

BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 21, 2022
Bankers Hill Clubhouse, 3030 Front Street

BHCG Co-Chair Pete Politzer called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present at that time: Politzer, Co-Chair John Percy, Secretary John Lamb, Aaron Reyes and Mike Meacham. (Treasurer Jeanne Rawlings arrived later.) Approximately 36 people attended the meeting.

Politzer welcomed everyone to the meeting and promptly introduced the evening's featured business/organization.

Featured Business — Museum School

Jen Hughes, parent of an 8th grader and member of the volunteer organization Friends of the Museum School, told attendees about the K-8 tuition-free public charter school at Third Avenue and Maple Street. She said the school is more than 25 years old and was formerly the charter school at the Children's Museum downtown, built in the basement. Hughes said the move to Bankers Hill has expanded opportunities for hands-on-learning field trips, particularly in Balboa Park.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Michael Meacham addressed the new stop sign at Fifth and Redwood, thanking all who supported the effort.

John Hartley talked about "Clean Election" efforts in San Diego.

Government Representatives

Kohta Zaiser, director of community engagement for Mayor Todd Gloria, did not attend but sent a message outlining recent municipal events.

Peter Raymond, a local parking district committee member, brought attendees up to date on various improvements and districts plans.

San Diego American Indian Health Center Update

Kevin LaChapelle, CEO for the health center, updated the audience on expansion plans for the First Avenue healthcare facility. He was joined by representatives from BSD Builders, who showed conceptual designs for a first-phase 5 1/2-story medical facility and a second-phase 6-story affordable residential building for seniors just to the south. All of the services the center now provides will be expanded for a growing service population, he explained. About a third of the center's clients are Native American, LaChapelle said. Attendees inquired about parking, building heights and setbacks. LaChapelle said the plan is for three levels of parking underneath the healthcare center. An open-air patio atop the medical center could be used for community events, the CEO said.

San Diego City Councilman Stephen Whitburn

Whitburn thanked the BHCG for the invitation and opportunity to interact with community members in person. He also thanked the BHCG for its service to Bankers Hill over the years. He and staffers Emily Bonner and Ryan Darsey made a PowerPoint presentation answering most questions submitted by the BHCG prior to the meeting.

The councilman said construction should finally begin on Olive Street Park in January and be substantially completed by year's end. The 0.74-acre pocket park, Whitburn said, will include

open-turf, children's-play, adult-fitness and seating areas, signage, security-lighted walkways and improved sidewalks, an AIDS memorial, landscaping and irrigation system, Maple Canyon overlook deck and storm-drain system improvements.

Whitburn said the Maple Canyon storm-drain project is now in the hands of Rick Engineering "for feasibility analysis and design of Maple Canyon storm drain system improvements."

He also said he was open to a proposal to close the Cabrillo Bridge to vehicular traffic on Sundays. The Fire Department would have to approve such a plan, he noted. He also said he would want to know how such a closure would affect traffic on the west side of Balboa Park.

Whitburn said he is personally very focused on the city's unsheltered homeless crisis. He said keeping the new public restrooms at Sixth and Upas open and functioning has been a "real challenge" despite the decision to close the bathrooms at night. The restrooms continue to be vandalized and slept in, he acknowledged. Gates are being considered by the city to help with the vandalism.

He said he is focused on providing more shelter beds, safe camping, and enforcement. Hundreds of beds have been added, but it's not enough, he said. Whitburn said he's hopeful the redevelopment of the civic core downtown will provide affordable-housing opportunities, "but that will take a few years." In the meantime, he said he's strongly pushing for safe camp sites, possibly in city parking lots. He said the camp sites would provide security, services, bathrooms and meals.

Whitburn was asked if federal grant funding already received for an approved Maple Canyon stormwater plan was used for the 101 Ash Street debacle. Whitburn said no. He estimated the Rick Engineering work will take nine to 12 months.

Whitburn also took questions about the city's Complete Communities program, the SDG&E franchise agreement, 301 Spruce, and future plans for mental-health facilities.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, Secretary.