

Miramonte Neighborhood Association (MNA)
Board Of Directors Meeting
February 9, 2022

- I. Call To Order: The ZOOM meeting called to order at 6:02 pm.

- II. Roll Call:
 - a. Board Members Present: Ellen Wheeler, president; Joanna Dinan, vice president; Ann Baldwin, treasurer; Jan Howard, secretary; Adam Lucia; Sam Behrend; Linda Dobbyn, Richard Webster, Brenda Kazen, Alecs Sakta
 - b. Board Members Absent: Anne-Marie Laurian, Greg Gibson
 - c. Guests: Councilman Steve Kozachik and new Ward 6 Council Aide Dora Maldonado; Merrill Evans, St. Mark's Church liaison, and several neighborhood guests, including Stephanie van Latum, Ravi Bewtra, Ruth Beeker, Ashley Geiger, Kathleen McLoughlin and Jeffrey Ingram.

- III. Ward 6 Update from Steve Kozachik:
 - a. A proposed House Bill at the State Legislature has been withdrawn from the Commerce Committee agenda without comment. The bill's intent was to preempt local jurisdictions from implementing any local zoning rules. The bill included a proposed zoning to allow up to eight residences on an acre or up to 12 duplexes; and it would increase the height of housing to 55 feet or taller if there's another building taller in the area. In addition, it would reduce the minimum setback to five feet between residences. Steve said he considers this overreach by the State Legislature. Steve added that he understood the need for municipal housing statewide, but not at the loss of local control over zoning rules. He will be following this proposed bill to see if it is revived in the Commerce Committee, is dead for the session or would be introduced in some other fashion.

 - b. Tucson's Mayor and Council voted to continue the city's participation in the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The RTA Board is a governing body made up of elected officials from local, tribal and state governments who oversee the implementation of roadway projects and transit services funded through a ½-cent sales tax. The sales tax is set to expire in 2026. Tucson was expected to receive \$2 billion RTA funds but currently the amount is about \$200

million short to complete the proposed transportation improvement projects. To keep Tucson's participation in the RTA, the City was offered greater participation on the Citizens Advisory Committee and planning and implementation committees, as well as having the \$200 million funding gap covered.

- c. Another issue to address is homelessness and the bottom line is that there are no simple solutions. One of the proposals includes asking the Tucson Police Department (TPD) homeless protocol team to research how other communities are addressing homelessness and what's working, what's not and how are they managed. One of the options is a controlled homeless encampment, in which the residents would be offered services by a non-governmental organization such as La Frontera or Old Pueblo Community Services or Primavera, which are already working with the homeless. This controlled camp would focus on engaging with the residents, identifying issues that prevent them from having stable housing and enrolling them in services, from drug rehabilitation to counseling. Our City's homeless outreach is not working and wasting resources, as well as not connecting people to needed services. Right now, the first step may be just establishing camp locations to get people off the street with porta johns, a water source and trash service while more comprehensive plans and resources are put in place.
- d. Steve asked for questions and was asked about the status of the proposed Royal El Con Apartment expansion plans. He gave a "30,000-square-foot" overview of the developer's expansion over about a 4-acre parcel of open space near 3rd Street and Dodge Boulevard. A site visit is planned February 15 by MNA's committee on the El Con Apartment expansion.

The developer has proposed a perimeter wall as a security measure and to control traffic. Board and audience members expressed concerns that the current El Con apartments are a focus for crime, trash and violence and that the building owner isn't addressing these issues. A board member said Royal El Con has multiple code violations that are not being addressed. One person asked what is to guarantee they will provide safe and secure housing in the new plan. The developer already owns the property, and as the plan is presented currently, the proposed housing is within the current zoning, leaving little the neighborhood can do at this point. Steve said if the developer modifies the plans and needs a variance, then the city can impose conditions on such an approval. He said neighbors should bring code violations to his attention, and his office will

make sure they are addressed. He recommended that neighbors get involved with the MNA committee and also contact the developer at greg.stanton@desertventuresdm.com.

Alecs Sakta said that the part of the neighborhood from Dodge to Alvernon already has a lot of problems with crime, domestic violence, drug abuse etc., and she is concerned this project will add more of those same issues. She asked if there could be services focused on the area. Steve K said he would reach out to St. Mark's to see if it could make space available for such an effort, and would also reach out to nonprofits like La Frontera. Merrill Evans commented that she has hoped that empty space at St. Mark's could have a community use like this. (Note: some of this discussion related to the Royal El Con proposal occurred later in the meeting.)

- IV. The next item on the agenda was the proposed traffic changes on 5th/6th Street. (A presentation was made at the January board meeting by City of Tucson Transportation representative Ryan Flanagan.) President Ellen Wheeler reminded board members and guests to participate in the survey if they haven't yet at <https://tucsondelivers.tucsonaz.gov/pages/5th6th>. The City is offering two plans for this street. Option A would keep the current four-lane roadway without bike lanes. Option B would convert the road to three lanes with one traffic lane each way, a center continuous left-turn lane, bike lanes and sidewalks.

Board member Linda Dobbyn made a motion that MNA support Option B, notify the City, of MNA support and encourage the City to implement Option B. Sam Behrend seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Board.

The renovation of the pocket park was the next agenda item. Ellen summarized what has been done so far, including a major cleanup by City Parks and Recreation with the help of the Arizona Conservation Corps. The City plans to have an arborist check the unhealthy trees on the eastern edge of the park. Landscape architect Margaret West is going to give the MNA committee some plant and design options, and the city will assist with irrigation repairs/expansion and planting. In addition, the City will replace the drinking fountain.

Ellen asked the board members for their thoughts about the play area, which is composed of sand and boulders, and it seems no kids play there. As the plans are implemented, the board needs to consider whether to keep the area as it is, to remove the sand, convert it into landscaping and relocate the boulders throughout the park. It

could be converted into a seating area with shade. Brenda Kazen recommended keeping the play area and adding some diggers like the ones at Himmel Park, which are very popular. A dog park was suggested, but another person expressed concerns about a dog park. Several commented on the need for seating and shade at the play area. Concerns were raised about maintaining the park once the renovations are completed and neighbor-volunteers participation would play an important role. There seemed to be general support for keeping the play area if something like the diggers could be added, along with shade.

- V. In conjunction with the park plans, the board was asked to address the funds that had been raised for the art for the Richey /3rd Street traffic circle, which was cancelled. Brenda asked whether the board could direct these funds (approximately \$5,700) to be used instead for the park improvements. All agreed it would be important to reach out to the donors and ask if their contributions could be used for the park. Sam made a motion to close the MNA GoFundMe site that was raising funds for the traffic circle art, Ann Baldwin seconded, and the board approved unanimously. Ellen volunteered to contact donors once we know if we can use those funds for the pocket park.
- VI. Merrill Evans gave an overview of a community garden that might be developed at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church. In addition to St. Mark's members, the garden will be overseen by Tucson Organic Gardeners, and MNA neighbors. Another group interested in helping is the Iskashitaa Refugee Network, which manages a free food pantry. While plans are still being finalized for the garden area, a work-day is scheduled for Saturday, April 2, that will include snacks and lunch. Individuals will be invited to sign up for a two-hour shift (there's no limit on shifts!) to work either in the garden area or the campus of the church. Molly McKasson is coordinating volunteers and can be reached at 520-271-8978 or memckasson@gmail.com.

VII. UPDATES:

- Treasurer's Report

Ann reported an account balance of \$10,569.64. One expense last month was reported of \$179.64 for a three-year renewal of the association's website hosting.

- Traffic calming committee

Brenda reported that the traffic calming committee met at the Chroma property on Miramonte and came up with several ideas to calm traffic on Miramonte, including rumble strips, illuminated stop signs, and painting bicycle lanes to allow for safer

biking and walking. Anderson and 3rd is another problem. She will send the notes from the meeting to send to Blake Olofson with the City Department of Transportation, and the committee hopes to meet with him. Adam was asked about the impact of the four-way stop at Third and Camino Miramonte, and he said there does seem to be some slowing, while not impeding bike traffic, but it's too early to evaluate the long-term impact.

- Annual meeting

Ellen reported that the annual meeting for the MNA is confirmed for 1-3 p.m., Saturday, April 9 in St. Mark's courtyard. Food donations from such local businesses as Jersey Mikes and Whole Foods, will be sought to provide refreshments to participants attending. Those invited to present at the meeting include Greg Stanton on the Royal El Con apartment expansion, Ryan Fagan on the 5th/6th Street changes, Steve Kozachik on City updates, and a representative from the police department.

- Newsletter

The spring newsletter is almost complete and will be mailed to the neighborhood before the annual meeting.

- St. Mark's community barbeque

Merrill announced the community barbeque would be Sunday, February 13 at 5 p.m. All are invited to attend.

VIII. The next board meeting will be held at 6 p.m., Wednesday, March 9. Depending on masking and the slowing of COVID-19 infections, the meeting may be held in person or as a combined in-person/Zoom format.

IX. Ellen adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jan Howard, Secretary