

BANKERS HILL COMMUNITY GROUP MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Monday, October 21, 2019 Bankers Hill Clubhouse, 3030 Front St.

BHCG Steering Committee member Ben Baltic called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. The following Steering Committee members were present: Chair Amie Hayes, Secretary John Lamb, Baltic, John Percy, Becky Veen and Peter Raymond. There were approximately 72 people in attendance.

Baltic welcomed attendees to what he called "Democracy Night," in that candidates for the San Diego City Council District 3 seat were there to take questions, and attendees would also be voting for members of the neighborhood Parking District board. He said while many have heard of Uptown Planners, the local advisory community planning group, the lesser-known Parking District also is an important voice specifically for Bankers Hill. Two board seats are open in this election, he said, and he encouraged the public to attend its regular meetings. The key difference between Uptown Planners and the Parking District, Baltic noted, is the Parking District has money — generated from neighborhood parking-meter revenue — to spend on community improvements.

Bankers Hill Neighborhood Parking Committee Elections

Baltic introduced Gerrie Trussell, executive director of the Uptown Community Parking District, who discussed the election rules and procedures. She said two of the five seats on the Bankers Hill Neighborhood Parking Committee are open for election, with the current seat occupants running for re-election. Doug Scott and Tom Fox offered comments on why they wanted to continue serving. Fox said work over the past three years has Bankers Hill "so close" to "turning dirt" on major improvements to Fourth and Fifth avenues, including curb cuts, landscaping and protected bike lanes. He said he wants to continue that work. Scott concurred, adding, "We are trying to produce a state-of-the-art project that will be a model for the rest of San Diego to change our community into a multi-modal community." He noted plans for upgraded crosswalks and improved lighting while also adding 40 parking spaces by reconfiguring side-street parking. In addition, the Walk the Walk plan of improved east/west pedestrian routes from First Avenue to Balboa Park will be implemented "so we can all visit the park without getting run down." He said the hope is to start construction by January.

Trussell asked attendees if there were any additional nominees, and there was none. She then asked attendees to vote by 7:30 p.m. Trussell also added that approvals and funding have been secured for new crosswalks at Fourth and Palm, Fifth and Palm, and Sixth and Nutmeg. Those should be going in soon, she said. She also provided plans for the new bike lanes for audience members to peruse. She provided the BHCG with another set of plans for its records.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

No comments were made.

Government Representatives

Chevelle Tate, speaking for state Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins, introduced herself as the new area representative. She said her specialties are affordable housing, education, 2020 Census issues and general constituent matters. She said she may not make every BHCG meeting but promised to be accessible.

Randy Wilde, representing state Assemblymember Todd Gloria, also introduced himself as the community's new rep. He said he's a resident of University Heights and sits on the North Park Planning Committee, adding he appreciates the community volunteerism and activism

demonstrated by groups like BHCG. He said the latest legislative session just ended. Wilde said now is the time to suggest legislative ideas and priorities for the coming year.

San Diego City Council District 3 Candidates Forum

Jeanne Brown of the non-partisan League of Women Voters, San Diego chapter, went over the rules for the forum and introduced the attending candidates: Chris Olsen, Toni Duran, Stephen Whitburn and Adrian Kwiatkowski. Brown said a lot of questions had already been turned in. "That's amazing," she said. The questions were submitted to LWV question screeners who grouped queries into categories to make sure important topics for the community were covered.

Each candidate provided a two-minute opening statement. Olsen thanked the LWV and BHCG for holding the forum and those who came out for it. "It's great to have people engaged so early in this process," he said. Olsen said he's running because he's a problem solver and a life-long public servant. He said he's worked in local government for 15 years, including the last six years in the city's Office of Independent Budget Analyst, which reviews "everything the City Council considers that would have a financial or policy impact." He also teaches budget finance at San Diego State University's School of Public Affairs. He said his knowledge of city operations is what he wants to bring to the City Council, because the city is facing some major challenges — housing, homelessness and climate action. He said his solutions would be data driven in hopes of making real progress rather than just offering platitudes. He said the city's homelessness strategy is reactive rather than proactive and focuses on police enforcement rather than mental-health-based outreach, "and it's cost-ineffective." Police overtime just this year was \$8 million, he said, funds that could have gone towards assistance.

Duran noted that she has been coming to BHCG meetings for the last six years as a representative for state Sen. Toni Atkins. "I love District 3," she said. Housing and homelessness, she said, are "big deals" in the community and neighboring Balboa Park. Housing affordability is a problem throughout District 3, something she said she has personally experienced. Homelessness now affects seniors, young folks, veterans and students, she said.

Whitburn thanked the BHCG for hosting the forum and LWV for moderating. He said we are all here because "we love our neighborhood." Beautiful park, beautiful views of the bay, downtown skyline, historic homes. "It's a wonderful place," he said. But there are problems yet to be solved, he added. Homelessness and housing prices have increased. Hard-working people finding it hard to make ends meet. Infrastructure in the city needs attention. "I want a city that's going to rise to these challenges of our time, and that's going to take leadership," he said. Active in the community for many years with San Diego Democrats for Equality, ACLU local chapter, North Park Planning Committee. Lived in community for 19 years. Endorsed by state Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez, former state Sen. Dede Alpert, and former city councilmembers Donna Frye and John Hartley.

Kwiatkowski thanked the BHCG and LWV for putting on the forum. He said this is this race's first community forum. He said he's a homegrown San Diegan, grew up in Rancho Peñasquitos and lived in Hillcrest for nine years. Now lives in Mission Hills with his partner. He said he won't make promises about what he'll do in office. "I'll tell you what I've done," he said, adding he's worked on "controversial issues" for the last 20 years in the city. He said he helped get the clean-needle-exchange program going in San Diego 20 years ago. He said he also worked on pushing the strong-mayor form of government now employed in San Diego. Also worked to protect the seals in La Jolla. "I know how City Hall works. I know how City Hall does not work," he said. Also does advocacy for land-use decisions, including in Bankers Hill. Working on a property on Fourth Avenue near Laurel for three years. Takes too long to build things in San Diego, he said.

Question #1: Community has often seen their District 3 councilmember more focused on future elected offices than the needs of this community. Can you convince us that you won't do that?

Duran said she understands the sentiment about career politicians. "To be honest with you, I never in my life saw myself as someone who is actually going to run for public office," she said.

But she said she's a public servant and volunteers as much as possible in the community, including cleanups and serving food to seniors. "That is where my heart is," she said, adding she doesn't think of the council seat as a stepping stone to another office. "This is where I want to be," she said.

Whitburn called it a "well-founded concern." He said some in elective office "try to tread waters lightly so that they won't offend too many people so that they have the opportunity to run for the next office." He called himself "the old guy in the race" — he said he's 55. "I don't have too many elective offices that I can run for here," he said. Whitburn ran for the same seat in 2008 and lost in a runoff. "This is what I want to do," he said. "I want to serve our community." He said he wants to improve the quality of life here and then "go out and do something else."

Kwiatkowski said San Diego is in his heart. Wants to work on the city's big challenging issues. Said he wants "to make the city hum." People always hear that the city can't deliver services. He said he doesn't believe that but wants to work on city's efficiencies. That work will take eight years, he said.

Olsen said it's a valid position. He said the next councilmember has to "set their ego aside" and find the solutions that will help the city progress on housing the homeless and protecting the climate for future generations. He also hopes for two four-year terms.

Question #2: What are you going to do to help the City of San Diego cool down as high-density building will increase the temperature of San Diego?

Whitburn said one of the challenges in an urban environment today is the amount of pavement associated with development, which absorbs heat and raises temperatures. One way to combat that, he said, is to plant more trees. That's part of the city's Climate Action Plan, he said, to help cool streetscapes, provide shade and clear the air. The city also needs more parks, too, he said.

Kwiatkowski said "it's pretty simple" to plant more trees and provide more greenery in the city as part of the Climate Action Plan. Unfortunately, the city, he said, isn't very good at implementing the plan. He proposes a Climate Change Department in the city, "because this is a real crisis." This would assure that climate change is part of the budget discussion every year. He would also propose a Climate Change Commission. Real action and real results are required to move the plan forward.

Olsen agreed that the city needs more trees and to do a better job of preserving and expanding its parkland. He said the city should also explore technological answers, including cool roofs and pavement treatments. On a larger scale, he said, the planet is heating up. And by bringing people closer to their jobs in higher-density developments, that too is part of the solution.

Duran also supported more trees, just as long as they don't grow into residents' plumbing. And cool pavement, which other cities have done. She said the city is looking into that. City must also address climate change, she said. "We are heating up."

Question #3: What public transportation do you use, and how will you get to work and to debates using public transit?

Kwiatkowski said he lives near the Washington Street trolley station and the No. 10 bus. He said he tries to incorporate public-transit use as much as he can in his personal life. "But let's not kid ourselves," he said. "We don't have a fantastic public-transit system in San Diego." He said a recent *Union-Tribune* story noted that transit ridership in the country is going down. "Why? Everyone wants personalized service." He said he would focus on making transit work in the urban core.

Olsen said he tries not to use a vehicle as often as he can. He said he biked to work at least once a week. He said he's been endorsed by the organization BikeSD. He said improved biking and

walking opportunities would help bring the community together. City also has to focus on where job growth should be encouraged, particularly downtown.

Duran said when she worked at City Hall she would take the bus from Normal Heights to downtown. It took an hour, she said. She said it's not an option now because her job takes her all over the county. She hopes to have that option soon, she added. She said she walks frequently.

Whitburn said he takes the bus and trolley occasionally. But he said it's hard to use in an efficient and effective way in San Diego. He said 90 percent of the jobs in San Diego County are not easily accessible by public transit. He wants to work to make transit more accessible and convenient.

Question #4: Could you comment on the feasibility of and funding for the city's proposed homeless action plan?

Olsen said the number-one issue he's heard about while walking every neighborhood in District 3 is homelessness. He said the released plan does a great job of setting mileposts for needed housing. It also acknowledges that the city's strategy until now has been short-term, and pouring resources into police enforcement has only served as a form of "whack a mole," he said. Olsen said he would focus on increasing short-term housing opportunities, permanent-supportive housing, and wraparound services.

Duran said what she appreciated about the plan was that input was sought from people who have actually experienced homelessness. "But we keep talking about it," she said, adding that funding remains a challenge. The plan does make clear we're not building enough low- and middle-income housing.

Whitburn said he was glad there was finally a comprehensive plan. The city, while homelessness continues to worsen, has not had one, he said. He said the city reacts when the media run stories and relies on non-profits that lack adequate coordination. Importantly, the plan does address a spectrum of strategies, which he said is good. He said he supports the convention center/homeless/road repair ballot measure in March and a proposed November 2020 housing-bond measure.

Kwiatkowski called it a "great plan" that now sits on a shelf because "there's no money dedicated to it." He said he also supports the March and November ballot measures.

Question #5: Will you or have you accepted donations from developers? Should communities accept whatever housing that developers propose regardless of the impact on communities?

Duran said the city "absolutely" should not accept whatever is proposed because the power needs to be with the community "to make sure we're working better for our citizens."

Whitburn said he doesn't accept developer donations. He also said neighborhoods shouldn't have to just accept whatever developers want to build. He said neighborhoods need to have a say in what goes on in those neighborhoods but too often are given short shrift or no opportunity to influence the process.

Kwiatkowski said he has taken donations from developers. Regarding whether developers should have carte blanche on what they build, he said he's a "big believer in local control" and community input. He said it's important to work with developers "not against them," but also "not just roll over."

Olsen said he has accepted a couple donations from people who work in housing construction and specifically from people who work in affordable housing. The private sector won't provide

enough affordable housing, he said. Communities "always have the final word in describing what is going to improve the neighborhood," he said.

Question #6: What proposed solutions do you have for Maple Canyon regarding erosion and environmental issues?

Whitburn said Maple Canyon is one of the treasures of Bankers Hill. Unfortunately, he said, we've seen so many problems in the canyon in recent years with loss of native vegetation and flooding that's altered the course of water flow through the canyon and into downtown. Replanting vegetation and reconstruct portions of canyon is needed, he said. Volunteers have identified funding sources for the work, he said, but the city has held up the process. Let the neighborhoods find solutions, he said.

Kwiatkowski said he wants to explore how the community can move ahead with the process while identifying the resources necessary and make sure the city needs are met.

Olsen said this is a good example where government just needs to get out of its own way. The community knows their own neighborhood best and has "really good solutions."

Duran said places like Maple Canyon are "our own little spaces, and we need to protect them."

Question #7: Do you think a Business Improvement District would benefit Bankers Hill, and if so how would you make it happen? Do you support development of a commercial venture like a hotel in Balboa Park?

Kwiatkowski said he supports establishing a Business Improvement District and added he would back creating a Maintenance Assessment District to "take care of Maple Canyon." That would allow local residents to get involved in the process. Regarding Balboa Park, he said the city has "cannibalized" portions of the park for the Navy and a local high school, but a hotel would not generate the revenue needed to fix and maintain the park. He supports a \$500 million bond measure for maintenance of the park.

Olsen said he opposes the commercialization of Balboa Park and called a hotel proposal as a "really bad idea." Said he opposed the Jacob Plan and "won't let it come back from the dead." He said a Business Improvement District for Bankers Hill is a "fantastic idea."

Duran said a Business Improvement District would be helpful for small businesses. She said she was disappointed to see the city seeking interest in a hotel at Inspiration Point.

Whitburn said some Business Improvement Districts do a good job, and some don't. He said Bankers Hill businesses should have an opportunity to vote on one if they want one. Said he does not support a hotel on Inspiration Point. The land, he said, is supposed to be converted to parkland. Added he did not support the Jacobs Plan. East Mesa, now a parking lot for city vehicles, also has to be a focus as well, he said.

Question #8: What role and priority would historic districts have in planning for the future of Uptown?

Olsen said the historic character of the districts is one of its greatest assets. Resident take pride in their homes. He said high-quality historic buildings can be preserved while ugly sites, like gas stations, are used to address the housing crisis for new housing.

Duran said some constituents have told her that they don't like their neighborhoods being turned into historic districts. "We need to have these conversations," she said. While history must be preserved, she said, some buildings may be no longer serving a necessary purpose.

Whitburn said so many people have moved into Bankers Hill because of its charm. Historical preservation plays an important role in that, but the process can be abused, he said.

Kwiatkowski said he has represented dozens of homeowners who have wanted to remove the historic designation of their homes. He said historic districts have been proposed without any input from homeowners, some of whom are stuck in regulatory limbo while the city decides whether to establish these districts. "San Diego has more historically designated houses than San Francisco," he said. "We need to look at our process a little bit."

Question #9: Would you support closing the Cabrillo Bridge to motor vehicles?

Duran said if that's what the community wants, she would support it. Duran said it could make the bridge safer for pedestrians and could spur ideas like having artists on the bridge.

Whitburn said he's not opposed to the idea. "A pedestrian promenade would be very attractive," he said. He said he's open to the proposal but would want to know what the impacts would be on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Kwiatkowski said if the bridge is closed, "everyone will park in your neighborhood." Park institutions need the access. If it's closed year-round, "your neighborhood will be overrun." He said he would need to see a parking plan before supporting a bridge closure. Said he was a "big supporter" of the Jacobs Plan and would like to see it come back.

Olsen said he would support closing the bridge to cars but added the city has lacked leadership on Balboa Park for decades. It would also be necessary to make decisions on the east side of the park regarding parking.

Question #10: We charge scooters and taxis to use our streets. Why not ride-shares like Lyft and Uber?

Whitburn said he wasn't sure but would be willing to explore the feasibility of something like that. "Certainly, San Diego lacks revenues," he said, "and San Diego needs to find alternative sources of revenue. And Uber has a lot of money."

Kwiatkowski said he represents the ground-transportation providers at the airport, "so I know this topic really, really well," he said. He said cab drivers at the airport "are getting killed" financially by Uber and Lyft. He said every cab driver needs a city business license, but the city won't go after Uber and Lyft drivers who need the same license but don't have one. He said he would push to require that licensing.

Olsen said he would support charging Uber and Lyft to "equalize the playing field" and get something for residents from companies that use the city's transportation network.

Duran said companies like Uber and Lyft should be treated the same as taxi companies. She said she doesn't "want to go after" individual drivers, many of whom are working to make ends meet. "But we look at the companies that are making the money," she said.

Question #11: The city passed and then rescinded regulations on short-term AirBnb-type rentals. Should there be regulations?

Kwiatkowski agreed there should be. He said he lives behind an AirBnB party house, and during the last weekend "it was going off." He said he doesn't want to hurt small-business people who rent out a room in a home if they live on-site. He said the key is not to turn residential neighborhoods into "de-facto hotel zones. That is just unacceptable."

Olsen said "absolutely" they should be regulated. He said in District 3, units are being taken off the rental market, adding to the housing crisis. "We should not have whole-home rentals that remove otherwise successful housing from working San Diegans," he said, adding there is room to allow renting out a room in a home or an accessory dwelling unit in the backyard while they live on site. He said other areas of the city should have some say in how they handle the situation, such as in coastal zones.

Duran said she objects to people buying homes just to convert them to an AirBnb rentals.

Whitburn said the city should "simply enforce the law." Residential neighborhoods are not zoned for houses that are year-round hotels, he said. He does not support out-of-town interests buying homes just for short-term rentals.

Question #12: What will you do to make housing affordable?

Olsen said first, cut the cost of government regulation on bringing housing to the market. He said it takes too long to get permits approved because of a "woefully understaffed" Development Services Department.

Duran said a November ballot measure will be an important step.

Whitburn said that direct funding would be important. He also said he supports ending the in-lieu fee option for developers to ensure that affordable housing is actually built on site to integrate neighborhoods. He said the city must also balance housing needs versus allowing unfettered development in our neighborhoods.

Kwiatkowski said one qualification for becoming a City Council member should be to get a project through the city's approval process. He said it would help candidates understand how long it takes to get a project approved. The 2016 Community Plan Update for Uptown, he said, provided an "almost net-zero change in density. Just kind of moved it around a little bit."

Question #13: What do you consider the biggest problem facing the Bankers Hill community?

Duran said homelessness, based on what she's heard from residents over the years. "It's a problem because you have Balboa Park so close," she said. "But these are people who need help."

Whitburn said the City of San Diego is Bankers Hill's biggest problem. "The city gets in the way of so many solutions that Bankers Hill requires," he said, adding the city should have already dealt with homelessness in a more effective way "long ago." He said the funding to repair Maple Canyon is already in place, but "for whatever reason" the city is holding up the process. Same with infrastructure repairs, he said.

Kwiatkowski said homelessness is the number-one issue. Leadership is required, he said, to find the funding for the \$1.9 billion homeless plan. "We are really falling short when it comes to solutions in San Diego, solutions that are actionable," he said, adding the city "talks big but acts really small at the end of the day." He said that dynamic must change.

Olsen said homelessness is the top issue in Bankers Hill and citywide. It must be addressed on a citywide basis, he said.

Question #14: Do you support a building-height limit in Bankers Hill?

Whitburn said he thinks a height limit does exist in Bankers Hill. When an audience member disagreed, he said, "No building height limit? Alright." He said the neighborhood should have a say in that. He said Bankers Hill is a neighborhood "with a lot of features." He said on the 6th and

Olive high-rise project, "many in the neighborhood came away from that feeling like they were not heard." Neighborhoods should have a say in building height.

Kwiatkowski said the flight path does limit building height. "Do you want to be Manhattan, or do you want to be Paris?" he asked. He said construction costs vary based on the height of a building. He'd prefer a Paris model, with four or five stories of wood construction vs. less affordable (and taller) concrete-and-steel construction. That would also address the height issue, he said.

Olsen said there should be a conversation about the types of buildings we want to see in our communities, and he said it's necessary to "empower and strengthen our community planning groups" to make "well-informed decisions and recommendations to the City Council." He said he's a "pro-housing guy, but only within the confines of existing community plans." He said opportunities exist to build along transit and biking corridors here.

Duran said Sixth and Olive was a "huge conversation at Uptown Planners" and at BHCG. It's that public input that will "tell us what you need and what you want." She agreed with Kwiatkowski that "Bankers Hill is not New York City....It needs to feel like a community."

Question #15: The city needs revenue sources. What about code compliance? Currently it's not a source.

Kwiatkowski said "we get the city we pay for." If residents don't want pothole-filled streets, "we're going to have to compromise." As president of his homeowners association, he noted his building residents pay for trash collection while single-family homeowners do not, including ones used as AirBnBs. "We need to have a conversation over revenues in our city. What it takes to fund a city of this size," he said. He said he's proposed a parcel tax just to fund upkeep of Balboa Park.

Olsen agreed that an honest conversation is required. He reiterated his experience in the city's Office of Independent Budget Analyst, which issued frequent reports about rising city costs and their challenges. He said the city needs to make commitments to communities about infrastructure-improvement plans in the short term in order to build trust for bigger projects in the future.

Duran said code compliance raises a bigger issue. "Right now, our city employees don't have a pension," she said, "they don't have Social Security." She said city voters "made a mistake" by eliminating pensions, because "we're losing city workers." The city needs to hire "the best and the brightest" and keep them. That will save the city money in the long run because "we're not going to have to keep retraining people and losing folks to other cities."

Whitburn said the city doesn't have enough code-compliance officers and is failing to enforce "things that we ought to be enforcing," from environmental hazards to health-and-safety issues and other nuisances. "If we did that, then we would be bringing more revenue into the city," he said, but added he doesn't think code compliance should be used as a revenue generator. But by enforcing the law, "we wouldn't be leaving as much money on the table as we are."

Question #16: Would you support a requirement of the city to install a minimum of 10 miles of new protected bike lanes every year on the 2,700 miles of streets?

Olsen said he has been endorsed by BikeSD and rides his bike to work as often as he can, but he doesn't support setting fixed goals. Some years might allow for 20 miles of bike lanes, while other years may require focus on other priorities. Flexibility is important, he said.

Duran said the city needs to build more protected bike lanes. She said some people say they don't see people riding bikes, but that's because many people still don't feel safe doing so, she

said, particularly when having to share a lane with a car. She said she hopes the city will be able to do more than 10 miles a year.

Whitburn said 10 miles a year "isn't an overly ambitious goal," so his answer he said is yes. The goal is reasonable, he said. People need to feel safe when riding, and most people in San Diego don't feel safe. But neighborhoods need to play a role in how it's implemented.

Kwiatkowski said a goal for bike lanes is great. In some neighborhoods, he said, they've become mostly "scooter lanes." In some neighborhoods, protected bike lanes won't work because of geographic reasons. City should have a vision, like the Bike Master Plan. Working with neighborhoods to put bike lanes where "they make sense" would be his focus, he said.

Closing statements were then made.

Kwiatkowski thanked the audience members for the great questions. At the end of the day, he said, this is a job interview. "You need to ask yourself, who can actually do the job? Not promising you they can do the job," he said, adding he can point to his track record. He said he offers real solutions and a plan for Balboa Park. He said he supports permanent supportive housing at the old Mission Hills library site. "I know this town really well," he said, "and I know how City Hall works because I helped design" the strong-mayor form of government San Diego currently employs. The city also needs to find a compromise regarding short-term rentals.

Whitburn said he has lived in District 3 the longest of any candidate and has the greatest understanding of the issues. Citizens need more say in what happens in city government, he said. "Too often, neighborhoods don't find out that's something is going to happen until it's already basically approved" or concerns are ignored, he said. "That is so disrespectful and counter to the way to get things done in a way that really can achieve the best result. People in the neighborhood generally know what is likely to work best." The city needs to listen and work with neighborhoods, he said.

Duran said audience members know her because she's been coming to BHCG meetings for the last six years. She said putting people first is her top priority. She said her work at the state level has helped shape that philosophy. "I live in North Park," she said. "I'm not going anywhere." She said she would always be accessible and open to her constituents "I'll be here for you every day," she said. "Already am." She said appreciates the work BHCG does.

Olsen thanked the LWV and audience for this "high-level discussion" and "engaged questions." He said he's running to solve problems, "and the problems that we face as a region trickle down to our district." Those problems include homelessness, housing affordability and climate adaption. "The time to address all three of those in a serious way is actually yesterday," he said, adding he decided to run out of the frustration from not seeing those issues addressed seriously. He said "we are failing" the homeless among us. "We have a responsibility to treat our neighbors with dignity and respect," he said. Services must be brought to where the people in need are, and the city isn't do that, he said. Money targeted for permanent housing was "wasted" on temporary tents. "That's unconscionable," he said.

The audience showed its appreciation for the forum and the candidates.

Baltic invited Trussell back up to provide the parking-district election results, confirming that Fox and Scott were re-elected.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Lamb, Secretary.