

BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Monday, October 18, 2021

Via Zoom videoconference

BHCG Chair Nancy Moors called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present virtually: Chair Moors, Vice Chair Becky Veen, Secretary John Lamb, Ann Garwood, Ben Baltic, Char Lou Benedict, Qamar Bradford, and Peter Raymond. Approximately 46 people participated in the virtual meeting.

Moors welcomed everyone to the meeting, including state Assemblymember Chris Ward and Marco Li Mandri, who was calling in from the East Coast.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Baltic told attendees that trees in the neighborhood will soon be removed because they are in violation of FAA flight path rules. He said a dozen trees, many of them palm trees, are targeted for removal. Replacement trees would be planted in the spring. He said the trees would be missed and wondered if the City Council representative knew any details. Emily Bonner, from Councilmember Stephen Whitburn's office, said that would be an Airport Authority issue, adding she first heard about the removals "today." It was suggested that the city improve its noticing procedures for future projects.

Dennis Seisun urged attendees to apply for several vacancies on the Uptown Planners board. Prospective candidates must attend a minimum of two monthly meetings to qualify, he noted.

General Announcements

Chair Moors noted that the next Steering Committee meeting is this Thursday, October 21. Everyone is welcome. Moors provided a preview of future regular meetings, including a visit by "homeless czar" Hafsa Kaka to discuss her critical role as director of the city's Homeless Strategies and Solutions Department and January's roundtable-meeting plans.

Treasurer's Report

Moors reported that as of August 31, there was \$6,396 in the bank, including \$2,500 in donations for the Balboa Park Adopt-A-Plot project.

Adopt-A-Plot Update

Moors said volunteers are needed to help with planting on October 29 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Volunteers will need to sign a liability waiver and are encouraged to bring their own shovels.

Project Review Committee

Baltic talked about the committee's efforts to have city staff explain the development-approval process as it relates to the Uptown Community Plan in the new era of Complete Communities.

San Diego Police Department Liaison Update

Veen discussed the September meeting of the SDPD Captain's Advisory Board, where topics included park restroom closure practices (some are locked from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., she noted) and homeless issues.

Benedict said there had been a fire last week near the Haunted Trail in Balboa Park. Veen said SDPD has said it will try to increase patrols in the area, but no details have been provided.

Other comments referenced transient problems near the CVS and other locations at the southern end of Bankers Hill. Veen said those spots are on the police radar. In response to a question,

Veen said she would ask police if the public restrooms are video monitored. At Moor's request, Bonner agreed to ask about that. Another attendee complained about the bike lanes on 4th and 5th avenues, arguing they're unsafe.

Neighborhood Safety Committee

Ann Kilrain provided an update on pilot Neighborhood Watch efforts in Bankers Hill.

Uptown Planners Update

Lu Rehling, an Uptown Planners board member, noted that ministerial approvals for development projects in the area are on the rise. She said the board is now "very divided."

Assemblyman Chris Ward

Moors introduced Assemblymember Ward, who talked about his primary areas of focus: climate adaptation and homelessness. Ward said he was able to get several bills to the governor's desk and experienced no vetoes. He mentioned AB223, which he authored to help prevent the poaching of rare plant species. He talked about fighting discrimination in housing with efforts to stop the so-called "poor-door effect," where a building is effectively segregated with a separate entrance for affordable-housing residents. Ward also discussed community-college legislation and plans to provide funding for 42,000 housing units over a two-year period.

Ward fielded questions about neighborhood tree-removal issues (he stressed the importance of maintaining and expanding the city's tree canopy to combat climate change) and active-transportation funding. Asked whether he thought affordable-housing units should be built within market-rate buildings rather than in separate structures, Ward agreed.

Bankers Hill Community Benefit District

Moors said more than 1,000 survey questionnaires were sent out to property owners in Bankers Hill within an area roughly bounded by Fourth and Fifth avenues and Interstate 5 and Brookes Avenue in order to gauge interest in forming a Community Benefit District in Bankers Hill. Moors introduced Marco Li Mandri, who forms and manages similar Business Improvement Districts nationwide as president of New City America, including most notably in Little Italy and most recently in Chula Vista's popular Third Avenue Village.

Li Mandri boasted that he'd just formed his company's 90th district. He also praised Bankers Hill, calling it "outstanding." For the surveys, Li Mandri said 739 property owners of 1,337 parcels were contacted, yielding 244 responses, roughly one-third of those mailed out. The top concern expressed in the surveys so far, he said, is homelessness. Improved pedestrian street lighting was another, as was just general street maintenance. He said respondents are also noting how "relatively safe" the neighborhood is. He said he hopes to have a better idea whether the Community Benefit District concept "has legs" by Thanksgiving.

Concerns expressed included whether such a district would just allow the city in essence off the hook to provide basic neighborhood services and upkeep. It was also noted that early supporters of the district idea are predominantly residential developers with interests in Bankers Hill. Others, notably Doug Manchester, owner of the 5th Avenue Financial building at 5th and Laurel, have expressed strong opposition.

Government Representatives

Emily Bonner, community representative for Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, provided an update on promised short-term vacation rental regulations. Proposed street-vendor rules also have been docketed at City Council on Dec. 14, she said.

Abbey Reuter, from county Supervisor Nathan Fletcher's office, said the county board would be discussing ghost guns and voting centers this week. She also noted there's still time to apply for a small-business grant.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, Secretary.