

**Minutes**  
**Minnetonka Community Commission**  
**Meeting of April 27, 2009**

**1. Roll Call**

Commission members present: Paul Ansolabehere, David Hakensen, Betty Johnson, Michael Kelly, Paul Kobs, Paul Thyren, Barb Westmoreland, Courtney Wieden, Melissa Williamson-Herren

Commission members absent: Eduardo Jimenez, Anne VanHorne

Staff: Jacque Larson

Chair Hakensen called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

**2. Discussion Items**

**A. Meeting Minutes: March 30, 2009**

Members gave feedback on the EDA meeting they attended March 30. Westmoreland said none of it was surprising. Johnson wanted to know why people are staying and aging in place. She thinks the council should be taking that into consideration. Hakensen said he thought the numbers by themselves could be misleading and it might be helpful to dive in with some focus groups. Williamson-Herren asked why the cities that were studied were chosen.

Hakensen said he was glad to be part of the meeting and if there is more data the EDA has that would be helpful, it would be good to have that.

Kelly moved, Williamson-Herren seconded, all voted to accept the minutes of March 30, 2009, as written.

**B. Neighborhood Initiative**

- Recap of April 13 study session with city council

Hakensen asked for feedback from the April 13 study session. He thought we received good feedback from the council. Williamson-Herren asked if this then becomes the focus of our efforts, or only of a subcommittee. She also asked about the restraints on subcommittees as far as open meeting laws.

- Subcommittee report

Kobs reported on the subcommittee meeting of April 24, 2009. The subcommittee recapped the April 13 study session, then formulated a plan. Although there was an opportunity to talk to Neighborhood Watch captains April 30, the subcommittee felt it was premature and message is not fully formulated. However there are other events upcoming that

are opportunities, such as the June 27 Ice Cream Social. An article may be put in the July Minnetonka Memo as well, just prior to the Minnetonka Night for Neighbors.

Thyren said that the commission was to be a resource for neighborhood leaders. Kobs said yes, there is a wealth of knowledge out there that can be tailored for use in Minnetonka.

Hakensen said that Larson had been talking with the contact in St. Louis Park who coordinates neighborhood opportunities. Staff is to contact her to visit subcommittee meeting and talk about challenges and opportunities.

Ansolabehere said the mayor also said there is a list of people who want to do something with the city but don't know what – it would be great to know who those people are. Ansolabehere suggested having a few neighborhood groups up and running first before rolling out to the entire city. He said in reading about St. Louis Park it's almost as much about what it isn't then what it is – not political, not neighborhood watch, but a neighborhood. The cable channel that airs the council meetings – it would be interesting to have someone interview neighborhood watch captains on cable where lots of people would see it, it seems like lots of people watch it.

Ansolabehere also said if we're not getting to city at large, if you get the block captains to watch it that's all you want.

Hakensen suggested that neighborhood captains might come back and say that many of these things are already going on with success, so that we don't assume no one is doing this – could be going on and we're not aware. That should probably be parts of the subcommittee.

Kobs mentioned that he lives on a busy road, so neighborhood shrinks, so how does that play into it – useful to have someone with a neighborhood like that and how that works. Johnson mentioned the many cul-de-sacs in town, where broader neighborhoods might surround it. Any way to make people living on cul-de-sacs feel like part of the larger neighborhood.

Kobs also said one thing discussed was the use of email to interact – or not. He said if it's something as simple as six homes getting together to blast out an email if they need to, he would consider that a success. Johnson concurred, especially in Minnesota where we don't see each other much due to weather. Ansolabehere said one neighbor started tying yellow ribbons around their trees, so Ansolabehere asked why – neighbor was sick, but many people didn't know what ribbons

were for. Ansolabehere lives in Forest Hills, every year a couple of houses get together and clean up litter in area of road. These would be examples of successful neighborhood efforts.

Johnson said that communicating with neighbors is really the bottom line. Westmoreland asked could we put something on the city internet, such as information on how to set up a free Web site on Google or something else.

Williamson-Herren said it's also important that the commission be aware of what's going on and that it's not buried. It's important to publicize what's happening in neighborhoods.

Westmoreland said she knew what was happening with the yellow ribbons, and Ansolabehere said now neighbors are going over and cleaning house.

Ansolabehere said neighborhoods might overlap – church, school, Boy Scouts – people identify with many different neighborhoods. Ansolabehere stated that Mayor Schneider said they'll naturally break out.

Johnson said we're talking about resident-initiated activities, not something that is organized and funded by the city. Minneapolis neighborhoods are very specifically organized with rules and regulations and funding. That's not what we're doing here, and it's important to make that clear that it's resident initiated, not initiated by the city. Grass roots things seem to be more successful – you have a vested interest in making them work.

Ansolabehere said his kids grew up in the Harley Hopkins neighborhood and used to close off road for a block party and they'd bring a squad car with McGruff, the kids just loved it. His son who is in his 20s remembers that as a fun activity, even though he was only five or six at the time.

- Next steps

Staff will coordinating with St. Louis Park neighborhood liaison to visit next subcommittee, time and date to be determined.

### **C. Minnetonka Reads**

- Book club report

Hakensen reported on the various book clubs. Ansolabehere asked what the goal of the club was. Hakensen said it was a partnership of the Hennepin County Library and city to promote reading.

Ansolabehere asked are we aiming for a certain number of people. He

wanted to know what the number target is, and felt we should focus on having one more there than last year.

Staff reminded the group of the school visits by the author as well. Johnson asked if all the schools are reading the book as a matter of course. Westmoreland mentioned that Gatewood had been approached, but had too much going on to fit it in. She said she agreed with Williamson-Herren's thought that the idea for the book club is to target diversity. Ansolabehere suggested we may have to target that group if we're trying to promote diversity.

Johnson said the neat thing about this book is that it is a specific message about a Sudanese boy moving to Minneapolis, but it is transferable to other situations. Hakensen said that 25 showed up at the April 4 book club, and it was a very diverse group that had a very engaging discussion about what it was like to come to America.

- May 4 schedule of events

Hakensen said he and Larson are meeting with librarians Wednesday to discuss final details for Monday, May 4.

#### **D. Other Business**

Hakensen asked if anyone else wants to form subcommittees to look at any particular areas of interest. He asked Johnson if she believes there should be a history subcommittee, or if that should just be something the community commission should continue to be aware of. Johnson said it would be a good idea as a subcommittee. Johnson said that knowing your history and where you came from is a way of staying grounded in how we're different from Shorewood or Brooklyn Park or somewhere else.

Hakensen asked Williamson-Herren if she had ideas for a subcommittee. She responded she thinks there are two gaps in our representation, and while some may be taken care of by neighborhood initiative, the links should be to the faith community and the rental community. Williamson-Herren mentioned the Project 350, which encourages local spending as a way to connect with businesses, although would exclude some. If our emphasis is to continue to build relationships, she thinks the small business community is just as important as the big corporations. These are what she sees as the gaps in current efforts.

Hakensen suggested that on the business side we should look at reaching out to small businesses, rather than large companies.

Williamson-Herren summarized the 350 project, which is to choose three local businesses to spend \$50 at each month.

Ansolabehere has asked about whether or not we've ever considered partnering with TwinWest Chamber of Commerce – he talked about the Buy Eden Prairie initiative that promoted local businesses. Not only did it keep community vitalized, but big companies need things too – such as traffic, companies worked together to stagger start and stop times to minimize traffic issues.

Hakensen said we should revisit subcommittee issue at next meeting.

Hakensen updated commission on church survey, five responses received. Staff will add these surveys to the packet for next meeting. Johnson mentioned a church that started as a social service. St. Davids also started this way.

Thyren said that Treehouse served more than 300 junior and senior high school students in Minnetonka and Hopkins last year. He said he could be a huge resource asking those families what services they use, such as ICA, etc.

Ansolabehere asked if we had a mission statement. Staff will get ordinance to Ansolabehere that describes the purpose for the ordinance. He wants to know who we could contact at city to put success stories out to people. Ansolabehere suggested partnering with school districts to go on national TV to be the biggest readers – all about twist and putting it out there.

Staff will provide roster list to commission with email addresses, etc.

**D. Next meeting**

- Change to Monday, May 18, at 6:30 p.m. in the boards and commissions rooms

**3. Adjourn**

Kobs moved, Ansolabehere seconded the motion to adjourn. Meeting concluded at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacque Larson  
Community Relations Manager