

WEST HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF AUGUST 9, 2022

ATTENDANCE

Neighbors: Tom Angell, Steve Bieri, Paul Bundy (Treasurer), Karen Carlberg (Chair), Rick Clapp (Executive Committee), Renee Compton, Jessica Craddock, Cathy Dernbach. Chris Dill, Diana Dosmann, Holly Edwards, Dwight Emerson (Executive Committee), Bob Fiala, Charles Frye, Josette Gates, Mike Gifford, Michelle Griffith, Liz Goodwin, Margaret Hansen, William Hagy (Vice-Chair), Josh Hatcher, Sara Hatcher, Bill Heaton, Judy Heaton, Dan Hill, Nykala Hill, Deb Iannuzzi, Annie Iishi, Eric Jahn, Keiran Jahn, Danny Johnson, Dustin Jones, Nate Juarez, Karen Jurasin (Communications Director), Kathleen Kellen, Stu Lee, Joe Long, Susan Mensching (Community Assembly Representative), Kristina Modica, Cynthia Montes, Joseph Montes, Julieann Morse (Executive Committee), Lyle Morse, Tybre Newcomer, Reid Oakes, Joy Peltier, Stanford Pierce, Christine Quinn, Sav Rogalski, Lisa Saddler, Lisa Sandbo, Nolan Steiner, Shea Suski, Paula Swan, Ramona Tyler, Judith Van Dongen, Steve Watts, Maria Weckman, Mark Westbrook, Nancy Westbrook, Derek Zandt, John Zuchetto, Tomie Zuchetto, Beth Anne, Cathleen, David, Ed, Jerri, Jessica, Jon, Paul, Paula, Shelby, Teresa H
City staff: Mark Brownell (Spokane Police); John Hall (Director of Neighborhood, Housing and Human Services), Kelly Thomas (Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Karen Statton)
Guests: Julie Garcia (Jewels Helping Hands); Zeke Smith (President, Empire Health Foundation), Maggie Yates (Candidate for County Commissioner, District 5); Zack Zappone (City Council, District 3)
Peak of 76 Zoom accounts connected to meeting.

MINUTES for the meeting of June 14, 2022

Minutes were approved for the meeting of June 14, 2022. Vote was 13 yea, 0 nay.

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY REPORT:

Susan Mensching, West Hills CA Representative, reported on the July and August 2022 CA meetings.

July: The city has a new asphalt art program. Each neighborhood gets one crosswalk. The program is funded with traffic calming funds because one purpose is to slow down drivers. Susan recommends putting ours at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Government Way. Please take the city's dog park survey if you are interested. Hello for Good was discussed. It is an extensive study of homelessness in Spokane produced by a large group of Spokane citizens. The new housing code changes were discussed. One change is increased opportunity for multifamily housing.

August: Susan introduced John Hall, the city's new Director of Neighborhood, Housing and Human Services. John described his new job and upcoming changes. Currently he is serving as

interim Director of the Office of Neighborhood Services until a new director is hired. His division includes Community, Housing & Human Services (CHHS) which obtains and administers grants to support housing for people in need. His vision is to increase the amount of housing in Spokane in order to house people who currently are homeless. With regard to the use of the Quality Inn for housing people who have been homeless, he said that the city had a very short time window for submitting a proposal to the state Department of Commerce. Therefore the public comment period was bypassed. An opportunity for public feedback is expected, convened by Empire Health Foundation.

TRAFFIC CALMING:

We collected ideas for traffic calming projects in preparation for the August 17 Traffic Calming workshop that we will share with the Grandview/Thorpe and Latah/Hangman neighborhoods. Ideas also were accepted at the West Hills gmail account. Ten projects were submitted.

BYLAWS REVISION:

Rick Clapp, Mike Gifford, and Bill Heaton presented the first installment of their recommendations for revision of the West Hills bylaws. They covered sections 1 through 3. No vote was taken.

UPDATE ON HOUSING FOR LOW INCOME AND RECENTLY HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE WEST HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD

Karen Carlberg summarized the current status for plans to house low-income and homeless people in West Hills. Proposals and plans often change daily, even from morning to afternoon, so the answers often are “we don’t know.” Yesterday Catholic Charities repeated again that the plan will not change for low-income apartments on their property at the northeast corner of Government Way and Sunset Boulevard. The Catholic Charities property on Whistalks Way currently has low-income apartments. Depending on who you ask, homeless people may or may not be added, and the facility may or may not cause problems for River Run residents. Empire Health Foundation had proposed to add pallet homes for homeless people on the Ascenda property, which it owns. They don’t have funding, so the plan is on hold. As of this evening, Karen C has no idea whether the Quality Inn will be used to house homeless people. A group of attorneys, business people, and neighbors is starting to work on it.

Karen C urged everyone to respect opinions expressed by others. It is normal for there to be a diversity of opinions on topics like homelessness. It is useful to everyone to consider and think about ideas expressed by others.

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

Chris Patterson (Hello for Good) and Julie Garcia (Jewels Helping Hands) led a discussion, and answered lot of questions, about homelessness. Some thoughts and answers: About 2/3 of

homeless people want help. People have a variety of mental health, addiction, and other needs. Some have a criminal history; others do not. They do need to be accountable for their behavior. People do best if they receive housing first, then receive the treatment or services they need. Many need protection. Pallet homes can be built quickly, and are safer than tents, but they are not intended to be permanent. It will take time to build enough permanent housing. Julie said that the people in Camp Hope all are adults, male and female, some couples. The average duration of homelessness is 3.5 yr. The people who are most successful are those who have been homeless the shortest time. People with long-term chronic homeless are least capable of living independently.

OPEN FORUM:

Neighbors asked questions and made comments from 7:50 to 9:30 p.m.

Mark Brownell, police officer for the southwestern neighborhoods, spoke briefly, and then contributed to the conversation.

Hello for Good is sponsoring a symposium on homelessness on September 1. Everyone is welcome.

There was a general agreement that housing for low-income people and people who have been homeless should be distributed throughout the city and the different neighborhoods. John Hall wants equity and fairness in housing and de-concentration of poverty.

There were a lot of complaints about lack of transparency in making decisions about locating sites for homeless people.

Zack and Zeke spoke a lot about the design, structure, and temporariness of pallet homes.

Zack said that the City Council has adopted its own good neighbor agreement. Neighborhoods can use this as a template. These documents should be written in collaboration with law enforcement and the providers.

John Hall said he can be a point of contact with the city about homelessness.

Nate and Mark discussed problems with homeless people at the cemeteries and parks. Some can be threatening. Some help clean up.

Mark emphasized the usual common sense safety precautions: If a situation seems bad, walk away. Call Crime Check or 911 to report all incidents. Lock and close everything. Some thieves are professionals, not homeless people.