

BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 15, 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, John Percy, Ben Baltic, Ann Garwood, Char Lou Benedict, Qamar Bradford, Bruce Dammann and Peter Raymond. Approximately 53 people participated in the virtual meeting.

Moors welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Steering Committee members. She reported \$4,165 in the treasury, and a total of \$2,129 spent on recent Adopt-A-Plot plant expenses.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Adopt-A-Plot Update

Percy announced that 15 volunteers gathered a couple weeks ago to help plant 167 plants along the west and north sides of Balboa Park's Redwood Bridge Club. City received props as well for providing the mulch and fixing the irrigation system. Percy said if you see a weed, feel free to pull it out.

Percy said another five or six volunteers are needed to help serve lunch Nov. 21 at the Bankers Hill Clubhouse.

Project Review Committee

Percy provided an update on committee activities and its continued efforts to meet with city staff to gain understanding how the Uptown Community Plan is being implemented since adoption of the city's Complete Communities program. Percy said the committee is also pushing for a more aesthetic roundabout than proposed at 6th Avenue and Juniper.

Uptown Parking District Update

Moors noted that 46 trash receptacles are being installed along 4th and 5th avenues from Elm to Upas in Bankers Hill. The bins will be cleaned three times a week, Moors said. Unknown when installation will be completed. The district and Bankers Hill parking subcommittee deserve the thanks of the BHCG, Moors said.

San Diego Police Department Liaison Update

Veen said she continues to discuss problematic areas with Community Relations Officer Larry Turner. She encouraged attendees to file Get It Done reports to steer more attention to the area.

Neighborhood Safety Committee

Ann Kilrain provided an update on pilot Neighborhood Watch efforts in Bankers Hill. She said more people are showing interest in establishing Neighborhood Watch blocks. She stressed that it only takes a few neighbors to start a watch program. Many resources are available, she added. Moors said it's exciting to see some neighborhoods moving forward.

Uptown Planners Update

Mary McKenzie, an Uptown Planner member, brought attendees up to speed on the work of the neighborhood advisory planning board, including accessory dwelling units. Lu Rehling, another Uptown Planner, acknowledged there is no consensus currently on the board. McKenzie urged

Bankers Hill to find candidates for future elections. Presently, no one on Uptown Planners lives in Bankers Hill.

Government Representatives

Kohta Zaiser, representing Mayor Todd Gloria, discussed plans for a Climate Action Plan update known as Blueprint SD, a new approach to comprehensive citywide planning, and formation of a new Military, Veteran and Families Advisory Council that will meet quarterly. Zaiser also announced a “Mayor for a Day” essay contest for elementary- and middle-school students. Zaiser was asked to help Bankers Hill residents obtain trash bins for organic materials. He said he would look into it, unsure about the process for setting that up.

Emily Bonner, Councilmember Stephen Whitburn’s representative, said she had “not much” to report, and urged attendees to use the city’s Get It Done app to report problems.

Jake Estrada, representing state Assemblymember Chris Ward, said Ward enjoyed his visit with BHCG last month.

Abbey Reuter, from county Supervisor Nathan Fletcher’s office, announced there would be a Board of Supervisors meeting the following day. She said Fletcher is working on changes “to instill civility in public meetings.”

Stopher Vallejo, representing state Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins, said the Legislature is on recess.

Hafsa Kaka Presentation

Moors introduced Hafsa Kaka, the city’s recently hired Director of Homeless Strategies and Solutions. Just three months into the job, Kaka talked about her previous experience in similar roles in other cities, starting in Los Angeles’ Skid Row. She said it may seem simple, the idea of dealing with homelessness. But she said there are many complexities to deal with, most importantly quality of life for everyone. She said efforts to “build capacity” to house the unhoused won’t happen in a day. “It takes a village,” she said.

She said there are no COVID outbreaks at the shelters at the moment.

Regarding Bankers Hill, Kaka acknowledged that most efforts are focused downtown. She said the city is bolstering its Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) responses in Balboa Park in hopes of getting individuals the care they need.

Moors asked what else can be done about problem areas like the 7-Eleven at Fifth and Spruce or the CVS on Fourth or City Liquor at Fifth and Elm. Seeking solutions from police or council offices has proven frustrating, she said. Kaka said it’s a great question, and the challenge is getting individuals to accept services. She said people need to have “realistic expectations,” adding, “This is a human issue....We have to reach people where they’re at.”

Kaka fielded questions about affordable housing, limited housing for homeless youth, whether the homeless can be forced into shelter if there are enough beds available (Kaka said there are 1,200 shelter beds, “but we need more.”) She said the occupancy rate is 93 percent. “Now we need more focused shelter beds,” she said. One size does not fit all, she added. The homeless also need access to public restrooms and hand-washing stations.

San Diego American Indian Health Center Expansion Plans

Rawlings introduced Kevin La Chapelle, CEO of the San Diego American Indian Health Center at First Avenue and Maple Street, who provided a brief overview of the center’s proposed expansion plans, most notably a new urgent-care facility on property just to the north.

The center has been providing medical, dental and behavioral care in the San Diego area since 1979. About a third of the center's patients are Native American, while the remainder are members of underserved populations, La Chapelle explained. The federally qualified center is funded through Indian Health Services and the Health Resources and Services Administration, he added. La Chapelle said he's been with the center since 2019, just prior to the arrival of the COVID pandemic.

The CEO said the center is undergoing an effort to "reinvent the whole operation," as the center's clientele continues to grow. During COVID, the center took the opportunity to refresh the facility, including anti-microbial interior paint throughout, new healthcare-grade vinyl flooring, exterior painting and upgrades and improved lighting, he said.

The center had leased the building at 2660 First Ave. to Greenhaus until two months ago. Now, La Chapelle said the plan is to demolish the building and replace it with a "three-story over one-story" structure. The center's square footage would increase from the current 12,927 square feet to 30,000, nearly tripling medical exam rooms including a new urgent-care facility, and doubling dental and behavioral-health rooms, he said.

La Chapelle said he envisions a facility closely tied to the community, with vans available, for example, to help vaccinate the homeless and provide outreach to local businesses to offer testing. "We really want to be good neighbors," he said, noting the buildings once served as a motel and a house.

The plans, he added, are in the early stages. The center will move forward with drawing in the first of the year, he said. Comments included suggestions to create a comprehensive plan for the entire campus for most effective use of the property, including how it will interact with local traffic patterns.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, Secretary.