**Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Board Meeting**

**Monday September 14, 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. Support for Office Use in the Gateway? – Cassidy Cvanciger, State Farm
3. Approval of August minutes and financials
4. Annual Meeting Planning – Determine method, program if applicable
5. Progress on Public Spaces
6. Vote on PILOT budget
7. Miscellaneous & Public Comment
8. Adjournment

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

October 12

November 9 (Annual Meeting at Coit Creative Arts Academy or Virtual, TBD in September)

December 14 (Old board/new board discussion, method TBD)

**Other NOBL Activities you may choose to attend this month:**

**Saturday September 19** - 8 am to noon or while space lasts [Dumpster Day](https://belknaplookout.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=69fc2104990e36147b9cec3e9&id=9f81d5d0ab&e=5d66bf074f) - \*\*\*NEW LOCATION\*\*\* We will be at East Leonard Elementary School this year. Discard your large trash items. See flyer to be delivered for guidelines.   
  
**Wednesday September 26** - [Master Plan Discussion (Chapters 4-6)](https://belknaplookout.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=69fc2104990e36147b9cec3e9&id=82299ba86f&e=5d66bf074f) - 6:30 pm. Read ([online](https://belknaplookout.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=69fc2104990e36147b9cec3e9&id=13e102bb6b&e=5d66bf074f) or ask for a hard copy). Join us at [http://meet.google.com/uni-wiek-oij](https://belknaplookout.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=69fc2104990e36147b9cec3e9&id=897f3a141d&e=5d66bf074f).

**Saturday September 26** - 2 pm [Park Walk & Wave](https://belknaplookout.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=69fc2104990e36147b9cec3e9&id=24b4684ca4&e=5d66bf074f) - We may still be social distancing, but we can also go for separate walks and wave at neighbors in other parts of the park! We look forward to seeing you at Belknap/Reservoir Parks this week.

Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Board Meeting Minutes

**Monday, August 10, 2020**

**Video Conference via Zoom**

**Members Present:** Robin Benton Amy Gautraud Loretta Klimaszewski Loren Sturrus Jonathan Swets

**Members Absent:** Brian Bremer Kara Harrison Gates Dan MillerDean Rosendall

**Staff Present:** Elianna Bootzin

**Guests Present:** Abigail Bruins (FGRP)

1. After informal discussion of GRPD’s strategic plan, the meeting was called at 6:35 pm.
2. **Presentation - Minigrant Tree Plantings** - Abigail Bruins from Friends of GR Parks talked about renaming the initiative “free trees”. Is anyone interested in planting trees with them? How can we spread the word? FGRP is aimed at planting trees, activating parks and advocating for our parks in a close relationship with the City Parks Dept. We can recommend they plant trees in any public space (park, parkway). Application is online. Applicant would have to bring 5 people to help plant and care for the trees. 5-30 trees. Explored option of fruit trees for the garden – encouraged to fill out application. Loop with Dan to include Newberry volunteers. Elianna will send garden group to Abigail. Loretta expressed concern that sugar maples are not being replaced with new maples. Currently there is a need to increase the biodiversity as canopy is half maples. City is occupied with maintenance needs rather than planting. Loren recommended consider new Linear Park segment and Bradford and especially Fairbanks.
3. **Approval of June minutes and July financials** – Amy recommended spending $100 with Comprenew from general funds to refurbish chrome books. The motion passed. Amy will bring Elianna chromebooks. The minutes & financials were approved.
4. **Verbal Acceptance of Conflict of Interest if not already signed** –Loretta accepts the annual statements a-d in section VI on the last page of the [Policy Packet](https://www.belknaplookout.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Policy-Packet-1.pdf).
5. **Annual Meeting**
   1. **Review/Revise Annual Meeting Remote Option for Nov – the text was shared and intended for vote next month. There was general preference for a private vote.**
   2. **ID Board Member Recruitment Targets, Participation (Nominating Committee)** – Elianna will check in with Dean and Brian about whether they want to run. Loretta says she could as well but would like to encourage Marlin on 700 block of Sinclair. The timing for a mail in ballot would allow us to print candidates on the postcard. Elianna will send the orientation to whole board. Robin will serve on the nominating committee and Elianna will ask Dan (and Dean if he chooses not to run).
6. Advisory Items and Small Group Tasks (Recommendations and Assignments)  
   a. **Progress on Public Spaces** *Improving access down Belknap hill* – Fairbanks lights: Loren recommends asking MNBA; Spectrum Health; DGRI as well as all of the developers (Rockford, Orion, RJM, CopperRock, Artesian Group, Design firm on Ottawa etc include probono requests). Cover both projects at once ($10k needed for lights on Fairbanks stairs and $25-35,000 on design work for Newberry stairs). Elianna will update City engineering on progress as well.
7. **Garden** - Eliannaclarified the garden status as leasing now and purchasing in the spring when the lien amortizes. Loren’s contact for water is not as strong as he had hoped; it will need a pit meter since the shed is not sufficient for a spigot/meter and he will look into costs. This will be a priority for FY2021 PILOT funds. Loretta recommended giving $100 to the tenants whose water we are using as a disbursement of garden funds. Amy will get Elianna one of their names. Amy also reported that it’s been a great year for the garden thanks to consistent water volunteers, a new to us picnic table from the Parks Dept and a purchased shed that John assembled. There does seem to be a bit of a critter problem but they are working to overcome it with barriers, and Loren mentioned garlic chives and lavender as repellant plantings. Ingrid may be helpful in that regard, and NOBL could provide an outlay for plantings. Loretta has contact information for the house next door that is going to be fixing the adjacent fence; they would like a shoutout in the newsletter/on Facebook etc.
8. **Vote on PILOT budget** deferred to Sept for quorum.
9. **Additional Coronavirus Response** – Loren raised the option of doing FB Live as a way to maintain contact with neighbors without physical open hours. Robin reminded us of the group chat (CRRE committee) as well.
10. **Miscellaneous and Public Comment**: There was a shootout in the garden today. John left the meeting early to talk with the police. Robin recounted a shooting a few days ago on Clancy as well; he is under the impression there is a warrant and the suspect is being sought. The latter incident may be related to the issue a month ago. Robin reiterated the mental health issue in regards to a neighbor dog dispute and the importance of preventive measures. Loretta mentioned Highland Park as a similar need; new barriers off the overpasses have resulted in people camping directly in the park. Joe Jones has indicated city services will be looking to assist the location. Robin noted the value of peer support. Loretta also mentioned dumping at More/North – Elianna will bring up removal of overgrowth with forestry as a preventive measure. Surveillance or the indication thereof might be helpful as well. Loretta’s final update is that CSNIP is scheduled two weeks out so we are looking at formal vet services (full price) for more spay/neuter. Elianna shared City agenda items – odd to even City election years and no primary winner take all (as public hearings tomorrow followed by voting on putting them on the November ballot), contractor being selected for Linear Park portion of Hastings Connector, and public hearing on CDBG performance scheduled for Sept 15. Elianna also expects an update from the County administrator about public internet in the next week or so. Elianna should also ask to schedule a City/GVSU work group for early October.

**Meeting Information:**

1. **Support for Office Use in the Gateway?** – Cassidy Cvanciger, State Farm – Cassidy wrote earlier this month: “My office is currently located downtown by Founders at the corner of Grandville Avenue and Cherry St. I am looking into moving into a nicer side of town, away from the bar scene to better serve both my clients and my employees. I am hoping to move our office over the new development at 201 Hastings Ave NE, the Gateway at Belknap but need to have it rezoned prior to since it is currently zoned for restaurant use. …[T]he next zoning meeting [is] in October. I also wanted to see if you had any questions regarding us potentially moving into your neighborhood, or see if you had any advice or tid-bits on the neighborhood, the residents there, etc.

“My team and I are so excited to move over to the Belknap area, and we have quite a few clients who live in the neighborhood already who are excited to have us as their real “good neighbor”. I’ve been with State Farm for going on nine years, and have had my office open for two and this wasn’t a move I was planning to do for some time, but we’ve grown a bit quicker than I anticipated especially over in the Belknap area; so I am very excited to grow in a new space and such a great neighborhood. “

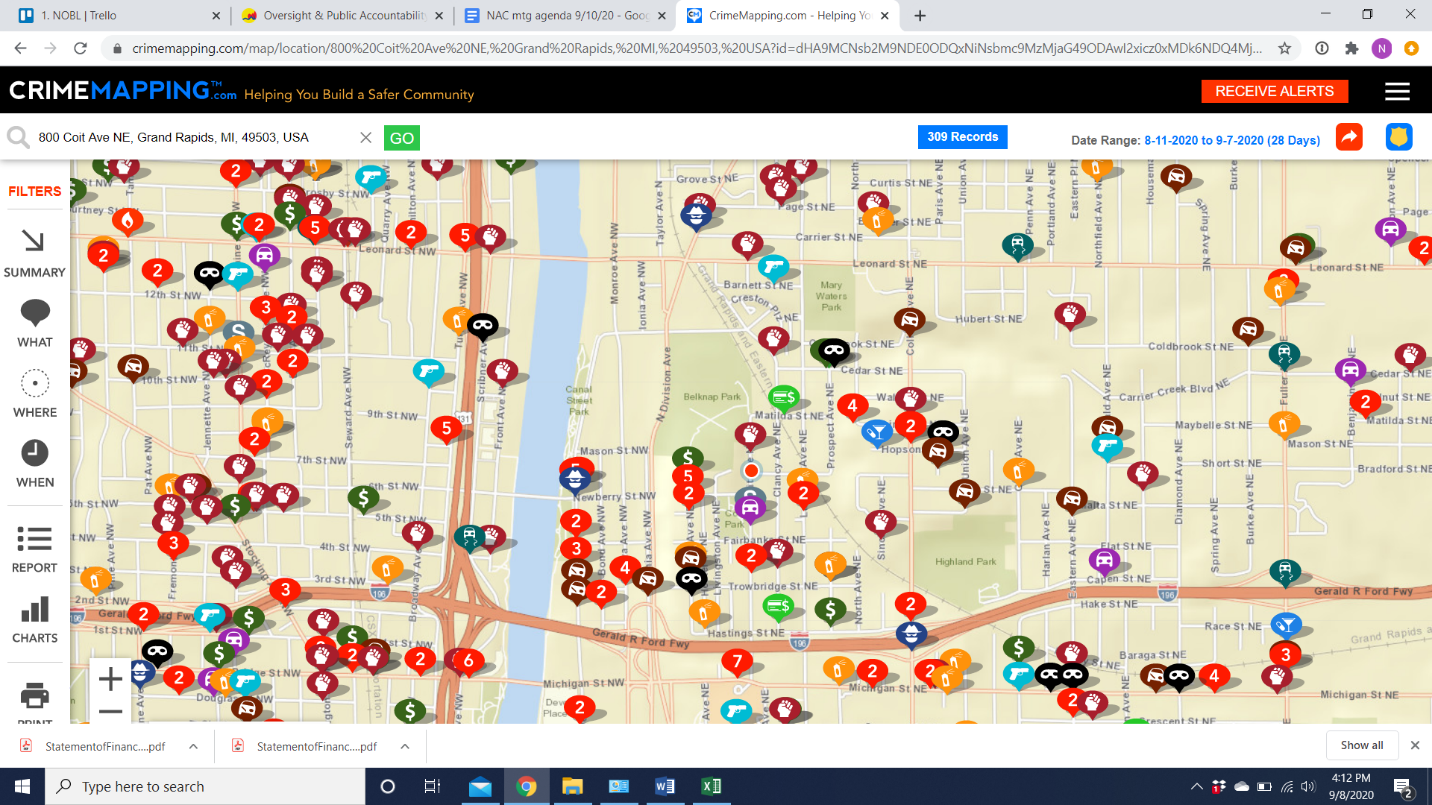
The State Farm office would fill the space where we were expecting to see a restaurant. Cassidy will reiterate her introduction and answer questions before a vote on whether to support the zone change.

1. **Approval of August minutes and financials** – Please note that if there are errors in the minutes it is important to offer corrections for them before they are adopted with those changes. Perhaps the main thing of financial note is we are finishing spending down our Census grant this month and will be continuing spending on the Master Plan as well.
2. **Annual Meeting Planning** **– Determine method, program if applicable –** Loretta and Elianna did some brainstorming and would like to propose a mail in election with follow up newsletter for participants to provide a written “program”. We have some recommendations for a specific process that are balancing two main needs: 1) a private ballot, and 2) making sure we know who participated in the election, collecting and updating contact information for our neighbors for future communications. Therefore, the postcard announcement for the annual “meeting” would ask people to request their ballot by phone or email (free with reduced time delay); they will provide their contact info and the names of all adults in the household). We can ask them to encourage their neighbors to participate too. We can also pre-emptively send a ballot to households already on file (including a way for them to indicate multiple ballots). Ballots will be sent with prepaid return postage. After the election, everyone on our mailing list gets a neighborhood update packet as well; as mentioned, this is a replacement for the meeting (and will be posted online as well), and it will announce the winners. Let’s assign articles and have drafts by the October meeting. Here are some ideas and tentative names:  
   1. Announce election winners – Dan
   2. What we’ve done
      1. Retrospective from Frank Lynn, include 196 mural – Elianna will request
      2. Retrospective from Brian Bremer – ASP &/or Coit School?
      3. Retrospective from Kristi DeKraker, include statue – Elianna will request
      4. Update on Hastings Connector –
      5. Update on cats – Loretta
      6. Update on garden – Amy
      7. Update on trash cans –
      8. Update on beautification – Jon
      9. Update on Racial Equity – Robin
   3. What we want do
      1. Update on better way down Belknap Hill (lighting, Newberry) – Dean
      2. Update on pedestrian connections (Fairview traffic calming) -
      3. Neighborhood internet - Loren
      4. 2021+ Neighborhood center on Lafayette, hike/bike on railway -
   4. Presentations
      1. Affordable housing (Coit project) – Kara
      2. 719 Prospect -
   5. Volunteer / donation recruitment –

Note on sizing – quarter page for GVSU & future projects, others up to full page (8 total)

1. **Progress on Public Spaces**
   1. *Improving access down Belknap hill* – Tom Bulten has drafted an LOI for GM which he will adapt into a 2 page max letter for the other potential funders we identified. Elianna should be able to share his content with the engineering discussion group for feedback before the board meeting.
   2. *Hastings Connector/Linear Park & Garden* – Construction continues. We will pursue another tree minigrant with FGRP as advised for timing from Dan Coy in Forestry to replace those lost in the initial Linear Park. Garden folks have 3 Newberry volunteers ready to join them; could Amy, Loretta or Jon provide an update on their application?
2. **Vote on PILOT budget -** GVSU Work Group meets again in November to refer to Comm.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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 |  |

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

**Public Safety:** GRPD indicated our understanding of the retribution involved in the Clancy shooting was accurate. Last I heard, there had been no arrests; they cannot give out the names of those suspected involved.

Similarly, no info/suspects on the found casings at the community garden or the Fairview one, where a bullet was found between window panes on a 700 block house. Some casings were found in the turnaround near the gate to Reservoir Park but it’s unknown if they were at all related.

**Development:** The group had a first look at an affordable project for the former Coit Square and scheduled an extra meeting to address The Master Plan discussion was fruitful; you’re welcome to attend the next (4th Wed).

Clancy lofts has been submitted to the Planning Dept as a zone change. Demo application for 835 Fairview has been submitted.

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

**Previous action items updates:**

* Comprenew actually could not refurbish the chromebooks for us; the check was voided.
* Elianna did request overgrowth trimming at More/North from Dan Coy in Forestry.
* No update from County Administrator re: public internet; Elianna sent another inquiry.
* GVSU team did have a meeting in August, primarily reviewing timing on various construction projects.

**Other organization updates:**

* We expect to engage with GRPD regarding the implementation of their strategic plan in October.
* Our rental unit was recertified by the City.
* We began distributing masks at Coit Church’s food pantry and will give out the rest at Dumpster Day.
* We helped Terry clean up at Highland Park and weeded at Coit/Hastings.
* Our new BSW intern has started for the academic year and chosen to focus on housing.
* Elianna has been engaging with the North End Wellness Coalition as they create their new strategic plan serving Belknap and Creston Neighborhoods.
* Elianna was able to participate in a Spectrum Health facility master plan discussion. We can expect to see information about their planned Monroe North campus mid October.
* We put out a petition to Fairview neighbors for a traffic calming study.
* Robin arranged for Elianna to participate in an Undoing Racism workshop this weekend.

**Other City Info:**

8/25 City Commission agenda included a resolution approving a Construction Agreement and accepting a Public Utilities Easement for 826 and 835 Fairview Avenue NW as well as the Monroe Fire station getting HVAC improvements.

Reminder: A public hearing on housing and community development program performance and needs will be held TOMORROW (Tuesday, September 15, 2020) at 7:00 p.m. That’s the CDBG funding NOBL receives. Citizens are invited to share their views on past performance of Grand Rapids' housing and community development programs and to identify community needs to be addressed by future programs.  To access the remote hearing, visit <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Meetings/Notices> .  In addition to the hearing, written comment may be submitted to [communitydev@grcity.us](mailto:communitydev@grcity.us) during the comment period from September 4, 2020 through September 18, 2020.