, the old city central number, that still rolls over to 311.

Luther described perception vs. reality and setting the level of fear at the right level. Don't leave computers in cars but also don't wear a bullet-proof vest.

There is a love-hate relationship with the media who often hype situations beyond reality.

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Luther described community impact statements—those on the virtual block club list will get an impact statement for offenses in their neighborhood. You do not have to be a witness or victim but are encouraged to describe how the crime affects your fear level. For other precincts, contact your crime prevention specialist.

Walking safety tips: carry a whistle, not a screech alarms that sound like a car alarm, don't use mace, carry a cell phone

Cruising in Loring Park—this has been a problem in the summer. This is not illegal. Residents could try to get Mpls to adopt the Anoka cruising ordinance. This was an issue about a decade ago at Harmon and Spruce. Neighbors scheduled themselves to record license numbers and descriptions of vehicles and drivers. The city would then verify the vehicle and send out a letter to the owner with a “survey” warning that the area had a problem with prostitution or drugs or similar. The letter also added a paragraph that repeated trips were creating fear of burglary for homeowners. Those receiving the letter generally did not return. This is not a complete solution if there are thousands of offending vehicles. What really worked was when the president of the CLPC Board calling Channel 5 and was interviewed in the park expressing concerns about male prostitution and drunken driving.

Question about walking at night down West 15th Street: About a decade ago the neighborhood had the Loring Watch. One resident feels unsafe walking anywhere after dark. Mike suggested walking down Nicollet which is very busy around 9:30 PM, and walk on the busy side of the street. Luther noted that when there are incidents, there will be directed patrols for a few days. The U of MN has an escort service—what would it take to get such a service for Loring Park? It might be a volunteer activity of neighborhood group.

Comment about street lights—the streets seem dark. Encourage property owners to keep their lights on. Call 311 if lights are burnt out. Call city council member if more lights are needed or if you have concerns that there are too few resources to maintain lighting.

There was a comment that someone heard that there were purse thefts on Oak Grove where the perpetrators jumped out of cars. These crimes may not have been reported but seem similar to crimes in North Minneapolis.

Lois Conroy introduced **Beth Campbell** (Restorative Justice) and described a new alliance between the city and the Restorative Justice program to ensure that more cases are assigned to restorative justice. The motivation is to take advantage of the low recidivism rate of those participating in rest justice. The key will be to involve police officers in direct referrals to notify the offender early in the process of the rest just option. There is some experience with direct referrals for certain offenses from the Second Precinct last summer. Beth described the history of the number of conferences including a big jump in 2005 with the pilot program. These data suggest an even stronger result for Loring Park because more cases are likely to qualify.

Lois also reaffirmed that persons concerned about solicitation should feel free to call 911. The two-part test for aggressive solicitation is an oral request that is aggressive (by style or location).

Lois is working with Cathy ten Broek (working with the county initiative to address homelessness) and Judge Hopper (of the mental health court) on working with the homeless to get them resources. Question—are they looking at a wet house for those abusing alcohol? Luther said that there are several wet/dry facilities that have reduced detox trips. There is a need for more facilities but this is limited by a lack of funding.

Lois noted that the city will be putting more resources into getting feedback about victim impact statements back to those writing them. So far they have received about 150 from first precinct.

Dave Hile, a contract employee with the city's antiviolence initiative, described his work Minneapolis police officers helping deal with those on probation.

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Neil encouraged people to contact Luther if there are issues with buildings permitting drug sales or similar illegal activity. Call Luther at 673-2923 or e-mail him at luther.Krueger@ci.minneapolis.mn.us. Luther works with landlords to help them identify and control illegal and improper activities.

Meeting adjourned 8:50 p.m.

Upcoming items:

For April

Legislative Auditor's report on chemical treatment facilities with Judge Hopper—meeting site to be determined.

For May

180 Degrees

John Dejung and information about the 911 system—invite other neighborhood groups to attend.