



## EPIC General Membership Meeting Minutes

December 16th, 2010, 6:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.,  
Holy Rosary Church Board Room, 24<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Ave

**Attendees:** Carlyle Bowker, Hannah Lieder, Kathy Wetzel-Mastel, Brad Pass, Joseph Spangler, Chiffon Williams, Linda Leonard, Al Bangoura, Rose Escanan, Geu Xiong, Free DuBose, Margaret Kirkpatrick, Tim Springer, Carol Pass, Mohamed Cali

### 6:50 Introduction:

- Greetings and Introductions
- We met as a committee of the whole with only three board member until Mahamed Cali arrived
- Approval of Agenda; approved
- Minutes from **EPIC General Membership Meeting 11/8/2010**

### 7:00 Announcements & Reports:

- Tentative **Grand Opening:** the East Phillips Park Cultural & Community Center – **January 22nd, 1 to 4 pm**
- **Next EPIC Meeting will be Monday, January 10th.**

**7:05 East Phillips Park Cultural and Community Center:** Things are moving quickly toward conclusion. The excavation for the Parking lot just barely get done before the big freeze hit. If that hadn't happened, the grand opening would have been pushed back until spring. The furniture is being ordered and the contractor will be finished this month. The Park Board will install furnishings and take care of the interior. The building is very classy and the gym with bleachers is awesome. This was the highest priority in the long ago survey of the neighborhood and it has happened. Remember, this was an NRP project carried forward by EPIC. This is important given the present state of the NRP funds.

**Tentative GRAND OPENING - Saturday, Jan. 22, 2011 from one to 4:00 PM. Small program.**

**7:15 Phillips Community Center and Pool:** (See attachment of the Pool elevation) The Phillips Community Parks Initiative is the three neighborhood group plus Waite House coalition that has been working for the past three years to preserve the Phillips Community Center and Pool from being sold as a warehouse and return it to full use for the whole Phillips Community. The community protested its propose demise and the park board put out a request for proposals for tenants to rent/lease the facility. The groups of potential renters joined together to form a coalition: Running Wolf Fitness Center; Freeport West Exercise & Nutrition Program, Waite House, Minneapolis Swims. Park Board community service area, Living in Balance Wellness Center ; Ventura Village; A Partnership of Diabetics; Waite House Kitchen and Job Center and Guri Nabad (House of Peace) Center. The Gym, Teen Room, class rooms and Dining Room will be open to the public and scheduled by the Park Staff in concert with Stewart and East Phillips under the CSA concept of shared space for a particular area.m and classroom space. Finally the group has reached the point where they have presented their full proposal to the Park Board of Commissioners this past Wed. night. The plan was very positively received. Much about this is in the recent Alley Newspaper, which has two front page articles about the center. We should be proud of this amazing 'save' and the collaboration, hard work and creativity that brought it about.

Now we face the daunting task of raising money to restore and sustain operating costs for the Phillips Pool. EPIC fully supports Hannah Lieder and Mpls. Swims in this endeavor. Mpls Swims put out postcards to solicit youth input about the role and importance of swimming. Hope Academy and South High wrote comments on the post card backs. These comments written by kids from the area that Hannah read to us will be used to publicize the need for the pool and the enthusiasm of area youth surrounding it. The pictures of the pool show a beautiful setting for aquatic sports. Mpls. Swims has strong support from a variety of sources. Hannah is doing a great job and EPIC fully backs this project.

Al Bangoura Brought his staff and introduced Fred Dubeaux, Rose Espalan, Lou, etc. etc. The Phillips CSA will have leadership that will float from facility to facility. CP wants staff stability for the father or mother figure the kids need. Hannah gave the pool presentation. Highlights;

1. work with schools, bonding bill for finances
2. work with DNR
3. USA Swimming support
4. comprehensive teaching programs

Meeting at Park Board Planning Meeting was impressed with our presentation and supports the United Plan including the pool.

**7:40 Greenway Site Development and surrounding land use:** (See attachments of one set of ideas for the apartment building) Kathy Wetsel Director of PRG. and Tim Springer talked about the Greenway Project. Carol reviewed the history of various proposed projects. David Rubedor was there when the property was bought. Bruce Lambrecht was a challenge to work with over a long period of time. 2009 PRG got 9 parcels with \$500,000 from MN housing and \$50,000 from EPIC. There is a sunset of September 2013. One proposal was low-density but the land value was inflated and more so now. This means the site needs to support higher density for cost sharing. It is a good site for transit and a feasible 30-40 "family" units with 2,3,4 bedrooms that would be workforce housing. A co-developer is identified and next year some diligent effort is required for environmental impact; property lines and the challenge of parking. PRG would like another parcel or two north of the site for green space and other needs. Midtown is interested in the development. Next summer the funding proposals will need to be introduced in the legislature and elsewhere. There may be construction in 2012 but more likely 2013 to have time to get enough funding. Kathy said funds are available for clean up if necessary. Joseph thinks it has already been done. Some sites nearby had a mix of railroad contaminants and was cleaned up. There are transit-oriented funds available too from P. Fitzgerald, Hennepin County and others. Joseph asked if it would be R5 or less.....she responded that she doesn't want more than four stories.

Tim took over the white board after explaining the midtown greenway's vision, mission, etc. He cited millions of dollars of development along the greenway and that the corridor is the most used bikeway in the state. It is owned by a group that manages the rail corridor. The modern street car looks very cute. There will be an express with no traffic interruption. The major Avenues will be the stops. It will connect the LRT on Hiawatha with the one planned for the SW to Eden Prairie. land use planning is important because it is a narrow trail and how a building goes in will effect the safety, access, and aesthetics of the greenway users. The trains will run on the south side of the greenway and the bike/walk way is on the north side. The bridges also have some consideration for design and rebuilding. The Greenway Coalition doesn't want the trail to get squinched and to end up on a tiny shelf in the embankment.

They endorse "place making" on the trail level at the stations by scooping out the embankment and building some businesses and green space. It is complicated to alter the trench because it is a historic district. It can happen in selected locations for an overall transportation system. Joseph has a lot of the specific history, which he explained in regard to feasibility under existing jurisdictions. The embankments are owned by the railroad authority and it would require a shared vision and partnership. There are some individuals on various governing groups that have multiple roles.

There is a possibility of a little amphitheater and ramp entrance on 15th that would enliven the Greenway. Carol asked about a boardwalk over the embankment with houses along the greenway. People could see into the trench and visit one another. Tim suggested a plan where the building would open at the basement level onto the greenway. There could be a wall on the street level with entrance to patios and the units. Several designs were presented including underground parking. There is a strong preference for a public access to the greenway of some kind.

**8:00 Xcel Energy HIGH VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINES:** (See attached information & sample letter) Xcel wants the PUC to revisit many of the issues that were already litigated in the hearings last spring. Tim said we needed to write letters to the head of the PUC protesting this move. A sample letter will be attached to these minutes for neighbors to use with their own changes. Also meetings will be held on Tuesday to which it would be good to attend.

**8:10 Apartments on 24th ST. and Bloomington Ave.** (See attachment of elevations of the new buildings) The funding is in and the elder house in moving toward construction. Elevations and footprints of the two buildings were handed out.

**8:15 NRP funding confiscated by City Hall:** The Tuesday before last, Dec.7th, the Mayor and some Council Members put forward a proposal that would freeze all remaining NRP funds, all remaining Program Income and all remaining Phase II funds that were uncontracted. This would be used to impact 2012 property taxes, NOT 2011 taxes as some have thought. On the next Wednesday, Dec. 8th, CMs Schiff and Colvin-Roy offered an amendment that would leave

remaining Phase I and program income alone, but would take 50% of all Phase II money from the neighborhoods. There was a valuable and very big meeting on Sunday, Dec. 12th which was attended by several members of the Mpls. delegation to the legislature. Research was done and several things were very clear:

- 1) This action will do very little to offset property tax increases, approx. \$24.00 on a \$2,000.00 bill in a low income neighborhood and approx. \$250.00 saved on a tax bill of \$18,000.00 in an expensive neighborhood. And this is only a one shot deal.
- 2) The primary losers of most of the funds are the low-income neighborhoods and the primary beneficiaries and the affluent neighborhoods, at up to a 9 to 1 ratio, \$9.00 tax savings to a Kenwood home for every \$1.00 tax savings of a low-income neighborhood. What this means is that major wealth is being transferred from the low-income neighborhoods, who were entitled to receive it to the rich neighborhoods who are profiting at our expense and the expense of all the other poor neighborhoods. There has probably not been such a blatant and large wealth transfer from poor to rich in the history of Mpls. and, while this functions as a bit of a figleaf for the high property taxes, it does almost nothing to mitigate them. East Phillips loses \$225,000 NRP dollars to save \$24,500 in total neighborhood property taxes or \$38.00 per property!! Linden Hills loses much less and gains a neighborhood tax savings of \$333,157.00 or \$251.00 per property. Whose loss contributes to that? One of our guests noted that Mr. Rubedor "took your money".
- 3) This action is grossly unfair and ignores the fact that the primary reason for the large amount of remaining money in the low-income neighborhoods is the result of their recognition of the extreme importance of these funds and so the care which was taken in spending them. Most of these neighborhoods operated with less staff to conserve money. They also did more complex tasks with their money, emergency rehab support, foreclosure assistance and major building projects that took time to fund and get under construction. How many council members have built a 5 million dollar Park building from scratch? Or an apartment building, or 28 town homes?? EPIC has done this and other low-income neighborhoods have done things like this also, Harrison, Whittier and so on.

Then at a major meeting of the Council to consider the budget last Monday night and after 5 hours of public testimony, the Council approved the Staff Directive to take 50% of the remaining NRP dollars for apparent tax relief. CM Robert Lillgren offered 3 amendments: one stating that going to the legislature to dismantle was unnecessary because there is a consolidation plan for the NRP funds to go to NCR anyway. The Mayor promptly stated that he would veto any such move. Those voting for Lillgren's motion were CMs Gordon, Reich, Hofstedt and Lillgren. Those voting against the motion were Johnson, Samuels, Goodman, Glidden, Schiff, Tuthill, Quincy, Colvin-Roy and Hodges.

CM Lillgren offered a second amendment to delete taking the Phase II funds. This also was debated and failed by the same vote.

CM Lillgren then offered a third amendment, specifying other options for property tax relief that should be looked at and offered a specific goal to be reached for tax relief. This also failed by the same vote of nine to four. Thank you to these four CMs for trying and to CMs Schiff and Colvin-Roy for at least getting 50% retained.

**Response by our Board President:** "Sadly, since this action by the Mayor and Council accomplishes so little in tax relief and only provides political cover for what is really budgetary and fiscal mismanagement of the city, it can only be viewed as an act deeply damaging to the future of Minneapolis. It has created an obvious source of serious antagonism between rich and poor neighborhoods and is of questionable legality. These funds were originally assigned to neighborhoods by careful formulas democratically agreed to and established on the basis of fairness and need. Therefore, equity cannot be really restored in any way other than to leave them as they are, since the funding already has been distributed with the highest equity possible developed over years of careful modifications.

The funding that remains in these low income neighborhoods is overwhelmingly still there because the task of expenditure has been more complex, given language barriers, fewer skilled volunteers, more complex projects, insistence on very strong leverage of funds, cautious management and a willingness to do without staff so as to funnel more money directly to the residents. It is a mean-spirited act to reward such diligence by poor people with the punitive act of taking these much-cared-for funds away and handing most of them to more affluent people in much less challenging neighborhoods. In addition, transferring major funding from poor to rich, and rewarding non-needy neighborhoods with the monies rightfully belonging to their poorer and more diverse sister neighborhoods will solve almost nothing, but will drive a permanent festering political wedge between parts of the city along class lines that will endure for generations. Do the Gold Coast, Fertile Crescent neighborhoods really want to be known for that? Have they had any possibility of expressing their opinion about this action of their Mayor and City Council?