

WEST HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 9, 2021

ATTENDANCE

Neighbors: Steve Bieri, Paul Bundy (Community Assembly Representative), Karen Carlberg (Chair), Rick Clapp (Treasurer), Dwight Emerson, Mike Gifford (Vice-Chair & Cleanup Coordinator), Colin Harris, Karen Jurasin (Communications Director), Joy Peltier, Kurt Scudder

City staff: Annica Eagle (Community Programs Coordinator), Kelly Mongan (Police), Angel Spell (Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation)

Guest: John Edmondson (Growing Neighbors)

MINUTES

Minutes for the meetings of February 11, 2020, and October 27, 2020, were approved.

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY REPORT

Paul Bundy, West Hills CA Representative, reported on the January and February, 2021, CA meetings. These summaries have been supplemented with material from minutes of these meetings.

January: The 2021 city budget was approved; there will be no layoffs. About 1/3 of city utility customers are more than 2 months late in paying their bills. Late fees and water shutoffs have been suspended during covid. SNAP can help. Cupid Alexander is the new director of Neighborhood, Housing & Human Services. He said a new young adult shelter will open soon.

February: The PeTT Committee will meet on Feb 23 to discuss changes to the traffic calming program. Please report homeless camps to the city (call 311) so they can be mitigated. The City Council is giving the CA money this year for leadership training. Planning for the training is in progress. Community Engagement grants for 2021 will be a maximum of \$800 per neighborhood. If projects funded by Community Engagement grants are cancelled due to covid in 2021, as some were in 2020, it was agreed that the funds can be used for

alternative projects. Training for writing Community Engagement grant proposals will be Feb 25.

GROWING NEIGHBORS

John Edmondson, Director of Growing Neighbors, spoke about what his organization is doing to promote healthy food, relationships, and planet. Community gardens are great for allowing people to grow food for themselves and others, as well as for forming relationships with neighbors. Fresh produce can be shared with Little Free Pantries, which make the food available to anyone who needs it. Produce also can be shared at farmers markets.

Angel said that Finch Arboretum now has two community gardens and a new bee hive. There also is free food pantry.

Dwight suggested that West Hills could build a free food pantry somewhere near the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Government Way.

SUSIE STEPHENS TRAIL

Angel Spell, Assistant Director of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation, gave a slide presentation on the Susie Stephens Trail and the Susie Forest. Susie was an activist, environmentalist, and bicyclist who promoted safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Ironically, she was killed by a bus when legally crossing a street in St. Louis. Nancy MacKerrow, Susie's mother, is using the large legal settlement to continue Susie's activism and to honor Susie. One project is the Susie Forest, which involves planting trees all over the world, as well as all over Spokane (over 400 so far).

Another project is the Susie Stephens Trail, which will be a pedestrian and bike trail going from the Finch Arboretum to the Fish Lake Trail. Nancy donated \$100K for the trail a couple years ago, and we're still waiting for construction. The city needs an additional \$100K to complete the project. Angel hopes construction will occur this season. It may be done in phases.

Mike said his Finch area neighbors are concerned about traffic safety for trail users, the condition of the Rosamond Bridge over I-90 (which will be part of the

trail route), and transients coming into the neighborhood from the Fish Lake Trail. Angel said that the trail will meander through the street tree exhibit (which is part of the arboretum) instead of on Woodland Boulevard and then will share the road on Rosamond and W 13th Avenues, with painted lines separating the trail from vehicles. She said that people can walk into the Finch neighborhood now, without the trail being there. Karen C said that the Rosamond Bridge is on a WSDOT list for reconstruction in the next four years.

FISH LAKE TRAIL - CENTENNIAL TRAIL CONNECTION

Karen C (a member of the Public Advisory Committee for FLT-CT Connection) gave a slide presentation on planning for a new trail to connect the Fish Lake Trailhead with the Centennial Trail trailhead at W Riverside and W Clarke Avenues. This will increase city connectivity so that bicyclists can travel more easily from West Hills and other parts of southwest Spokane to the Centennial Trail on the north side of the Spokane River, and then to north, central, and east Spokane. It also will be a good recreational trail for pedestrians and cyclists.

Engineers are proposing four potential routes, all that are partly within the West Hills borders and will affect West Hills roads (Government Way or W 8th Avenue). Karen C asked for feedback that she will send to the engineers. W 8th Avenue (behind West Wynn Motel) is a lightly used residential street with plenty of room, so adding the trail would have little effect.

One of the proposed routes could involve major changes for Government Way from Sunset Boulevard to W Riverside Avenue. The new trail will be on the east side, where now there is a wide sidewalk. The four traffic lanes will be changed to one northbound lane, one turn lane, and one southbound lane. A southbound bicycle lane will go the entire distance. A northbound bicycle lane will go from Sunset Boulevard north for a way and then join the new trail. A sidewalk will go the entire way on the west side, including next to the tall rock wall where there currently is no sidewalk.

Rick had these comments on potential changes to Government Way: 1) A sidewalk next to the tall rock wall would be dangerous. Cars run into the wall about once a year because they miss the curve or go around the curve too fast. A barrier would be needed. 2) Reducing four lanes to two probably would slow

traffic. 3) This route looks like it would cut off a corner of the pathway from Government Way to the dog park, forcing people and dogs to walk down a very steep slope. Karen J attended the public meeting last week; the engineers answered that question by saying that only a small portion of the path would be taken, and the remaining path would be fine.

NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME

Kelly Mongan, our neighborhood police officer, was invited to the meeting mainly to help with discussion of crime associated with Motel 6. Prior to the meeting, Karen C appointed Kurt and Colin to serve on an Ad Hoc Committee to work on a solution to the Motel 6 crime problem.

Kelly thinks a major part of the problem is that the police can arrest offenders and take them to jail, but then they are released, often with low bail, due to policies of the city council, state legislature, and judicial system. The police are as frustrated as we are. They are at Motel 6 every day.

One solution is to talk with the managers and owners of the motel. Kelly said the managers recently were replaced, and he will meet with the new managers next week. Kurt has investigated ownership of the Motel 6, and found that there is a local owner who owns a franchise. Kelly said that franchise owners must follow corporate policies.

What can the neighborhood do about this? Kelly said we need to contact our city council members and state legislators about changing policies and laws. Kelly said we should report all criminal activity to Crime Check because the police give more priority to a larger call volume. Joy reiterated that we need to work with the city council to change ordinances related to the kinds of criminal activity occurring at Motel 6.

Karen C talked with Carly Cortright (Director of Community Programs, Neighborhood, Housing, & Human Services) prior to the meeting. Carly has spent part of her career working with the police department, so she can offer suggestions. One possibility is that the Motel 6 property could be declared a chronic nuisance property, which would initiate city action. Another possibility is to use the civil enforcement unit of the police department. Kelly will look into

these. Carly emphasized that neighbors need report all criminal activity to Crime Check because the police prioritize locations with large volumes of calls.

The EconoLodge also has been a source of crime. It is closed now. Kurt and Kelly both have looked into what is planned for the property. It appears to have been sold to a group of companies and there seems to be no information available about what they plan to do with it. Kelly said this property will be a priority for the police. Kurt will continue to monitor it.

Kelly, Kurt, Colin, and Karen C will work together on next steps.

Approved April 13, 2021