

# Minutes



District 10 Community Council Board Meeting  
**Tuesday, September 15, 2020**  
7:00 PM

**I. Call to order**

Chair Melissa Liu called the meeting to order at **7:04** pm.  
*Meeting took place via Google Meet videoconferencing and by telephone.*

**II. Introductions**

Board Present:

Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek, Dan Edgerton, Debra Verber, Jenne Nelson, Jennifer Victor-Larsen, Maggie Zimmerman, Marika Staloch, Melissa Liu, Melissa Brannon, Mike Ireland, Rachel Bowers, Rebecca Calvo, Sarah Reuter

Board Absent:

Olivia Mulvey Morawiecki, Sara Benzkofer, Amanda Rohrer, Jill Henricksen

Staff Present:

Michael Kuchta

Community Present:

Maria Bertrand, Paul Czarnecki

**III. Review, Amend agenda**

**MOTION:** Approve meeting agenda (first/second) passes

**IV. Community Section**

A. Community Concerns

Maria Bertrand wanted to know about Get Out the Vote efforts. Wants to know what the rules are for helping Get Out the Vote. D10 can help educate about resources for voting, but may not participate in anything partisan at any level. If the council's logo is to go on it, we should have that go through the Neighborhood Relations committee

**V. Board Business Section**

A. Financial Reports (Mike Ireland)

Notable Revenue

- Received \$21,411.43 in reimbursements from the City toward our Community Engagement Grant (\$16,296.33 for March, April and June; \$5,115.10 for July)
- Received a total of \$250 in unrestricted personal donations (\$100 from Mighty Cause, two \$25 individual donations and one \$100 donation)

Notable Expenses

- \$147.22 in prepaid insurance does not equate to our tracking. Mike will follow up with our accountant for clarification
- \$179.11 to the St. Paul Regional Water Services for the community garden water usage

- \$70.46 for the Compost Site organic herbicide and \$45.78 reclassification for weed trimmer rental
- \$150 Lancer refund for the Como Pavilion rental for cancelled February Sunday Series
- \$150 Lancer refund for the Como Pavilion rental for cancelled annual meeting

#### Other Highlights

- Our checking account balance as of August 31 was \$52,524.58
- The mayor's proposed 2021 budget includes funding district council at the same 2020 amounts for both the Community Engagement and Innovation grants. If the City Council approves the proposed budget and if district council funding formulas remain unchanged, we can then begin to build the 2021 budget confident in the revenue we anticipate receiving

#### B. Board and Committee Minutes

**MOTION:** Approve August 2020 meeting minutes (*first/second*) passes

#### C. Board Chair and Officer's Report (Melissa Liu)

Special Election: 39 ballots were requested, 26 were completed for the special election. Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek was uncontested and got the majority of the votes. Welcome Benjamin to the D10 board!

SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) small groups will convene soon to talk about and answer questions about the board.

#### D. Committee Updates

##### A. Environment (Mike Ireland)

Second DIY Como Lake Clean-Up has ended. 6 groups participated. 3 groups borrowed and have returned the tools. There will be one more in October. Gift cards to Conny's were purchased and delivered to groups completing the survey to show appreciation for participation in this event.

Looking into raised-bed gardens for county-owned vacant lot at Front and Jameson. Compost/organics recycling site update (which there isn't much of an update on county proposal to rebuild site; still waiting for city approval.) 'Churchill' gardens — these are watershed district stormwater diversion projects; they sent a postcard critiquing what needs to be cleaned up.

Como curb cleanup: This consists of demonstration houses in the neighborhood removing leaves in front of their street curb so that the leaves don't go into the lake, adding phosphorous that fertilizes the invasive curly leaf pond weed growth in the lake. Each year, we have prevented enough phosphorus from reaching the lake that otherwise would have grown approximately 3 tons of algae.

The Como Active Citizen Network is considering a strategic change: moving away from a small group managed initiative to a decentralized, self-led household practice. If this approach will be pursued and how to effectively make a transition will be discussed with the CRWD.

Trash brigade: brought up the idea of adopt a part of the park (clean up, projects, etc). Jennifer is reaching out to folks at Parks to see if they've done anything like that to see how that might work before we bring it back to see if there's interest in the community.

October 14: the project leader of the bee sky-rise will provide update on the research it has provided since its installation approximately 2 ½ years ago .

## B. Land Use (Maggie Zimmerman)

Meeting was focused entirely on the East Como Lake Drive closure/reopening. This was closed by Parks due to COVID. The neighborhood developed strong opinions on both sides. (Wanting to reopen it AND wanting to permanently shut down the drive.) A community member worked out a plan, including his estimates of a timeline, costs, mapping, etc. He brought the plan to the D10's Land Use committee. The conversations were already happening informally, and they brought it in hopes to formalize the process.

The people who want it closed permanently talked about more space, more green space, safer trails, how narrow paths are, especially in winter when it's one-lane and icy. The road is currently a one-way road with lots of alternates.

The people who want it open talked about accessibility, parking, those who can't walk around the lake can drive around the lake, emergency vehicles, and plow access.

Land Use recorded many comments on both sides of the issue, including email input from those unable to attend — they're available in the committee minutes.

Our neighbors are passionate about caring for and feel a responsibility for our neighborhood. The Land Use committee did not put forth a motion. Next meeting they will have some background from the city. This will be a long process of information gathering — we need to get a lot of input. Learning from multiple stakeholders: Grand Rounds, Capitol Region Watershed — find who holds management of that area of the neighborhood.

The road reopened after Labor Day as was planned by Public Works. The next Land Use committee meeting is first Wednesday of October. If people have questions or want to attend, they should contact D10 office.

## C. Neighborhood Relations (Sarah Reuter)

### **Action Item: Como Neighborhood Coat Drive**

Want to host a community coat drive for kids in the parking lot of the streetcar station. Melissa Brannon is leading that.

**Moved:** The Como Community Council hosts a winter coat drive for kids in the parking lot of Street Car station Sept. 26-27, 2020.

**Motion passes**

### **Action Item: Community Halloween**

**Moved:** Neighborhood Relations moved the Como Community Council to host a district-wide Halloween street decoration competition in lieu of a fall social. Blocks, apartments and individual houses can sign up by Oct. 17, 2020. District 10 will create a map for residents to be able to explore the decorated streets. The Como Community Council will vote on the winning street, and will announce it Friday Oct. 30, 2020. The winning street will be presented with cookies and bragging rights of best Decorated Halloween Street for a year.

**Motion passes**

This Friday at 7 pm there will be a 15-minute mini-concert from the Bach Society. Melissa Brannon and Sarah Reuter are helping host this with donating a tent and a yard at 1489 Dale St. N. All concerts are limited to 15 people with appropriate social distancing. All concerts and details are listed on this interactive map: <https://bachsocietymn.org/mobile-mini-concerts>

#### D. Anti-Racism Subgroup (Sarah Reuter)

Jill will be able to speak to it more. They will meet soon to define the work better. Emily wrote up a summary that didn't make the board packet, but will be sent out tomorrow.

#### E. Staff Report (Michael Kuchta)

Our submissions did not make the cut for recommended Capital Improvement Budget project funding. We will try to find other ways to move these projects forward.

The Lion House on Midway Pkwy and Hamline, which has been converted to a halfway house for women, has code violations that have been outstanding for a year. This may make its way to Land Use if violations are not addressed.

Food scarcity in our neighborhood: D10 has an inventory of food shelves in our neighborhood. Several congregations have food shelves in our neighborhood, some are just once/month. Sanneh Foundation just signed a distribution contract with the county and is looking for distribution sites throughout the city. They are targeting low-income communities and looking for where they can bring pallets of food — we would provide the volunteers. We need to find a place to host this.

#### F. New Business (Board Members)

There was a question about the board survey results. There wasn't a closing date set, but right now only about half of the board completed it. Please do this soon, as it will inform the SWOT analysis.

We have to be careful to know what our role is as an organization. We have not been a social service organization, and now we see opportunities to support other social service organizations. How do we leverage our community's assets in the long term strategy, and not just respond to immediate needs. All actions from committees should be approved by the board. Approvals for this kind of action can be a year-long approval.

### VI. Adjourn

**Motion** to adjourn at **8:26** pm by Melissa Liu. *(first/second) passes*

*Respectively submitted by Marika Staloch. These minutes are not official until approved.*

## **Action Item**

**DATE:**

Sept. 12, 2020

**FROM:**

Neighborhood Relations

**ITEM:**

Coats for Kids Drive

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Moved: The Como Community Council hosts a winter coat drive for kids.

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

This will be in coordination with the Salvation Army that serves our area and the greater St. Paul. The drive will be held in the parking lot of Street Car station and will be held Sept. 26th-27th.

**ISSUES UNRESOLVED OR YET TO BE DETERMINED:**

## **Action Item**

**DATE:**

September 12th, 2020

**FROM:**

The Neighborhood Relations Committee

**ITEM:**

Halloween Decoration Contest

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Moved: The Como Community Council will host a Halloween Decorating Contest (yet to be named) for the neighborhood during the month of October.

**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The Neighborhood Relations Committee typically hosts a fall social event. Due to the threat of COVID-19, we are not able to host such an event this year. We would like to do something safe that will boost morale and build community in the neighborhood.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

The NRC will advertise this contest in the newsletter and reach out to block captains and multi-family buildings. Groups of neighbors will apply to be part of the contest as blocks or apartment floors by Sunday, October 18th. The NRC will then create a map for neighbors of participating groups. We will also ask for and publish pictures on our website. On Friday, October 23rd, we will publish the map and link to the website pictures in the newsletter. People will be encouraged to tour the neighborhood and the website to enjoy the festive displays. A winner will be chosen by the District 10 Council, and a prize of cookies and a trophy will be awarded on Saturday, October 31st.

**ISSUES UNRESOLVED OR YET TO BE DETERMINED:**

We need a catchy name!

# Como Community Council Officers Meeting

Oct. 13, 2020 / Zoom 5:30 p.m.

**Present:** Melissa Liu, chair; Marika Staloch, secretary; Mike Ireland, treasurer; Michael Kuchta, executive director.

## Events

- **DIY Como Lake Clean-Up.** Closed out 2<sup>nd</sup> effort; will start another one Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> for one week. We have been providing gift cards to Connie's for groups that participated, but it closes Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>; will have to figure out another place; needs to be family friendly.
- **Food distribution.** Still exploring with Sanneh Foundation. Looking at Niem Phat Buddhist Temple at Como/Front/Dale, and vacant county-owned lot at Front and Jameson. Many logistics to be worked out, including whether to obtain a tent for outdoor distribution.
- **Sunday Series.** Second presentation scheduled for Oct. 25 with Richard McLemore. Anti-racism group hoping to present two each month.

## Communication

- **Website.** Current site's inadequacies came up in SWOT discussions, including observations that meetings are hard to find, it's hard to know what's updated, and there's too much information to navigate easily. Michael will seek Catchafire volunteer to help launch new website, which remains a work in progress.

## Financials

- Community Engagement expenses are reimbursed through August. Checking account has balance of about \$53,000. Michael shared an updated budget forecast with Mike for rest of year, so we have rough idea of how much we have available for fourth-quarter initiatives. One glitch to note: City wants us to apply all expenses incurred in 2020 to the 2020 grant. That means expenses we typically pay in first month of following year – such as last payroll period and credit card charges – will have to be reimbursed from 2020 grant, not 2021 grant. This will affect end-of-year balance, though not overall revenue and expenses.

## Organizational Business

- **Board Meeting (Oct. 20).** County Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo will give presentation on Ramsey County strategies for housing homeless residents, including leasing rooms in hotels such as Best Western Bandana Square. This has been contentious issue in other neighborhoods. To maintain civil discussion, we will:
  - focus on recognizing that these are individual people experiencing homelessness (not “the homeless”)
  - hold questions till end, monitor the chat box, and ask people to raise their hands in Zoom
  - be sure to let people know this is a public discussion that is being recorded and archived
  - At the very least we will post link in the newsletter and minutes. Will need to consult our policies on how long we retain; will also need to investigate if it makes sense to begin to archive recordings on a YouTube channel.
- **Action Items.**
  - Fiscal agency for North Dale Booster Club's Toys for Tots event
  - Appoint Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek to Land Use
  - Environment: TBD
  - Land Use: Rethinking I-94 coalition
  - Neighborhood Relations: Food distribution (possible)
  - Neighborhood Relations: Thanksgiving partnerships

Next meeting: Tuesday Nov. 10, 5:30 p.m.



- Neighborhood Relations: Philanthropy

Extensive discussion about proposed language, which seems to turn board decisions over entirely to the committee, making this the norm rather than the exception. Emergency or time-sensitive needs do arise in which there is no chance for board to weigh in, but this language seems to give committee authority to do whatever it wants whenever it wants, rather than having more eyes on the decision. Recent email exchanges seem to suggest that committee has not fully adopted the mindset that activities should fit strategic goals of district council and needs of the neighborhood. There is risk of burning people out, overusing our communication tools, and weakening credibility of organization. Have to guard against arbitrary, carte blanche decision-making and think ahead, when different people might be active in committee. Don't want to dampen enthusiasm, or discourage support of worthy needs, but there need to be safeguards on how they assess requests. Melissa will talk with committee, ask them to have more discussions, and come up with a consistent way to vet requests, using a decision-making flowchart, sieve, or scorecard model.

- **Conflicts of interest.** As organization gets more involved in supporting philanthropic efforts, board members need to be aware of conflicts of interest (real or perceived) and recuse themselves from voting on action items that directly involve them, their employer, etc.
- **Strategic planning.** Michael shared Catchafire consultant's recommendations based on board self-assessment survey. Officers highlighted SWOT topics from their small-group discussions with board members. Officers will summarize their group discussions in writing. Michael will share these, consultant's summary, and survey summary with all board members; pull out 10-12 key areas; then ask board members to pick their top 5 priorities of what to work on. We will then form board work group to begin crafting new mission, vision, and values statements, plus strategic initiatives based on board preferences. Work group will seek volunteers, but also invite specific board members.

## **District 10 Environmental Committee Meeting**

October 14, 2020, 7:00 p.m. Google Meets

In attendance: Colleen Satyshur, Dawn Lamm, Sara Benzkofer (board), Dan Edgerton (board), Amanda Rohrer (board), Benjamin Kowlasky-Grahek (board), Devan Paulus, Mike Ireland (board), Thea Evans, Christine Baeumler, Michael Kuchta (Executive Director), Jennifer Victor-Larsen (board), Julie Wegscheid, Rachel Bowers (board)

### **STANDARD ITEMS 7:00 - 7:06**

- Welcome and Introductions
- Amend/Adopt the Agenda

### **PRESENTATION 7:06 - 7:41**

- Bee Skyrise Research: Colleen Satyshur, Research Coordinator, Department of Ecology Evolution and Behavior, University of Minnesota
  - Bee Real Bee Everywhere project update
  - 2017 first sculptures installed (at Como Lake and Lake Phalen)
    - Sculpture, hex sign in several languages, interpretive signs
    - Pollinator education by bike
  - MN has ~470 bee species
  - Habitat needs
    - Food: pollen or nectar
    - Shelter: place to live and build nests to rear young
  - Larvae overwinter in nest and emerge in the next spring
  - Making artificial nest sites
    - positioning
    - consider parasites
    - Not much known about best design/what bees prefer
  - Skyrise Mini Experiments
    - face East and South (bees can choose)
    - give bees choice of hole size
    - repeat experiment in many locations and over many years
    - took blocks out of sculpture in winter to see what bees were there
      - 10 bee species, 5 wasp species found (also ants)
      - More nests in south blocks and .25" hole size blocks
      - DNA analysis of plant species that were used in nests
    - Takeaways
      - both east and south nests work
      - bees used all hole sizes
      - sculptures provided healthy habitat
    - Future
      - Sculptures refurbished
      - Ownership will transfer to St Paul, need to see if there is interest in maintaining them
    - More information in a report available at street car station

### **COMMUNITY SECTION 7:41 - 7:42**

- No community issues

## **INITIATIVES AND UPDATES 7:42 - 8:31**

- Capitol Region Watershed District Grant (Sara Benzkofer)
  - Received grants in last several years
  - Looking for ideas for this year's grants (due November 1st)
    - Leaf sweeping, partnering with businesses to work on adopt a drain, student water quality did not go forward due to COVID
    - Lake clean-up did go forward
  - Incorporate Trash Brigade?
    - Worth having a conversation with Watershed District about it
    - Maybe coordinate with/expand Lake Clean-up?
  - Leaf sweeping education? Safer sidewalk salting education?
    - Send informational postcards to district households?
    - Would align with Watershed district goals.
    - Committee is interested in this idea
  - Lake clean-up
    - need to replace small supplies (gloves, etc)
    - nice to provide snacks
    - Committee wants to continue with this
  - Next Steps
    - Committee is approving Action Item for board authorizing to apply to grant
    - Language will be sent out via email
- Pierce Butler Meadow Seed Harvesting & MNSEED Project (Dawn Lamm)
  - Seed collecting event Sept 19th
    - Collected at 5 sites
    - Collected 44 species for seeding Pierce Butler Meadow (at Pierce Butler and Snelling)
    - Will collect more seed in White Bear on Oct 24th
  - Looking to build a seed network
    - Will be distributed through seed libraries and community gardens
  - Cyber Seed Crawl Nov 7th
    - socially distanced seed swap
    - people can make arrangements to swap seeds
    - Como Seed Library Facebook page for more information
- Como Lake DIY Clean-Up #3 (Mike Ireland)
  - Clean-Up #2 (August) re-cap
    - 9 participants contributed 22 hours
    - removed estimated 159 pounds
    - 2 groups did not report
  - Clean-Up #3
    - pick up tools this week
    - goes through this week
    - \$10 per person gift cards, Conny's is closing, need new place
- Como Lake DIY Walking Tour (Mike Ireland)
  - Watershed District hopes to get it done by end of October

- DIY walk, educational signs around the lake
- Trash Brigade (Jennifer Victor-Larsen)
  - Talked to volunteer manager for parks
    - existing volunteer network and programming
    - supportive, but doesn't have capacity to concentrate on Como Park
    - suggested to contribute to quarterly newsletter, share what's relevant about Como Park
  - Next Steps
    - Does the committee want to pursue an "adopt a tract" effort? i.e. formalizing existing volunteer efforts
    - Have conversation with Lindsay at Watershed District about incorporating it into grant
- Churchill Gardens (Michael Kuchta)
  - Inspected rain gardens, found undesirable plants
  - Workday on Sept 25th
    - ~25 volunteers
  - Neighbors working on recruiting new stewards
    - D10 needs to keep tabs on stewardship and provide support
    - Probably need spring and fall workdays
- Climate Change Survey
  - [mn.gov/climate/get-involved](https://mn.gov/climate/get-involved)
  - Reminder to fill out survey
  - Future meeting also in survey

### **FUTURE MEETINGS 8:31 - 8:40**

- Discuss Ideas for Presentations
  - Citizens Utility Board
  - Jumping worm - UMD
  - Climate Change/Resiliency Plan from city
  - Watershed District: Health of lake, data on initiatives/clean-up/etc.
  - Access for underserved groups to natural resources (outreach, education, recreation)
    - Como Snow Sports, Urban Boat Builders, Wilderness Inquiry, City of St Paul ice fishing

### **ADJOURN 8:40**

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- D10 Board Meeting, Tuesday, October 20, 7:00 p.m., Google Hangout

**Next Committee Meeting Time:** November 11, 7:00 p.m.

## **District 10 Environmental Committee Meeting**

September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 7 pm Google Meet

In attendance: Sara Benzkofer, Michael Kuchta, Jennifer Victor-Larsen, Mike Ireland, Dan Edgerton, Dawn Lamm, Gordon Wrobel, Bill Niebur, Susan Jane Cheney, Rachel Bowers

Start 7:02, Adjourn 7:46

### **STANDARD ITEMS 7:02 – 7:07**

- Welcome and Introductions
- Amend/Adopt Agenda
  - Addition: Bee Sky Rise update
  - Addition: Event on Sept 19th
  - Addition: Churchill Gardens

### **INITIATIVES AND UPDATES 7:07 – 7:46**

- Como Lake Clean up #2 (Mike Ireland)
  - 5-6 groups requested tools, tool return will be Saturday
  - Vouchers provided for canoes and kayaks, very popular
  - Will try to do one more event this year after leaves are down
- Como Curb Clean Up (Mike Ireland)
  - Como Active Citizens Network has run it in past years
  - Goal is for neighbors to clean up leaves out of the street to take phosphorus out of lake
  - Planning to transition to a neighborhood-based effort
  - Will start beginning of October
  - If anyone is interested in helping with the transition, talk to Mike I.
- Bee Sky Rises (Mike Ireland)
  - Presentation at October committee meeting
- Beulah Lane Compost Site Reconstruction (Michael Kuchta)
  - No new updates
  - Currently hung up in city attorney's office, will need an agreement between city and county for diversion of parkland use
  - Less optimistic that there will be movement before winter
  - County sprayed sanitizer and deodorizer in containers. Will maybe swap out bins for new ones in the future
- Churchill Gardens (Van Slyke-Horton-Churchill-Chatsworth)
  - Gardens serve as storm water diversion project
  - Watershed District provided evaluation of project. Said there were obstructions in inlet, needs more plants, and there are unwanted plants gaining a foothold (ragweed, trees, etc.)

- Are they talking about the right garden? Michael will follow up
    - Schedule a clean-up effort with neighbors? Just District 10 people?
      - Reach out to neighbors
  - Is there a Master Water Steward assigned to gardens who could help? Michael will check
  - Grasses in the northern garden too high for the traffic? Safety issue
- Trash Brigade (Jennifer Victor-Larsen)
  - Trash trouble area in woods across from street car station, other areas in park
  - Explore idea of offering areas of park to adopt for clean-up, maintenance, enhancement
    - Engage neighbors
  - Will need to work with Parks Department, Tricia Worley, volunteer coordinator is a suggested contact
  - Also talk to city maintenance department
  - Work with Sister City organization?
  - Jennifer will reach out to suggested contacts
- U of M Landscape Arboretum Pollinator Summit Series
  - Monday, September 14 – Thursday September 17
  - Learn more and register here: <https://www.arboretum.umn.edu/Pollinators2020.aspx>
- September 19<sup>th</sup> Seed Collection at Pierce Butler Meadow
  - Seed collection event
  - Dawn will send out details
  - MN Horticulture Society is starting a seed library/network for native and essential crop seeds

## COMMUNITY SECTION

- None

## Land Use Committee - District 10 Como Community Council – 10/7/2020 – Minutes

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1. Call to order 7:04pm (remote meeting via Zoom)

Present: 29

Board members: Maggie Zimmerman, Rebecca Calvo  
Michael Kuchta (D10 Staff)

Presenters/guests: Debbie Meister (Neighborhoods First!), Alice Messer (Landscape Architect, St. Paul Parks and Rec), Randy Newton (Traffic Engineer, St. Paul Public Works).

Community members: Anne Fundakowski, Anne Thom, Craig Foster, Devan Paulus, Heather Brenden, Dolores Rufenacht, Jane O'Brien, Jenny Beilke, Julie Jackson, Sandy Barnes, Scott Brenden, Ted Budd, Cole Fundakowski, Dee Lukas, Adam Brady, Rich Fundakowski, Jeff Brown, Jeff Thole, Kathee Foran, Kelly Finn Searles, Marijo Schwiderski, Tony Ryan, Paul Czarnecki

2. Amend/Adopt Agenda

*Moved by Rebecca Calvo, seconded by Jeff Brown.*

Minutes: Rebecca Calvo

3. Land Use Voting Procedures Reminders

4. New Business

- a. Rethinking I-94 (7:10-7:25)

- Neighborhoods First! Presentation

**Debbie Meister:** Neighborhoods First! formed originally with intent to make Ayd Mill Rd. a linear park. Current work is focused on biking and pedestrians, sustainable living along the I-94 corridor. In the 1960s, construction of I-94 destroyed the Rondo neighborhood. We want to mitigate noise, traffic, and air pollution from the highway. We don't want additional lanes of highway, we want public transit and safer crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. We want improved safety at the I-94 / I-280 interchange. We would love to have District 10 endorse the work of the organization.

Can we get a copy of the flier? Yes, sent to Michael for the D10 newsletter.

Have you talked with Metro Transit? Yes, have talked to staff, MNDot has an agency to work with community. They are involved.

**Moved: District 10 Como Community Council endorses the tenets of Rethinking I-94 and support the ideas presented on the flier shared at the October 2020 Land Use Committee meeting.**

*Moved by Maggie Zimmerman, seconded by Rebecca Calvo.*

Vote: 25-0.

**Motion passes.**

- b. Continued Discussion: East Como Drive (7:30-8:30)

- St Paul Public Works – Randy Newton
- St Paul Parks & Rec – Alice Messer

**Randy Newton:** Closures were related to pandemic and considered temporary. We need to budget into work plan, we anticipated that some closures might want to be considered for permanent closure.

What did the closure cost?

RN: \$50/day for traffic control; around \$1500/month. Rent for signs and barricades. Soft costs (staff monitor equipment).

What would the cost be for permanent closure? Would it be a one-time cost, or would there be ongoing road maintenance costs? Are there other projects like this (permanent road closure)? What's the city's decision-making process?

RN: The biggest issue is maintenance we still need to clear snow if there's a road. If road were removed, substantial construction project. Millions to tens of millions of dollars in cost (his off-the-cuff guess). Could Parks take on at cost (construction and ongoing maintenance)? Would need to be budgeted.

Did you monitor traffic flow on surrounding streets?

RN: No, we didn't. Traffic volumes were down from typical levels at beginning of pandemic and road closure. Peak traffic hours are still lower than typical, but overall vehicle traffic is similar to before COVID.

Are there criteria that determine accessibility to the greenspace?

AM: Grand Round plan recommends testing closure of ECLD.

Lakeview/Parkview are scheduled to be rebuilt in 2023. Is the rebuilding still on schedule?

RN: Will make sure, if it's announced and scheduled, then it should be completed on time.

Has either department had conversations with the Capitol Region Watershed District?

AM: We did not look at that stretch, recommendations on the Pavilion side/Lexington and runoff from golf course and Como Zoo and Conservatory.

Is access for emergency vehicles on ECLD needed? How does that road fit into snow plowing in that part of the neighborhood? How would closure affect those areas?

RN: Road doesn't have parking; designated as night plow routes. We would need to look more closely at this. There are easier routes for emergency vehicles to access Neighborhood.

Why not move boat launch to east side of Como Lake? Add fishing pier, picnic tables, food trucks to east side of lake. Lots of visitors from outside neighborhood come to park, how can we spread out activities in park more equitably?

AM: We definitely want to keep this in mind for planning, because Como Park is one of the most used regional parks.

We have a large park and not all of us support more greenspace in this area of the park.

People like to drive on ECLD to view the lake and it's important to preserve this ability.

How is traffic monitored? Are reckless driving problems tracked?

RN: We don't have a great way to track reckless driving. When we collect data, we collect vehicle speed; can analyze to find 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed and speed outliers (e.g. more than 10+ mph over speed limit).

How do we get the name of ECLD changed? Lots of confusion about roads with Como in the name.

RN: I don't know exactly how that process works. I think it might involve a petition or require approval from City Council. What do you change the name to? Could be lots of disagreement. We'd have to check into what the process is.

Would you be studying how often the parking lot is (mis)used? Often occupied after park is



closed.

AM: Traffic study would include the parking lot.

Is it legal to sit in a car idling for an extended period of time?

AM: When the park is open, it's allowed – I don't know of a policy about idling. City vehicles have a no-idling policy.

Would the traffic study take place in summer and winter?

RM: Traffic studies are traditionally done using counts over a period of time (48 hours). There are new tools available to us that would help us understand how things change over the course of a year. Limitation is that we can't get "typical" traffic use during certain times (e.g. during the fair, on a snow day). Warmer weather is when the traffic studies are typically done.

Is there a plan for Parks to clear snow from both the walking and biking paths around the lake?

AM: I don't have an answer for that, but I can bring that to Parks' attention.

Could we place picnic tables near the East parking lot this spring?

AM: I don't know what the funding source for picnic tables would be. We'd need to look at cost and site feasibility.

*A discussion occurred about ways to increase usage of the east side of the lake, and how to make it more accessible to park users. No action was taken by the committee.*

## 5. Staff Reports – Michael Kuchta (8:33-8:50)

### a. CITY

- Proposal to redefine "family" under zoning code

Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing for Nov. 13.

Three options are under consideration, with different combinations of how many legally-related adults and unrelated adults could constitute a single household. Goal is to better accommodate multi-generational families, extended families, and families sharing living space in order to afford housing.

You can get more details or express your preference and comments at:

[www.stpaul.gov/family-study](http://www.stpaul.gov/family-study)

- Capital Improvement Budget

The CIB committee is recommending 10 community projects for the \$1 million in funding that is available in the 2020-21 funding cycle. None of the 6 proposals submitted in District 10 is recommended. The mayor makes the final decision. CIB proposals for projects in District 10 and their rankings:

13. A **marked crosswalk** outside Como By The Lake Apartments; estimated cost: \$185,000.

14. Informational and wayfinding **kiosks** at six locations in Como Regional Park; estimated cost: \$75,579.

15. **Security cameras** and additional crime-prevention tactics along Como Lake's walking paths; estimated cost: \$198,688.

19. **Exterior signs** for Northwest Como Recreation Center; estimated cost: \$44,560.

33. **Fencing** for a dog park in Como Regional Park; estimated cost: \$89,930.

39. **Snow-making equipment** for a 5K loop of Nordic skiing on Como golf course; estimated cost: \$5,290,000.

- Dock & Paddle

City Council was scheduled to vote Oct. 7 to amend restaurant's lease requirement.

Changes include: reducing the restaurant's commission payment from 10 percent to 6

percent for the 12 months ending March 31, 2021; eliminating any minimum payment to the city for the same 12 months (the existing language requires a \$100,000 minimum payment); and allowing the restaurant to reduce or eliminate the hours it is open between now and March 31. No update on contractual requirement to do a community evaluation.

- Lancer Catering

Parks and Recreation Commission is recommending reducing contractual payments Lancer owes the city for Como Town and for food service in the Zoo and Conservatory. Recommendation would:

- reduce food commission by 5% across the board through March 31, 2021. Current commission payments range from 10% to 20%, depending on their source and time of year. New commission rates would range from 5%-15%.
- reduce minimum payments due between September 1, 2020-July 1, 2021 from \$170,000 to \$85,000

- Como/Front/Dale

City Council voted Sept. 23 to transfer \$229,125 in unspent funds from the Como/Front/Dale Commercial Vitality Zone to the Rice/Larpenteur Commercial Vitality Zone.

- Como Pavilion/Golf Course Parking Lots

Design team has been soliciting additional public comment, including promoting their interactive map through lawn signs near the Lakeside Pavilion.

- Half Time Rec

No update from Department of Safety and Inspections on implementing our language.

## b. INSTITUTIONS

- County Homeless Shelter at Best Western

County Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo will give an update to the full Como Community Council board Oct. 20 on Ramsey County's efforts to house unsheltered people in hotels and other available indoor facilities.

- Humphrey Job Corps Center

Construction is about halfway done. They are adding HVAC systems, new elevators, and other safety features. Most work is on Building 1 and the gymnasium. Job is contracted by federal Department of Labor.

Campus has about 10 students living on campus who otherwise would be homeless; newly arriving students are quarantined for 2 weeks. Most students enrolled in distance learning. DOL will decide when to resume in-person training; earliest estimate is late October, with a phased re-entry. Most staff are working on campus.

- Hmong College Prep Academy

Site review on middle school construction was Sept. 29. Construction scheduled to start mid-November, though it is not clear if building construction can begin if skyway permit is not granted in advance. We asked Public Works to steer construction traffic away from Jessamine; they are not sure which division is responsible for that kind of decision (maybe Right of Way?). Architect said construction gate is scheduled to be set up on Pascal; they will ask contractor to recommend that sub-contractors making deliveries use Snelling and Brewster, but there are no guarantees sub-contractors will comply. Also raised issue of bus queues backing up along Pascal and Jessamine. School says it believes problem will disappear once construction is finished, because more buses

will be able to stage in the parking lot; students then can use skyway to get to main building without crossing Brewster at grade.

c. PROPERTY ISSUES

- 1349 Midway Parkway

The city gave St. Paul Women's Recovery House until Oct. 5 to correct code deficiencies or risk losing its certificate of occupancy. No update on current status.

- 1119 Montana Ave.

Still classified as vacant property. City scheduled re-inspection for Oct. 5 to determine if it is eligible for certificate of occupancy to be used as rental property.

- 1013 Jameson

The city's Department of Safety and Inspections has declared this vacant building a nuisance. The owner has until Oct. 24 to correct 11 code deficiencies or risk demolition.

- 1554 Midway Parkway

Developer added security cameras and beefed up fencing last month. No other update.

d. LICENSES

- Carter's BP

The gas station license for this convenience store at 623 Como Ave. are up for renewal on Dec. 29. Anyone with concerns should email District 10 or contact the office of Ward 5 Council Member Amy Brendmoen.

- Duke's Car and Towing

The license for this auto repair garage at 977 Front is up for renewal on Oct. 18. Anyone with concerns should email District 10 or contact the office of Ward 5 Council Member Amy Brendmoen.

- Speedway

The gas station and liquor licenses for this convenience store at 950 Lexington Parkway N are up for renewal on Dec. 1. Anyone with concerns should email District 10 or contact the office of Ward 1 Council Member Dai Thao.

6. Coming events

- a. Next Board Meeting – October 20th @ 7pm – Virtual
- b. Next Land Use Meeting - November 4th @ 7pm - Virtual

7. Adjourn 8:52pm

I have a request for **expanded use of the east side of the lake on the drive**. If you would please accept these comments for the record to be included with the Wednesday night, October 7 District 10 Land Use meeting.

Como Park is a regional park meant to be accessed and enjoyed by everyone regardless of age, physical ability, income or race. Those who are proponents of closing the park drive are asking for this for their benefit.

Parks has concentrated everything on the west side. I am asking for some of the park amenities to be located on the east side.

For example, I know there was discussion of a boat launch. The east parking lot is near the shoreline (nearer than on the west side) and the existing steps to the lake could be turned into a slope and a few more spots added to the lot to accommodate boats. I understand the lake allows non-motorized watercraft - I see people now trampling the shoreline to launch canoes or kayaks and I see people trying to do this awkwardly without knocking anyone over on the promenade as they try to get to the water.

That parking lot could also, during the summer, be partially reserved for food trucks, especially if expanded and picnic tables placed there. It would be nice to give some small, minority owned food businesses a presence on the east side of the park in contrast to the Pavilion restaurant.

There would and should be expanded use of the existing green space on the east side. I request that Parks consider placing picnic tables near that parking lot. Again, all of the the tables are on the west side of the park and this gives families that are low income and cannot afford Pavilion food a place to bring their own foods far away from where kids will ask to buy something they can't afford.

The fishing pier on the south side is generally crowded and the adjacent lot is full. My observation is that the park could use a second fishing pier and the point would be a great spot to do that and promote urban fishing, or launch watercraft. In the winter, some kind of launch in this area would facilitate use by the ice fisher's for their sleds and gear. These park users are accessing the ice covered lake from the east side.

My opinion is that instead of closing off the east side that Parks really look at how space on the west side is becoming congested and what would really make Como Regional Park more accessible to all residents is an expanded offering and access to the park, including being able to drive there and use the east side in order to enjoy the space. I belong to an Irish cultural dance group and we have used the area near the east parking lot because we could easily access outdoor space and easily carry the boards we need for dance a short distance without having to navigate the congestion on the west side.

The park drive would be necessary for this expanded activity and the parking lot would be well utilized. More people, not fewer and more distanced (pandemic times excepted), makes a safer park.

If there is a plan to remove vehicles, I would ask that the road still be open for use by a streetcar that would circle the lake and transport people around to where they parked or just allow people to view the entire lake. I'll admit, I don't know where we will get one, the one at Bde Mka Ska is quite popular, and it would be a lot more fun than a shuttle bus. The State Fair has streetcars so

they must be available somewhere. People would still choose to and should be able to see the entire lake.

In reviewing demographic data, Como Park is a neighborhood that is 77% white and has a median household income of \$53,227. The neighbors asking for closure of the park drive already have access to quiet and safety and their request seeks to limit access to the same for other city residents, those who live outside of Como Park. The city is more attractive to all people if it is easy to get around and there are multiple ways to do so, including being able to drive, and their proposal limits the accessibility for many people who are aging and/or have physical mobility issues.

Bordering Como Park are two neighborhoods that I am guessing, and I'd be willing to help survey to substantiate this, enjoy Como Park, but do drive there because of safety issues and the park being just slightly out of reach on foot or by bike. The North End neighborhood is 24% Black and 36% Asian Pacific Islanders. Median income is \$24,677. The Frogtown or Thomas Dale neighborhood is 32% Black and 33% Asian Pacific Islanders. Median income is \$33,601.

The people who are lucky enough to be able to walk to Como Park live in Como Park. I believe that Frogtown, North End and Eastsiders have to drive here and those are disproportionately low income neighborhoods. Closing a road around and through the park cuts off their access, and this will also affect residents on the west side of the lake with increased traffic and parking issues.

When you compare that demographic data with Como Park, it would appear that closing the park drive creates a barrier to those residents being able to easily get to the park by car, and that's really the only option they have.

Whether the park drive is closed or not, it would be worth considering a shuttle from other city neighborhoods, for example from Jimmy Lee, that run back and forth the east side of the lake or a direct Metro Transit Route that follows some of the proposed BRT routes.

I am also going to suggest Parks look at that acre or so of green space that sits empty on East Como Blvd between Chatsworth and Milton. It would be fun to see benches set up and a concrete pad for a stage where smaller concerts could be held, it would be a great spot for busking by young musicians or impromptu sessions by park users who might want to play somewhere and an audience to attend to see something new, it could be used for both music and dance. It could also be used to community art classes such as drawing or painting. If that space isn't feasible, it would be feasible to have a cultural gathering area near the east lot.

On behalf of residents of Victoria Street and, contrary to claims made by some proponents of closing the park drive, there would be a substantial increase to traffic on our street. Thus, their request, for quiet and green space for themselves because they live closer to the lake and can afford to do so, seems at best inconsiderate of their neighbors.

A recent traffic study shows that the average speed on Victoria is 38mph. Lowering the speed limit to 25 mph I don't believe has had any effect on that average. We all pay property taxes and we all use the roads for access to this city and only a few property owners would benefit from closing the park drive, while many others would see a negative impact.

The increase in traffic on Victoria would result in the need for increased maintenance - maintenance residents on Victoria will have to pay for. This would also impact the Right of Way assessment Victoria Street residents pay. We are being asked to take on the financial, environmental and safety burden for the benefit of a few residents who live on Como Blvd and neighborhood residents who again, are lucky to live here and seem to only care about the park being accessible to the Como Park neighborhood.

The proposal shows parking to be shifted to the surrounding neighborhood streets, especially Lakeview Avenue. Lakeview is presently an unimproved street. In order to support increased traffic, Lakeview likely would have to be improved - curb and gutter, pavement, fixing sidewalks and lighting.

There's been a claim that removing the lot and the drive would result in improved water quality to the lake. I would like some evidence showing where runoff comes from, because my observation is there is a large pipe on the east side of the lake that collects water from our homes up the hill, including the residents on East Como Blvd., some of whom haven't let that stop them from applying fertilizer to their lawns.

We don't own the public space. We have an obligation to ensure that everyone can access it in order to use it and we have an obligation to ensure that we use it well. There is available space and accessibility on the east side of the lake that fits in with some of the park plans for engaging more residents, especially low income residents and residents who are people of color in activities outdoors. For that reason I believe it is more beneficial for all residents in St. Paul to keep the drive open with a plan in place to locate activities over to the east side where the terrain and space exist, including a boat launch space, picnic tables, a community open gathering space and fishing access on the east side of the park. This makes it more enjoyable and more accessible for everyone and will require that the road stays open for the benefit of the entire St. Paul community.

Anne Thom  
1355 North Victoria Street  
St. Paul, MN 55117

Jeremy Stomberg:

Hello, I am unable to "attend" the Land Use Committee meeting this week, but would like to pass on my opinion on the proposal for the permanent closure of E Como Lake Drive.

I am a fan of the proposal, as long as the road is replaced with expanded walking and bicycle paths, but for the most part changed to green space with new tree plantings.

In addition, I would propose keeping Lakeview Drive open to the parking lot to allow for park visitors with mobility impairments to visit the east side of the lake, and moving the walking/biking paths to the west as shown in the attached image that I just threw together.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the LUC's recommendations.



Council Neighborhood Relations Committee  
Thursday, Oct 8th, 2020 @ 7:00pm Online

**Attendance:**

Board members: Sarah Reuter, Jenne Nelson, Olivia Morawiecki, Jill Henricksen, Ben Kowalsky-Grahek, Melissa Brannon.

D10 Staff: Michael Kuchta

Community Members: Darcy Rivers, Dolores Rufenacht

**Old Business:**

The coat drive for the Salvation Army was a success! The numbers: 57 coats, 19 sets of gloves, 12 scarves, 12 hats, 5 sets of hats and gloves, 11 pairs of snow pants, 6 ear warmers, 2 vests, 2 pairs of boots.

**Philanthropy:**

- 1) Olivia- Como by the Lake Thanksgiving.
  - a) Last year, D10 was a partner with the Block Nurse Program and paid for a Thanksgiving meal. This year, BNP is partnering with TST Creative Catering. For \$10, we can provide a meal for seniors who live at 901 Como. BNP has a budget of \$500, which will provide 50 meals. The goal is 100 meals for seniors. D10 will ask the neighborhood community for another \$500 to reach the goal. D10 will also ask for 10-15 volunteers to deliver meals the week of the 23rd. Michael will include the ask in the newsletter on Friday Nov 6th, and then post every Friday. We will post on FB, NextDoor. Olivia will get us an end date for when to stop asking/posting (so TST knows how many meals to make). **Create an action item to bring to the full board in October.**
- 2) North Suburban Kiwanis Club of St. Paul wants to partner with the Neighborhood Relations Committee on another Thanksgiving-related effort. They will prepare baskets that contain all of the food to make a Thanksgiving meal for families who have lost income due to Covid-19, and we will help connect them to families via neighborhood organizations. We will talk with our current institutional partners: IIMN, local congregations, local schools, local rec centers (North Dale, Northwest Como). Darcy will talk to Northwest Como.
- 3) Sanneh Foundation partnership. It's looking likely that we will be able to offer food boxes within D10. Michael has been scouting a location; the Buddhist Temple on Dale and Front seems promising and is on two bus lines.
  - a) Details:
    - i) Drop-offs can occur anywhere from once/week to once/month, on Wed or Fri afternoon.



- ii) Deliveries consist of boxes of food that contain produce, meats, spices, and other items for about 12 meals through programs we serve with local food sourcing.
  - iii) There is a form that participants have to fill out. Participants need to have been negatively affected by COVID. There is a brief survey (via Google) that needs to be completed for each household that receives resources. [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOo\\_OQFLZI\\_b2wedqE6WadqfrGl6f95MoUJbPcayl0kJhZMQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScOo_OQFLZI_b2wedqE6WadqfrGl6f95MoUJbPcayl0kJhZMQ/viewform)
  - iv) We will need to bring portable tables to any food distribution event to keep food boxes off the ground.
- b) Unanswered questions:
- i) Our insurance company needs to weigh in on what coverage we need for vols and participants.
  - ii) We need to know how many volunteers we need for each distribution (Sanneh usually uses 2)?
  - iii) How often do we want to do it? There will be 50-100 boxes delivered at each event. If we held a food distribution event twice a month, we would meet a need.
- c) Next steps:
- i) **Melissa will write down the questions she recommends we think about, based on her experience.**
  - ii) **Michael will draft an action item, assuming we get the go-ahead from the temple.**
- 4) **Jenne will create an action item that covers us for philanthropy for a certain time period.**

### **Know Your Como:**

NRC would like to foster community through a project called Know Your Como, where we ask neighbors to share their stories and their pictures with us. The rough idea is to feature someone new on a monthly basis to give us time to meet with folks, take their pictures, and ask them questions. We will crowdsource a creative team to take this on. **Michael will prepare a draft.**

### **Como Decoration Celebration**

We have 14 sign-ups! On the 18th, we are closed to new sign-ups. We will need a volunteer to create a map of participating dwellings/blocks/buildings at that point (to make a google map and pin locations?). The prize will be cookies from Cookie Cart. Or have a volunteer take them? Keep it in the backs of our minds to hold a Halloween parade next year!

- A) Next steps:
- a) **Find a volunteer to create a google map.**
  - b) **Can we get pictures for the website/FB?**

### **Winter Fun**

What can we put forward to help people get through this winter? Some ideas:

- Snow sculptures?

- Broad scavenger hunt for the kids while they are out?
- Horse and carriage photo op?
- Cardboard cutouts around the neighborhood for photo ops?
- Neighborhood cookbook
- Leverage Zoom account: virtual yoga, trivia
- Snowman contest

### **Racial Equity update:**

First Sunday Series on 1pm Oct 11th over Zoom with Lissa Jones-Lofgren. "Equity in Community: Getting the language right." We will record so it's available later. Next one is on the 25th with Richard McLemore. Thinking we'll do two speakers per month.

Last week, the Anti-Racist Working Group met with Gretchen, a volunteer with Isaiah. She generated a lot of interest and energy from our group re: housing.

#### A) Some ideas:

- a) Partnering with Sustain St. Paul to be a guest speaker at the full board meeting.
- b) Participating in the Mapping Prejudice project.
- c) Adopting an Equitable Development Scorecard- a few other DCs are using this, it's a tool we can use and recommend to the Land Use Committee potentially. A scorecard gives you a framework to look at a project and initiative through an equity and inclusion lens. Who is this project designed for? What is the impact of who will be served or excluded? Is there affordable housing and at what level? One outcome is that we could say D10 would not approve any kind of economic development that didn't meet our equity standards. Here's one example that came out of West Side Community Organization:  
<https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/2019-09-25%20Equitable%20Development%20Scorecard%20-%20FINAL.pdf> Here's another: <http://thealliancetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/EquitableDevelopmentScorecard.pdf>
- d) Next steps:
  - i) **Invite Land Use and other board members to attend anti-racism work group meeting.**
  - ii) **Start working on a scorecard with the anti-racist workgroup.** They can start crafting a version that would work for Como and then come to one of our committee meetings and present. Let's encourage the workgroup to have a real impact on the board. That is what we wish for them to do.

**Community Concerns:** None