**Neighbors of Belknap Lookout Board Meeting**

**Monday August 14, 2023 at 6:30 pm**

~~Creston Plaza, Grand Rapids MI 49503~~  
700 Clancy Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503

**Agenda**

* Roll Call
  + Review five finger method
* Last Month’s Minutes
  + Action Item: Approve Minutes
* Special Item: Transition Update
* Talk about each area of the Strategic Plan
  + Action Items regarding Justice
    - Committee roles for 2024; accountability to board
  + Action Items regarding Community
    - Annual meeting outline/location
  + Action Items regarding Quality of Life
    - Support for Union Suites II Brownfield?
  + Action Items regarding Accountable
    - Q2 Financials
    - Revised Signature Authorization Form
* Committees
* Guests
* Miscellaneous
* Adjournment

Future Meeting Dates and Locations (2nd Monday at 6:30 pm):

9/11 – 700 Clancy

10/9 – 700 Clancy

11/13 – TBD

12/11 – 700 Clancy

**Meeting Details**

**Roll Call**  
Marshall Grate

Kara Harrison Gates  
Scott Huebl  
Ben Malloy  
Dan Miller

Brandon Ryan  
Ellie Walborn-Henry  
Will Witt  
Lara Dengerink Van Til  
  
**Review five finger method**

**Last Month’s Minutes**

**Neighbors of Belknap Lookout, Board Meeting on Monday, July 10, 2023, Newberry Common House, 800 Livingston, NE**

**Board Members Present:**

Lara Dengerink Van Til (Chair) Dan Miller Ben Malloy   
Brandon Ryan Will Witt

**Board Members Absent:**Scott Huebl Ellie Walborn-Henry Marshall Grate

**Staff Present:**

Elianna Bootzin

**Guests Present:**

Kara Harrison James Lewis Nick Lovelace (Union Suites)

**Meeting Minutes:**

1. Lara began the meeting at 6:35

2. Lara gave an update from the Ad Hoc Transition Committee. Discussion followed:

Elianna spoke with Gregg Hampshire from the Creston Neighborhood Association about NOBL’s need for temporary staffing. He suggested that their Neighborhood Organization (NO) could provide three different staff people to fill different tasks. Lara will contact him to discuss the situation further and report back to the Ad Hoc Committee and the Board.

Kara advised Lara to make sure that NOBL, not just a representative from the Creston NO, represents NOBL at the City Planning Commission and other public meetings.

Ben contacted the West Grand NO and learned that they have a budget of over $200,000, generated largely from “community partnerships” with local businesses. Business partners provide financial support to the NO and they promote supporting businesses at community events. They also get donations in kind for distribution at a drop-in center for homeless residents. The NO also collects dues from members on a sliding scale and businesses provide coupons to members.

Kara suggested that NOBL could work with Corewell—many of whose employees work in our neighborhood—and other local businesses to promote neighborhood improvement.

3. The Board received information about how to use Community Development Block Grant funds from temporary Contract Administrator Johanna Schulte via Zoom. The City (not the Contract Administrator) determines the allocation of funds to the NOs based on demographic census data. Since neighborhood demographics are not static, NOBL would be wise to seek additional sources of funding for its projects so that it would not be affected by a reduction in CDBG funding. The Contract Administrator is responsible for ensuring compliance with the project goals submitted by the NOs in their grant requests and makes an annual site visit. The two main types of activities that the CDBG grants support are public safety and community leadership. In response to questions about using CDBG funds to pay staff, Joanna said that there is a lot of flexibility in how the funds may be used but generally any work paid out of CDBG funds must fit under those two categories such as conducting meeting with neighbors to promote public safety or to provide leadership training. CDBG funds may not be used for fund raising purposes or for activities that are already being supported by other funding sources. They may not be used for food or liquor or promotional materials or political advocacy. Anyone we hire with public safety dollars should be connected with Julie Niemchick who works in the Police Department because she must train our staff for them and their work to qualify for CDBG public safety funding.

4. Board approved minutes of the June 12 Board meeting.

5. Elianna provided an overview of the Union Suites II project and the Community Development Committee’s scoring and recommendation based on committee chair Alan Otis’s report. Brandon noted that he has a business relationship with the property manager of the project and therefore needs to recuse himself from voting on the project. The board therefore noted that they did not have a quorum for this item, were unable to take a vote, and that there is no official position for the organization on the project.

Action Item: Elianna will relay the lack of official position to the Planning Commission. The board would also like to revisit the alignment of the board with the committee in the future, with interest in ensuring more varied geographic representation on the committee.

6. Neighbor James Lewis, who has significant land use experience, offered some corrections to our understanding of the Union Suites project. For example 60 and 90 units are quite typically for these types of developments, whereas “the projects” are 3,000-4,000 units. Developments need 50+ units to make affordable (LIHTC funded) housing.

7. Kara Harrison Gates has completed her Master’s program and is back in town full time. With no conflicts on this item the board was back in quorum and voted to bring Kara back on the board to fill the seat vacated by Cassidy.

8. Nick noted that he and Tom will remain very involved in the maintenance of the Union Suites buildings even with a property manager, sponsor events etc. He encouraged the board to stay in touch.

9. Elianna has not been able to secure indoor meeting space at Creston Plaza for next month so we may need to consider an alternate location.

* Special Item: Transition Update
* Talk about each area of the Strategic Plan
  + Action Items regarding Justice
    - Committee roles for 2024; accountability to board: Sample roles follow on the next page to be adopted for recruitment purposes. As noted last month, the board would like to ensure better coordination, for instance having a representative attend Community Development and vice versa.

**Help Improve YOUR Neighborhood! (Eligible for Stipend.)**

* **Advocacy** Subgroups: **Issue Advocacy** may be the same as Racial Equity. **Tenant Advocacy** will learn about and support renters; **Unhoused Advocacy** same for our unhoused neighbors. **Food Justice** will help explore options for a subsidiary food business.
* **Beautification** is expected to conduct outreach to potential recipients and help with simple exterior maintenance on 5 homes, and host a garden tour. Depending on 2023 results, they may also host a perennial exchange, Dumpster Day, and 3 peer education sessions.
* **Circle Planning** is expected to learn about shared decision making, teach other groups key principles and facilitate their use of relevant methods, prepare for the Annual Meeting, and propose an overall structure and process for NOBL governance and committee operations at that meeting.
* **Community Development** will continue to evaluate projects as they arise, participate in Master Planning, learn and report about housing options, advocate for trash cans at bus stops and sidewalk snow removal by the City, contact desired business for recruitment, evaluate sidewalk ramps, explore options for a subsidiary business, and host an early discussion on hike/bike trail options.
* **Events** (depending on 2023 results) may host 6 food truck events (possibly adding movie nights, carnival and/or concerts), a basketball tournament/bike repair clinic, summer celebration, neighborhood yard sale/free sale, farm to table fundraising dinner w/ community cookbook, walkathon/dog walk, new fun run(?) and blood drive.
* **Public Safety** will create and execute a work plan to reduce crime.
* **Racial Equity** will create a work plan choosing topics to be covered at their basic monthly meeting. As the quarterly cycle continues they will prepare a policy suggestion and evaluate and add partnerships.
* We are also recruiting **Board** members to provide oversight of the organization (not eligible for stipend). Request more info if interested.
  + Action Items regarding Community
    - Annual meeting outline/location:  
      In addition to board elections, primary programming recommended is the third round of engagement for the City’s Community Master Planning process. Depending on Planning’s recommendation this may be provided by the new staff or a guest speaker. We have been at Coit Creative Arts Academy for several years in a row; would the board like to seek meeting space at East Leonard Elementary to improve accessibility for neighbors on that side of the neighborhood?
  + Action Items regarding Quality of Life
    - Support for Union Suites II Brownfield?  
      Recognizing that we did not have an official position for the Planning Commission hearing and anticipating that individual neighbors will continue to share their voices at the City Commission for the Planned Redevelopment District, would the Board like to issue conditional support for the Brownfield funds? Specifically, if the City Commission approves the zoning, will NOBL then support financing so that environmental hazards can be removed, as we did for Union Suites I?
  + Action Items regarding Accountable
    - Revised Signature Authorization Form: This is authorizing Gregg Hampshire from Creston Neighborhood Association to submit reimbursement requests for us to the City for CDBG funds during the staff transition. We will need to do this one more time to authorize our new staff member once they are in place.
    - Q2 Financials: Elianna has provided the Q2 financials from our bookkeeper and the performance to budget report she compiles. Scott has already reviewed this material.
  + **Committees:** Beautification – It sounds like Chris is still planning to support Dumpster Day, which will have taken place before this meeting on Sat Aug 5 (8-noon at East Leonard).
  + Community Development – Alan and Sondra assisted with the Move & Talks and follow up questions for the City’s Community Master Planning process. This activity completed our deliverables for CDBG Neighborhood Leadership & the second round of the Master Plan. Our final performance report for FY2023, originally due Jun 30 and extended through Dec 31, has been submitted at Johanna’s recommendation though funds remain available to finish spending.
  + Events – Food truck night went alright despite the heat and we celebrated Elianna’s 6 years of service.
  + Public Safety (staff) – Elianna completed our FY2023 Public Safety grant cycle deliverables, originally due Jun 30 and extended through Dec 31, by talking to Clancy neighbors about car theft/larcenies and providing public safety programming at the July Food Truck event. Our final performance report has been submitted at Johanna’s recommendation though funds remain available to finish spending.
  + Racial Equity (staff) – No activity.
* **Guests –** FYI there has been a fire at 515 Lafayette and GVSU is working on removal.
* **Miscellaneous**
* Adjournment

**Regular Report Contents**

Public Safety: Check crime stats at [www.crimemapping.com](http://www.crimemapping.com)

View current rental certs at: <https://inspections.grcity.us/CitizenAccess/Report/ShowReport.aspx?module=Enforcement&reportID=303&reportType=LINK_REPORT_LIST>