MIRAMONTE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Annual Meeting Minutes

Saturday, April 15, 2023

Ward 6 Office, 3202 East 1st Street

Ellen Wheeler, President, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Present: MNA Board members Ellen Wheeler, president; Jan Howard, secretary; Joanna Dinan, vice president; Sam Behrend; Richard Webster; Brenda Kazen, Morris Palter, Linda Dobbyn, Ravi Bewtra, and Anne-Marie Laurian. Absent: Ann Baldwin, treasurer. Approximately 40 neighbors were in attendance.

Pocket Park Update: Ellen Wheeler

- Ellen reported that the shade structure is installed at the Miramonte pocket park and that the Cemrock climbing animals will likely be installed by the end of April, with the sand digger toys to follow.
- A thank you to Steve Kozachik, Ward 6 Councilman, who funded the shade structure and the new drinking fountain. Thanks also to the many neighbors who donated a total of \$11,200 toward purchase of the play equipment, to Parks and Rec for taking care of installation, and to Kim Fernandez for painting the beautiful hummingbird mural on the west wall.
- A clean up and spraying for weeds has been underway at the park. Thank yous to Celestino Fernandez who helped with the clean-up and Ruth Beeker who organized and paid for the new free library installation and bird chart installed at the park.
- Ellen noted that the MNA is financially healthy, even after allocating money to park improvements, with more than \$6,000 in the treasury.

Addressing crime, homelessness

- Tucson Police Department (TPD) representatives Officer Paulina Herrera and CSO Ramon Silvas updated attendees on the City of Tucson website resources available to report homeless camps on the City of Tucson website. The link is (https://www.tucsonaz.gov/manager/homeless-encampment-protocol-reporting-tool#.)
- Silvas is one of the leads for the monthly Alvernon-Fifth crime coalition which meets at 6 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the Ward 6 office, 3202 E. 1st Street.
- Work is underway to help with the transient and crime problems at the Royal El Con apartment complex. TPD officers patrol the area daily, and two officers have been assigned to the neighborhood park to patrol the site daily and nightly. The City of Tucson plans to file a lawsuit to declare the Royal El Con property a "public nuisance." TPD will update the association regularly as work progresses to address the property's issues.
- A new 311 hotline is being implemented by the City to take non-emergency calls, and a city "traffic watch" has been started to help with actions that can slow traffic. Three motorcycle officers have been assigned to help with this effort.

- Silvas said homeless encampments were concentrated in the Grant/Alvernon area, but with the work to move out transients from this area, many have migrated south to other areas, including our neighborhood. The officers encouraged residents to alert TPD.
- In other neighborhood safety measures, St. Mark's Church on 3rd Street is researching the installation of lights and security cameras.
- Ellen urged neighbors to attend the monthly Alvernon-Fifth crime meeting, because it is an opportunity to report specific problem properties and other issues directly to TPD leadership.

Ward 6 Update by Councilman Steve Kozachik

- A three-tier homeless protocol has been instituted by the City to clear out encampments and address any criminal activity. The City has purchased three hotels to offer approximately 160 rooms in an effort to create stable short-term living environments to transition homeless into long-term housing, which Kozachik said is clearly not enough to address the problem. Kozachik said that the homeless estimate in Tucson is approximately 2,000 to 2,500 although many are saying it's realistically closer to 3,000 to 4,000.
- He told the audience "You are the eyes and ears" of our community to identify and help address chronic homelessness and crime issues.
- The Benedictine complex is 95 percent leased with interest in some of the retail space. A coffee shop is the first restaurant open at the site. The owner has purchased land just to the north, at County Club and Second Street, for additional resident parking.

Traffic and transportation

City of Tucson Department of Transportation

- Fifth Street paving, restriping, sidewalks: Plans are underway to make improvements to 5th/6th Street. Step one will be repaving and reconfiguration of the lanes on 5th street east of Country Club, with a reduction to one traffic lane in each direction with a center left turn lane. The impact of this change will be evaluated after about a year. Sidewalks and lights will be installed from Campbell Avenue to Alvernon along 5th Street. A new water main will be installed before the sidewalks are installed. Two hawk light crossings to facilitate foot traffic are planned between Country Club and Alvernon. Attendees asked about the impact of the new sidewalks on their property and driveways, and any plant or tree removal.
- It is not certain that the proposed north-south bicycle boulevard will follow Camino Miramonte, given objections from the El Encanto and Colonia Solana neighborhoods to the south. A proposal is anticipated by the end of 2023, and public input will be sought.
- Speeding traffic on Camino Miramonte is a growing problem, especially because of the increase in foot traffic and lack of sidewalks but adding speed bumps is not possible because of the inverted cone shape of the street and drainage requirements. Ideas to slow traffic along the road include bike lanes set off with reflective stripes. Kozachik also raised the idea of landscaped "chicanes" in the roadway, which would help to slow traffic and control runoff. These have been used along Treat Avenue north of Grant. Brenda Kazen said neighbors living along Camino Miramonte have been enthusiastic about adding sidewalks. When a question about whether stop signs could be added, the City representative said that this type of signage cannot be used for speed control.
- Members of the audience expressed concerns about the numbers of large trucks and semis using Camino Miramonte and if there was a way to limit or stop this type of traffic.

Development Updates

- The Bashful Bandit bar, 3686 E. Speedway Blvd., is still anticipating a summer 2023 opening. The bar has been purchased by the owner of the Bisbee Breakfast Club restaurants and when open, will be a Texas-style barbecue restaurant with outdoor seating.
- Whole Foods Grocery has renewed its lease for five years at the Rancho Center. The Center was purchased in 2022 by Tucson company Larsen Baker, as well as the adjoining lot to the west of Camino Miramonte with plans to update the Center and add a mixed-use complex with retail and housing space.
- The closed restaurant at the southeast corner of Speedway and Country Club will be torn down to make way for a new Starbucks drive through.

Board Election

• Upon motion and second, the attendees voted unanimously to elect the following board slate:

Two-year term:

- Linda Dobbyn
- o Jan Howard
- o Brenda Kazen
- William Kuitert
- Betsy Lubis
- Theresa Webster
- Ellen Wheeler

One-year term:

- Ann Baldwin
- Sam Behrend
- Anne-Marie Laurian
- Richard Webster

• Two additional board members have one year left on their terms: Ravi Bewtra and Morris Palter.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. The next regular monthly board meeting will be at **6 p.m.**, **Wednesday**, **May 10**, at the Ward 6 office and by Zoom.