**Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Board Meeting**

**Monday June 8, 2020**

**Zoom**

**6:30 pm**

**Mission**: To advocate for and enhance the quality of life in the Belknap community.

**Vision**: To be a vibrant, diverse and desirable place to live in Grand Rapids.

**Public Space Goals**: Improving access down Belknap hill; Hastings Connector & Linear Park;   
Better Pedestrian Connections.

**Add’l Priorities**: Social Connections; Active in the Neighborhood; Voices Heard in Local Gov’t.

1. Call to order and additions to agenda
2. Presentation – Events & Outreach at Skate Park on Monroe, Stephanie Balke
3. Positions for Upcoming Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals Hearings?
4. Approval of May minutes and financials
5. Projects Updates
   1. Providing Assistance
   2. Additional Coronavirus Response
   3. Present PILOT budget for Approval/Referral
   4. Cat Shelter Plans for Sinclair
   5. P&P Wifi Project/Grant Application(s)
   6. Hardware Acquisition and Distribution?
   7. Progress on Public Spaces
6. Miscellaneous & Public Comment
7. Adjournment

**2020 Board Meeting Schedule, 2nd MONDAY of each month, 6:30 pm**

July 13  
August 10

September 14

October 12

November 9 (Annual Meeting at Coit Creative Arts Academy)

December 14 (Old board/new board potluck)

**Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, May 11, 2020**

**Video Conference via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Loren Sturrus (President) Robin Benton

Amy Gautraud Kara Harrison GatesLoretta Klimaszewski Dan Miller (Recorder) Dean Rosendall Jonathan Swets

**Members Absent:** Brian Bremer

**Staff Present:** Elianna Bootzin

**Guests Present:** Joe Modderman (RJM) Chris Swank (GVSU)

1. Meeting began at 6:31 pm.

2. Board discussed Modderman’s Clancy Lofts Project.

a. The Development Committee has seen this project at the corner of Clancy and Fairbanks several times. The main thing they requested was adding a substantial amount of porch on the front and Modderman has added that to the design.

b. The Board voted to send a letter of support based on the revised design.

3. Board discussed the April Financials Report and the Minutes of the April 13 NOBL Board Meeting.

a. Loren requested that we record a correction for the source of the $800,000 quote on the stairs – Elianna got this from the Parks Department. Dean has estimated a much lower price.

b. Regarding the financials, Elianna said that NOBL has a higher cash balance than it had last year at this time because of Census and second round PILOT funds as noted in the packet.

c. Kara said that NOBL’s application for a PPP loan was denied because NOBL has no full-time employees which were given priority in the first round of applications. She noted that we could reapply for the second round.

d. Board approved the Financials Report and the Minutes of April 13.

4. Project Updates.

a. Loretta asked about the status of the lease on the Neighborhood Garden at 762 North, NE. Kara said that the Kent County Land Bank still holds the deed, but it may transfer it to a newly created Grand Rapids City Land Bank. Meanwhile the Michigan State Land Bank has not taken over the deed and it does not know anything about NOBL’s previous arrangements for leasing the property. Elianna said that we have a previous written agreement with the Kent County Land Bank and will send it to Kara.

b. Loretta reported on the Feral Cat Program. C-Snip is currently closed but they are asking for financial contributions to sustain the organization, which is essential for us to continue the program of neutering feral cats. Loretta offered a motion to have NOBL Board contribute $100 to C-Snip. Motion passed. Loretta is interested in building structures at 600 Sinclair, NE, for cats to shelter in. She will bring plans to a future meeting and needs carpentry help.

c. Elianna: NOBL has officially requested Coit Park for National Night Out (as always there is no financial commitment for us to do so) but depending on safety requirements at the time we might not be able to hold it in the usual way. If social distancing is required, some of our options include a porch night, predated by a scavenger hunt. We could also adapt traditional kid’s games for the purposes of social distancing.

d. Dumpster Day has been moved to September.

5. Board discussed how to provide additional assistance to the neighborhood during the Corona virus.

a. Hand sanitizers and masks have been handed out at the L&L Market.

b. Robin passed out flyers in Creston Plaza with information about resources people could access.

c. Elianna has prepared a “neighborhood improvement” kit also for sidewalk chalking and decorating windows. Invitations to request a kit will go out by mass email/NextDoor, kits can be set out for neighbors at the next Park Walk & Wave, and volunteers can deposit near kids playing outside late in the month.

d. How we hold events in June will have to depend on what restrictions are in place and whether we are prepared to handle the needed precautions.

e. Elianna noted that Neighborhood Match Funds are available for recovery efforts but so far the approved projects have been more aimed at providing help dealing with COVID. The next funding round is in June. We considered seeking funds for Meijer gift cards as prizes for National Night Out games but decided augmenting PILOT project for neighborhood internet would stretch available funds further.

6. Board discussed the PILOT Program.

a. Loren suggested that funds could be used to add lighting to the Bradford stairs (and the Fairbanks stairs?)

b. Loretta suggested that funds could be used for plantings along the Bradford stairs. Robin suggested they could make use of globe planters.

c. Elianna, Loren, Robin, Loretta, and Jon Swets will form an ad hoc committee to create a budget for the next round of PILOT funds to be brought to the June board meeting.

7. Board discussed progress on public spaces.

a. Eliana said that we have about $1200 each dedicated to Public Safety and Neighborhood Leadership left to spend down.

b. Loretta asked if some of that money could be used to buy masks. Elianna said that could become expensive. Loretta asked if bandanas could be used instead. They can be purchased at ACE Hardware. Or perhaps we could pass out material that people can turn into masks.

c. Robin proposed that we give the neighborhood access to the internet via “P2P”. Kara suggested we could use Neighborhood Match funds for the project. Robin said that we could justify that as a progressive project that the City could support. Kara said that the Garfield Park Neighborhood Association is doing something similar and suggested we could put together a proposal borrowing from their example. Kara will check on how we can apply for the Neighborhood Match Funds. Kara, Amy, Loren, and Robin will form an ad hoc committee to prepare a proposal.

d. Loretta asked if we could also supply computers since some of our neighbors don’t have devices to access the internet. Robin said he knows of a company that refurbishes old computers and gives them away. Amy said she has a brother who cleans used computers and he might be able to donate some. Dan said that Calvin University replaces their computers every three years or so and probably other universities in the area do the same. Perhaps they would be willing to donate some of the old computers. Chris said that GVSU sells its old computers at its surplus store in Standale but he can check to see whether they would be willing to donate some of them.

e. Loren asked Elianna to put this topic on the agenda of our next Board meeting.

8. Miscellaneous and Public Comments.

a. Elianna noted that squatters have moved into some of the GVSU houses that were torn down for the Connector. Chris will look into it to be sure the same is not true of houses that remain standing. He noted that the summer session will be on-line only. Plans for the fall are being adjusted to allow on-campus students to maintain social distancing.

b. Kara asked if GVSU is considering other developers for its reduced priced housing project since Third Coast has not yet started work on it. Chris said that Third Coast is planning a new application to Lansing for LIHTEC credits but he will follow up to see what’s happening with the project.

c. Elianna and Loren agreed that Elianna would draft a reply email to Rick re: the Belknap hill by the end of the week.

d. Chris said that the parking booths on the south side of Michigan Avenue might be moved to the gravel lot north of the Finkelstein building to control parking there.

e. Elianna said that the City’s homeless outreach team is operating out of the Fire Department. Loren said he got a COVID-19 test and it wasn’t too bad. It tells you whether you’ve had the virus in the last six weeks.

9. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Daniel Miller (recorder)

Meeting Information

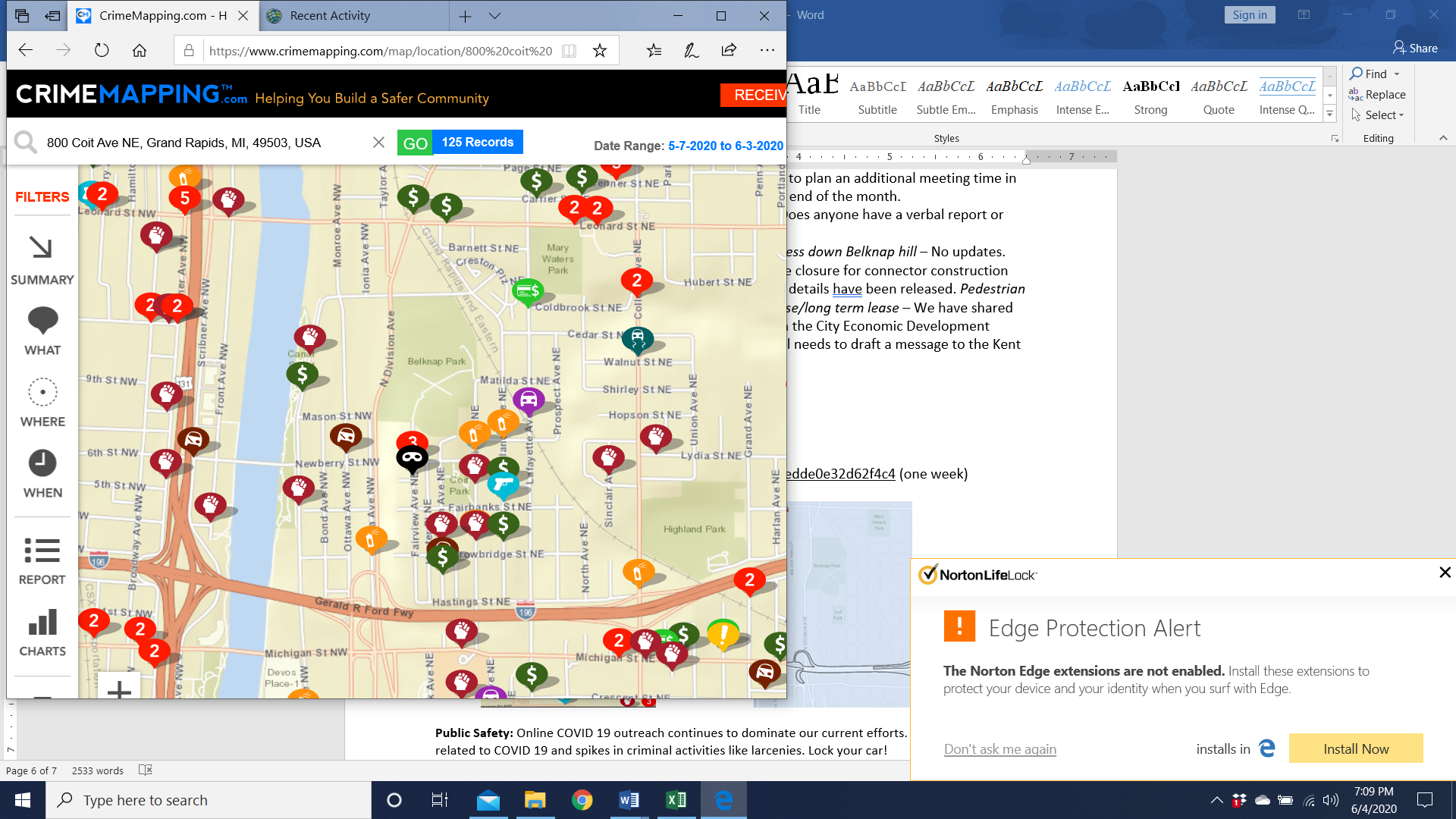
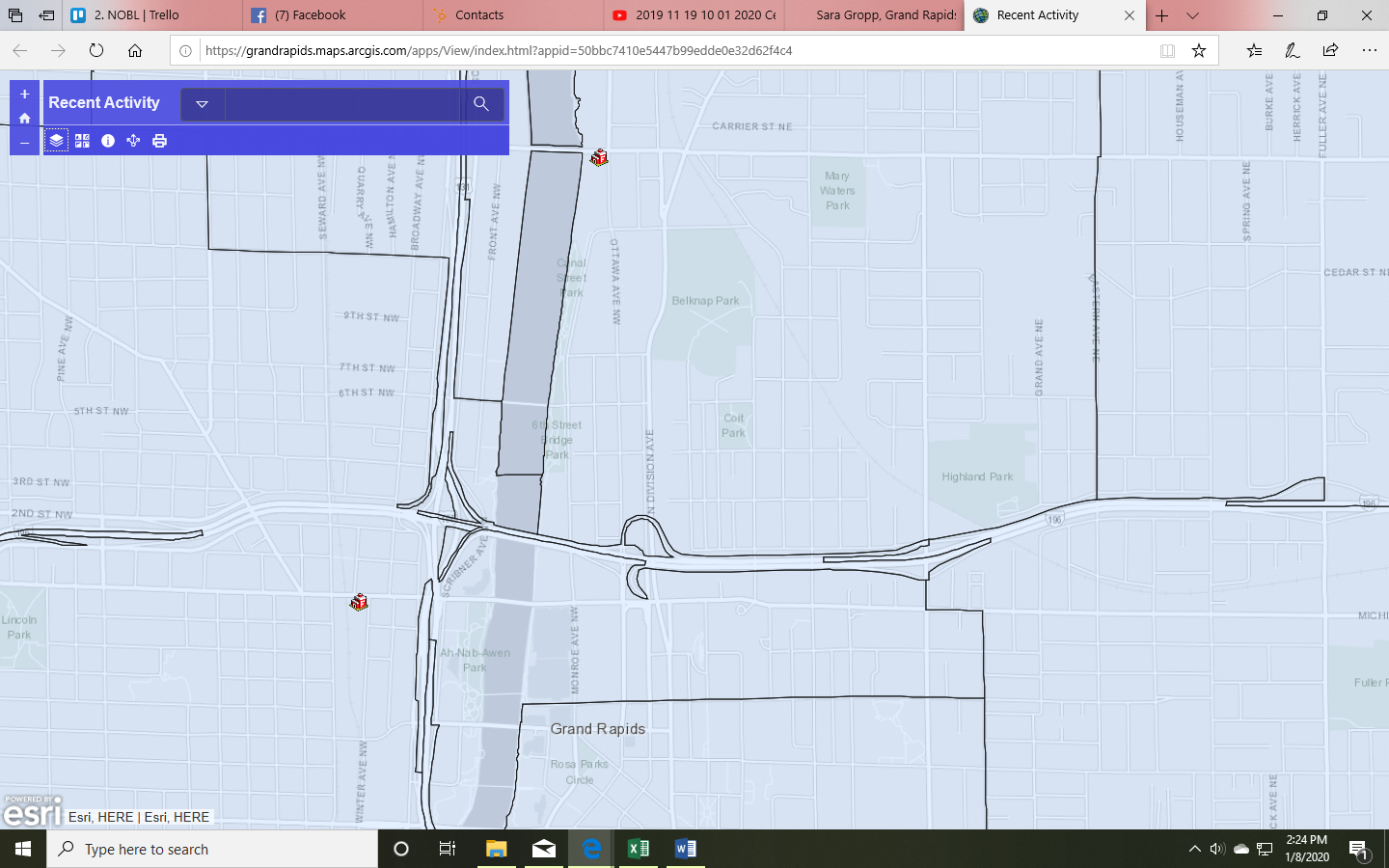
1. Presentation – Events & Outreach at Skate Park on Monroe, Stephanie Balke: Ms. Balke is involved with an application to DGRI to provide events and outreach for the new bike and skate park coming to 555 Monroe. She will provide a brief overview of what she would plan and seek input on how to best engage the Belknap Lookout community.
2. Positions for Upcoming Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals Hearings?
   1. 242 Cedar is up for demolition without replacement at the June 11 Planning Commission hearing. This derelict house has been considered for renovation but plans never materialized. It is currently proposed to become additional greenspace for the Clancy Street Ministry building and will be fenced with the existing play area. Materials for the hearing can be found at <https://grandrapidscitymi.iqm2.com/Citizens/detail_meeting.aspx?ID=5826>.
   2. Outfront Media is appealing the Planning Department’s denial of ten sign permit applications to the Board of Zoning Appeals to convert billboards to electronic signs. The one in Belknap is at 516 Monroe Ave. Electronic meeting information for Thursday June 18 is available if desired.
3. Approval of May minutes and financials – Financial comment are same as last month.
4. Projects Updates
   1. **Providing Assistance** – Our “neighborhood improvement kit” distribution is complete; about 10 kits went out through the sign up, then the other 90 through encounters with families outdoors. It went faster than expected when siblings requested their own bags. We also provided 200 masks to those families.
   2. **Additional Coronavirus Response** – What was going to be our bimonthly potluck is up to a social distanced picnic at Coit Park on June 17. The garden group is reconvening work days (but no potlucks). The office will reopen the week of June 15 on a limited basis for Census assistance and a contractor will lead alley and litter pick ups. Neighbors on Shirley and Lafayette picked up trash but did not seek recognition. **Decisions to make**: Move to outdoor meetings at 704 Clancy in July for Board and Development Committee through October, weather plan bring your own umbrella? Box meals for Board? In person or distanced National Night Out with what activities? Location recommendations for Dumpster Day?
   3. **Present PILOT budget** for Approval/Referral to GVSU Work Group/City Comm.

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| Project | Amount | Narrative |
| Feral Cats | $ 600.00 | Top up fund for ongoing spay/neuter and other care to $2000 |
| Neighborhood Internet | $ 5,000.00 | Equipment and potentially initial IT support to increase access to the web as isolation continues |
| Trash Cans | $ 1,100.00 | Top up fund for ongoing supplies to maintain trash cans at bus stops |
| Communications | $ 1,000.00 | Top up fund to cover printing and postage for 2021 annual postcard |
| Events | $ 1,500.00 | Top up fund to cover food and other needs for events like National Night Out, Annual Meeting, and board meetings. |
| Stairs Lighting | $ 2,500.00 | Combine with $2500 from previous "beautification" line for lights on Fairbanks and Bradford stairs |
| Garden | $ 1,500.00 | Top up operational fund for additional improvements to the lot, anticipated to be landscaping costs |
| Beautification | $ 2,993.89 | Top up fund for ongoing projects like bulb plantings and building/placing IKEA spherical gardens in the neighborhood to increase food security |
|  | $16,193.89 |  |

* 1. **Cat Shelter Plans** for Sinclair – Loretta may have a verbal report.
  2. **P&P Wifi Project**/Grant Application(s) – Robin and Kara have been compiling resources; the group may need a moment to plan an additional meeting time in order to complete NMF application by the end of the month.
  3. **Hardware Acquisition and Distribution**? Does anyone have a verbal report or want to schedule/begin planning?
  4. **Progress on Public Spaces -** *Improving access down Belknap hill* – No updates.*Hastings Connector & Linear Park* – College closure for connector construction has begun; summer phase of construction details have been released.*Pedestrian Connections* – No updates.*Garden purchase/long term lease* – We have shared our purchase request from last spring with the City Economic Development Team and the State Land Bank. Elianna still needs to draft a message to the Kent County Treasurer for review.

**Regular Report Contents:**Crime (last four weeks) from   
[www.crimemapping.com](http://www.crimemapping.com)

Fire from [https://grandrapids.maps.arcgis.  
com/apps/View/index.html?appid=50bbc7410e5447b99edde0e32d62f4c4](https://grandrapids.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=50bbc7410e5447b99edde0e32d62f4c4) (one week)

**Public Safety:** Online COVID 19 outreach continues to dominate our current efforts.

**Development:** The group took a first look at 600 Fairview and got a heads up about our opportunity for involving the neighborhood in the development of 719 Prospect this month.

**Clancy Lofts letter:**May 26, 2020

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing this letter to relay the NOBL Board’s support for RJM/Moddermans’s Clancy Lofts development on the southeast corner of Clancy and Fairbanks. The NOBL board saw greyscale elevations (Create3, 4/15/20) and site plan (Nederveld 5/11/20) at its meeting on Monday May 11. The project was recommended to the board by the Development Committee which accepted its density and height but noted accepting the project’s size, flat roof and homeownership status specifically because of its proximity to the similarly sized and designed apartments across the street. The fact that affordable units were included in the project was also very important. Both groups appreciated the integration of extensive porches in order to create an interface between the building and street, or in other words an opportunity to create community. The board passed its motion to support with 7 in favor and one abstention.

Yours sincerely,  
Elianna Bootzin, Executive Director

**Parking lot:** 712 North, office signage, HousingNOW, the trash can at L&L, bike trail, Pitch Night.

**Organization Operations:** New tech is here and upgrades in process. CDBG spend down going well.