

## **BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, January 21, 2019  
Bankers Hill Club, 3030 Front St.

BHCG Vice Chair Nancy Moors called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present: Amie Hayes, Nancy Moors, Ann Garwood, Jeanne Rawlings, Char Lou Benedict, John Lamb, Susanne Carvalho, John Percy, Ben Baltic, Jim Frost and Bruce Dammann. There were 65 people in attendance.

### **Announcements**

Board member John Percy called for volunteers to help serve lunch at the Bankers Hill Clubhouse in February and March. He said the group is also seeking nominations for Community Improvement Awards.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Jeanne Rawlings announced the group has \$4,110.66 in the bank. She asked attendees to offer their suggestions how that money should be spent in the community.

### **Non-Agenda Public Comment**

Stephen Whitburn announced that he is running for the District 3 City Council seat in 2020. He called D3, where he's lived for 20 years, "the best district in the city."

### **Government Updates**

No government representatives attended.

### **Featured Event**

The annual BHCG Roundtable discussions then commenced. Topics represented at each table were: Quality of Life, Maple Canyon, Balboa Park/West Mesa, Bankers Hill 150 (opposing 20-story 6<sup>th</sup> & Olive project), Bankers Hill History and the Bankers Hill Neighborhood Parking Committee, the community arm of the Uptown Community Parking District.

#### **Balboa Park/West Mesa table – Bruce Dammann, discussion leader**

-- Bruce Dammann brought a petition requesting the city adopt a Sunlight Ordinance similar to one that has been on the books in the city of San Francisco since 1984. The ordinance would require developers of buildings 40 feet and higher to conduct shadow analyses of their proposed projects to determine the shading effect on the surrounding neighborhood. A total of 28 attendees signed the petition.

-- Homelessness and trash accumulation continue to be issues on the west side of Balboa Park. Dammann noted that the city's Park and Recreation Department is doing a good job, but more could be done.

-- A resident at Sixth Avenue and Laurel Street commented on the number of events that take place on the West Mesa and along Sixth, such as "races and parties." Wondered if the city is compensated appropriately for those events. Spoke positively of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Noted that the area is "in the center of everything."

-- One resident wondered, much like New York's Central Park, whether it would be wise to close the park at least for a few hours at night to allow law enforcement and city crews to "catch up" with various issues within the park, including homeless encampments and trash accumulation. Others questioned if that would be practical or even doable.

-- Athletic activity on the West Mesa (originally designed as the tranquil portion of the park) was discussed. Some attendees liked the increased active use of the area (as a deterrent, for example, to homeless encampments), while others noted that some users (Frisbee football

matches, as an example) have caused damage to the grassy areas that then have to be cordoned off for extensive period of time to re-grow the grass. One suggestion was to move the active areas around the West Mesa so no single area becomes overused.

- Homeless sleeping in the park again mentioned. Happy Valley mentioned as a particularly troublesome area. Some people wondered if there's a phone number to call re homeless issues.
- One purchaser of a new 41 West condo said she was concerned about shadows becoming an issue on the West Mesa. She was concerned the city is not doing enough to "protect the quality of the park."
- A complaint about the condition of West Mesa, described as "worn down" and "not kept up." Concern that increased underbrush only creates more hiding spots for the homeless.
- Several attendees noted feeling intimidated by walking in some portions of West Mesa, especially Redwood Circle, where "groups of homeless" congregate. One resident suggested that the homeless being swept out of the downtown area are gravitating more to the park. Some noted the ease of purchasing drugs, particularly methamphetamine, in the park at night.
- A new resident of the X90 condos at Fifth and Hawthorn said he "loves" Bankers Hill but "almost regrets" moving from Mission Valley because of the increased homeless issues near his home. One resident wondered if the recent shuttering of the work-space business at 6<sup>th</sup> and Fir – a former church that served the homeless – might be contributing to the problem.
- A resident reported that trees donated by SDG&E will be planted in Happy Valley on Feb. 9.
- A request for more stoplights along Sixth Avenue was suggested. Peter Raymond from the Parking District said a new flashing-light pedestrian crossing has been requested for Sixth and Nutmeg, but he offered no estimate on when it might be installed.
- The West Mesa bathrooms were discussed. Most attendees said the current bathrooms are, as one put it, "too creepy" to use. Noting that the current facilities are not ADA compliant, Dammann talked about the proposed new bathrooms for West Mesa. He said the one proposed near the Nutmeg intersection is in a holding pattern since the bids came in over-budget. The original estimate of \$900,000, he said, is now more like \$1.5 million to \$1.9 million. Dammann said the designs – 13 individual stalls with locking doors, including two ADA-compliant – are disappointing and show a lack of concern with "the historicity of the park." He said the proposals have been returned to the city's Public Works Department for further review.
- One resident suggested there should be no parking in the park from 2 to 4 a.m. Another suggested a time limit for parking along Sixth Avenue, where parking is currently unlimited.
- Ben Baltic said he would like to see the West Mesa more "activated" with additional playgrounds and a farmers market on the west side of Balboa Drive in order to put more money in the city coffers. He supports athletic activity on the West Mesa. Urged efforts to slow down traffic on Sixth Avenue. He wondered if people actually use the West Mesa bathrooms and who is responsible for their maintenance and upkeep. Are they locked at night?
- Peter Raymond suggested that the affordable housing coming to the neighborhood should be "for people with jobs." Blamed the current mayor for the housing issues. Suggested closing Sixth Avenue from Upas to Laurel for Sunday art shows or other activities. Suggested more lighting at the Chess Club and Happy Valley. Said picnic tables are unavailable because of the homeless.
- Jim Frost endorsed the idea of closing the park for some portion of the night so "police can do things."
- One resident wondered if the green tram that runs through the central mesa east to Park Boulevard could be extended to the West Mesa.
- One resident said she no longer takes her small dog to Nate's Park because other dogs are aggressive. Lamented how the park is now all dirt, leaving dogs either muddy or dusty with no place to wash off. Said the grass was allowed to die because of the drought. Wondered if artificial turf might be considered. Also noted the limited seating at the park. Suggested that part of the park could be secured for small dogs, similar to Grape Street Park in South Park. She also talked about the notion of "tree stewards," i.e., people who agree to water/care for a particular tree.
- Much praise given to the medicine tree area.
- One resident suggested creating a separate path east of the Sixth Avenue sidewalk that would be dedicated to bikes and scooters. He said he's experienced several near-misses while walking there.

- One resident noted that he's observed city maintenance trucks cutting across the grass to go get lunch in the neighborhood.
- One resident wondered how often police or park rangers patrol the West Mesa. Also suggested closing the park from 2 to 4 a.m.

Quality of Life table – Ann Garwood, discussion leader

- San Diego Police Department's non-emergency number is not answered soon enough, and responses are slow.
- Discussion of bringing Neighborhood Watch to the community. Block captains would be required.
- White lines need to be painted.
- The homeless problem continues.
- Campers parked on the streets make the community feel like a KOA (Kampgrounds of America) campground.
- Closing Balboa Park at night was suggested.
- Scooters should be regulated by a city ordinance, although it's also a national issue.
- Better traffic enforcement is needed. Vehicles constantly running stop signs. Particularly bad at Fifth and Nutmeg.
- A city tax on bikes and scooters was suggested to generate money for the city. An attendee said scooters are a public health problem and an ADA issue.
- Permits should be required for bikes.
- Lack of street cleaning which is made worse when trucks can't get to the curbs to clean because of hindrances, most notably parked cars.
- The public bathrooms in Balboa Park are not clean, and people loiter there.
- One attendee wanted to know if the drinking fountains in Balboa Park are connected to lead pipes.
- No trashcans from Brookes Avenue to Laurel Street.
- Dog park needed.
- Developer impact fees.
- Developers, contractors are wrecking roads. How can they be held responsible?
- Police walking a beat in Bankers Hill.
- Downtown Partnership (?)
- 6<sup>th</sup> and Upas corner (?)

Bankers Hill 150 table – Donna Shanske, discussion leader

- Building heights equal shadows.
- Building height is a safety concern for general-aviation airplanes arriving at San Diego International Airport.
- Toronto requires a ratio of affordable housing to luxury high-end housing. And it's enforced.

Friends of Maple Canyon table – Roy McMakin/Tershia d'Elgin, discussion leaders

- Ben Baltic said he supports native plants in the canyon, indifferent to the eucalyptus trees and believes no bikes should be allowed in the canyon. Also noted the homeless issue in the canyon. No pruning occurring to discourage the homeless. More legal access for pedestrians should be created.
- One attendee said more erosion in the canyon is occurring.
- A letter should be sent asking for separate federal funding. (State funding has already been received.)
- The group was praised for having a comprehensive plan to address storm-water runoff and erosion.
- An email should be drafted to send to the mayor's office.

Bankers Hill History table – Amie Hayes, discussion leader

- Attendees expressed interest and learned about the process of historical designation, potential historical districts in Bankers Hill, and the 45-year historic review process.

Bankers Hill Neighborhood Parking Committee table – Doug Scott, discussion leader

- Upgraded crosswalk with flashing lights at Second Avenue and Laurel Street urged.
- Four-way stop at Third Avenue and Nutmeg Street requested. Another attendee agreed, saying the intersection will be more dangerous if head-in parking adopted because Third Avenue is not wide enough.
- Restriction on long-bed trucks parking in angled and head-in parking spaces.
- Scooters should be regulated and banned from operating on sidewalks. Should not be parking on sidewalks. They block people and things and are a hazard.
- Make Sixth Avenue one lane each way with a turn lane from Laurel north to Upas.
- More dedicated bike parking.
- \$1-a-day charge for every rental scooter, bike, e-bike allowed on city streets. Money should be split between the city and parking districts to be used for more bike and scooter infrastructure.
- Turn some streets into car-free “multi-modal innovation zones.”
- Re-close Cabrillo Bridge.
- Rumble strips should be installed on Fourth Avenue. Bumps preferred.
- Waste receptacles requested along Fifth Avenue between Brookes Ave. and Laurel St.
- Roundabouts (a la Bird Rock). Fourth and Quince mentioned.
- Angled parking on Third Avenue between Grape and Laurel streets.

Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, interim Secretary.