WISPPA

Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action

January 10, 2015 Minutes

Date: January 10, 2015

Location: Library Community Room

Present: Lela Bissner, Dollie Chapman, Betty Emirhanian, Diana Mahmud, Barbara Sinclair, Kim Hughes, Connie Wardlow, Nancy Wilms, Ellen Wood, Ellen Daigle, Janet Braun, Becky Thompson, Ron Rosen, Lisa Cavelier, Beverly Biber, Gary Pia, Gretchen Robinette, Aarin Edwards, Sally Kilby, Scott Feldman, Lisa Pendleton, Bobbie Nansen, Polly Podewell, Cheryl Jacobson, Kim Hughes, Juana Eva Martinez, Lissa Reynolds, Judi Barhydt, Lisa Roa, Lisa Boyd, Bianca Richards, Judith Harris, Marina Khubesrian, Mary Ferrero and Joe Loo

1. Creating Community Connections Roundtable

**Juana Martinez, President, Vecinos de South Pasadena:**

The organization began with residents looking for neighbors who they had a connection to, with similar backgrounds. Vecinos means neighbors in Spanish and it has become an organization of people who are almost like family.

Their mission is to enhance the lives of South Pasadena residents by advancing education for themselves, for their children, for others, promoting the Latino culture, family and community, also contributing to the community at large.

Vecinos achieved 501(c)3 status just over two years ago. Their

Annual Scholarship Awards doubled last year and five South Pasadena students received $10,000 in scholarships. They held a community forum on micro aggressions that are endured on a daily basis, both in the work place and in the classroom. Last September they held their first Annual Vecinos de Amigos career fair and hope to continue them. The organization received a Certificate of Congressional Recognition by Congresswoman Judy Chu. First College Readiness workshops were well received and they plan to continue and expand them. They have made contributions to Spark and the SPHS academic decathlon team.

An upcoming event is a Havana Nights Party. They look forward to offering more scholarships for differing educational endeavors, having more community forums and workshops and more collaboration with other community organizations.

**Joe Loo, 1st Vice President, South Pasadena Chinese-American Club:**

The organization incorporated in 1989 as a 501(c)3. They came together as a group, right after the teachers strike in 1988, to promote education.

Their mission is 3 pronged: to support academic programs, encourage community service and promote the Chinese culture.

They presented scholarships at the high school – 2 academic scholarships of $2,000 based on 5 criteria: written report; transcripts; GPA; community service; and extra-curricular activities, and 2 $10,000 scholarships based on community service. They give grants to the five schools and the library: $1500 per elementary school and $3000 each to the high school and the middle school. They also sponsor the Math Field Day, the Library’s summer reading program and with the Library, author night.

They have been involved with the Union Station Adopt a Meal, the feed the homeless program and have been feeding 50-60 people every month for fifteen years. They have a Chinese New Year lunch for the Senior Center. This year it will be at the War Memorial in order to accommodate the large attendance. Their big fund raiser is their Annual Ball- Moon Festival– they have entertainment, food, activities for children, contests. They want to show their culture.

They will be sponsoring a dinner for the Special Olympics.

They donate to SPEF every year and donated $10,000 to the Chinese Garden at the Huntington Library. They also sponsor candidate forums with the Women’s Club.

Dual language immersion is coming to SP schools for which they have offered their support in terms of people resources and provided $20,000 for dual language for Mandarin in elementary schools in 2016.

**Beverly Biber, Women’s Club of South Pasadena:**

The Women’s Club was established in 1899, as the Women’s Improvement Association and remained that until sometime in the 1920s. Part of their improvement agenda was to make South Pasadena a prettier place. They created the first park in SP at El Centro and Glendon. As part of their improvement agenda they were very effective in making this a green community by planting a lot of trees. They worked with the City in 1911 to make sure the parkland in the Arroyo remained parkland, helped establish the Arroyo Seco Park, and have been supportive of the nature park in the Arroyo.

The Collier sisters, who were founders of the Club, were also instrumental in making sure the town had a library.

Their primary mission is to be a charitable and philanthropic organization and to be of service to those in need. They have a long history: during the world war I they helped wrap bandages and during the depression helped neighbors in need by collecting food. In the 1940s they joined with other Women’s Clubs to establish the Penny Pines Reforestation Project working with the Forestry Service to provide funds for the maintenance of the forest.

Upcoming events:

* March they have their Annual Penny Pines Drive to collect funds to donate to the reforestation effort.
* The Love of Chocolate M
* March women’s history tea
* May 20 Operation cookie repackaged in decorative tins and distributed to the veteran’s hospitals and homeless centers.
* Also once a month serve coffee and cookies at the downtown veteran’s center.

Charitable/service projects include donation of yarn and fabric for use in making to make “lap-gans” for wheel chair bound veterans and county hospital patients and neo natal caps for infants in the hospital. They also make breast cancer pillows for Huntington Hospital and Norris Breast Center. They are always looking for donations of material and yarn as well as item for hygiene kits which they provide to county hospital patients and the homeless.

**Scott Feldman, President, SP Chamber of Commerce:**

The chamber is a business organization in a bedroom community. They have 250 members and a board of directors that is all volunteers. Their

Core mission is to connect people in the community. Their goal is to promote South Pasadena and advocate for business. In the promotion of SP they have developed an art based economic development strategy which led to such things as the Arts Crawl, Eclectic Music Festival and the formation of SPARK. These things allow the City of South Pasadena to differentiate itself from all of its neighbors. And compete with something the City can actually deliver on. SP has Indies and Artists.

They also take part in community leadership. Many of the Chamber Board members are on other Boards of directors and there is a lot of cross over. They represent business with in government matters - members regularly meet with all levels of elected officials. They have a legislative affairs committee that keeps in touch with legislation locally as well as at the State and Federal level. They help new businesses find the resources they need and operate a business resource center and a gallery.

Networking – They also do the normal chambers’ activities - ie they have three ribbon cuttings coming up – tonight Center Barre, a work out facility. And in the near future, Tomato Pie, a pizza parlor official opening sometime in Feb and Smile Haus, a new optometrist.

**Lisa** **Boyd, President and Founder, Moms for Community**

Moms for Community started a year ago with the desire to effect positive change in the community. It is an organization that engages moms to be a positive force in their community by creating events and programs that improve the quality of life for everyone. The group started when there was a rumor that the old Blockbuster was going to become yet another massage parlor. They started a letter writing group, attempting to bring positive businesses into the community and encourage people to shop locally.

They went to Sacramento to testify on the massage issue. They are also concern about the human trafficking issue which is still a huge issue. They have gone door to door speaking to moms and dads to create change locally and also in our State. They want to raise awareness on issues that affect our families and our children.

One of their recent events was the SP reality house party, to promote awareness of underage drinking, drug use internet prowlers, date rape and bullying. Moms co sponsored a screening of Tough Guys 2 with the Mayor, the City, the High School, the Police Officers Association and the Place, to raise awareness of violence in our culture. Co hosted Poker night with The Dudes to raise money for Burn Quest, an organization for burn victims and their families, as well as the Place (teen center). Also Co sponsored the Christmas tress lighting, where they gave over 200 treats to the kids and took 200 photos of the kids and their families.

Questions and Comments:

- Legislation re sales tax on services providers? Per Scott probably won’t happen, but they will be tracking it.

-Vecinos open to others not just people of Latin culture Multicultural organization that works to bridge the education gap for the whole community. Also their scholarships are for all levels of education – including community colleges and trade schools.

-How can we better avail ourselves of the information of everyone’s events, per Scott, The Chamber is just launching South Pasadena calendar.com website that is an online calendar. Anyone can post there events with an opt-in approval by The Chamber. They would like it to function as a community calendar.

-WISPPA also has a website that posts events and is planning to add a community page with information on all local organizations.

-Gretchen suggested a yearly summit to bring together all organizations in town so the community can be exposed.

2. Announcements:

Diana Mahmud announced that the petition that was circulating in town to repeal the Utility User Tax which represents 15%of our general funds. Passage would severly impact the City’s ability to provide the level of service that we have all come to expect. A majority vote is required to repeal. But last time it was close. That petition was just certified by the City Council. They had no choice but to certify because the county registrar determined that there was a sufficient number of signatures under state law to qualify the petition. This will be on the November ballot and requires a majority vote. Also on the November ballot is another renewal of the Library parcel tax. Which requires a 2/3 vote. Diana requested that all organizations alert their membership. It is imperative that people who care about these issues get to the poles.

This will be discussed at future meeting. Carrie. Stated that a committee will be organized should be a week or so to gather information and start organizing.

Break

Reconvened with agenda reorder

4.b. Special Olympics – Lisa Cavalier and Laura Kieffer (co-chairs)

SP is a “Host” town, and will be hosting 100 Special Olympic athletes and their coaches for 3 days - July 21-24. This is an international event with 174 countries involved. The games will be held July 25 – Aug 2, 2015

Most important thing coming up is Jan 28 fundraiser at Mary Urquhart’s 7-9 suggested donation $50. But they want people to attend whether or not they can make a donation.

First the committee is trying to nail down fundraising because we are going to need to have accommodations for them for 3 nights and we also have to have transportation. Second piece is volunteers to be involved to help serve to help at training facilities and cheering on the athletes at their events. Ellen will have signup sheet.

Ellen: WISPPA is co-hosting the party – will have a table we are going to donate hors d’oeuvres need people to volunteer to provide a platter for about 15 people.

2. Approval of Nov 1, 2014 meeting minutes MSP

Reports

3.a and b. Treasurer and Membership Report – Dollie Chapman reported that we have 69 members and our current bank balance is $3,850. She also suggested that we need to on a new member crusade. Usually do our good push for members at our cocktail party. We will also have a silent auction at the cocktail party. We need additional funding for the candidates forum and other things as they come up. Janet and Ellen Daigle are going to be in charge of the silent auction.

Janet stated that we would like to keep the silent auction at about 20 items with a value of $200 or higher. They are looking for things like a box at a Dodgers game, Hollywood Bowl tickets or a special dinner for six somewhere.

3.c. City Council Update – Councilmember Diana Mahmud reported on the following: At the last meeting the City Council approved an ordinance for a development impact fee at 100% of the estimated cost that attempts to recoup from all new housing projects in the City the cost of the infrastructure. The ordinance will go into effect on April 1. It won’t affect the Abbott Labs property because that has already been permitted.

The Council also approved a traffic survey.

Diana strongly encouraged everyone to watch what City Council does and vocalized their concerns to commissions and at Council meetings. Citing as an example the Grand Ave. community response to a proposal to increase the speed limit, they were very well organized and came out in force, they advised the Public Works commission of their concerns and they were successful in holding back the recommended increase to 30 miles an hour. Unfortunately, the Monterey Road people did not come out and the speed limit there was increased to 30 mph.

Upcoming events:

Monday at 6:30 in the Council Chambers the Parks and Recreation Commission will have public meeting regarding the dog park;

Community Forum on February 7th which provides an opportunity for community input on priorities for the city;

The Community Center will be on the Council’s agenda on the 21st to approve some architectural features and also select or narrow down site choices.

Also please get applications for Commissions in if you are interested. Mayor Joe will be making decisions soon. Openings are listed on the City and the WISPPA websites.

Questioned about the massage parlor ordinance, Diana stated that the City is not under any pressure currently because the moratorium is in effect.

Regarding the pending formation of a renewable energy commission, the NRC is in the process of forming that, it will then go to the city clerk and City Council. They are considering whether they want to call it renewable energy or sustainability commission.

Judy raised the issue of body cams for the police. Not known whether all officers have them, and at this point it doesn’t seem that they are using them at all times.

Diana announced that the Rialto has been sold to a gentleman who has done a lot of downtown building development.

Diana also alerted the meeting that there has been a hot prowler in the City and Arcadia has seen a rise in residential burglary.

3.e. Public Safety Commission – Public Safety Commission Chair Janet Braun reported that they are working on their strategic goals.

The second CERT training is starting on February 21st and will be held at the Oneonta Church. There is a long list of people interested in doing the training. The fire department is starting to co-ordinate with San Gabriel and San Marino so that all have a full calendar of classes for the three communities since we are all now linked by a common chief. There was an advance first aid training class today. On April 22nd There will be a mapping your neighborhood training for CERT and neighborhood watch. The goal is to get each neighborhood to get their 20 house group ready with an emergency plan.

The City and Police union have reached a three year deal, and that has stemmed the dreaded outflow that was a concern. Also they are hiring a couple cadets, (18 hours a week only because they can’t afford to pay the benefits).

Focus now is on building the neighborhood watch community.

3.f. NRC Update – Kim Hughes reported that one of the commission’s goals is the urban forest and maintenance of trees. There are over 10,000 trees in the city that are public trees, but the age range is 35 – 65 years old so replacement is really important. With the drought situation our trees are under a great deal of stress and there is also a very bad beetle problem in the San Gabriel Valley. There is a protocol for dealing with infected trees, do not remove them from your yard, cover the tree and let the heat kill the bugs. Over 320 species are susceptible to these beetles.

They are also looking at the West Coast Arbor contract, which is on a month to month basis right now.

Water conservation is still important. The use is still high, up to about 182 gallons per person per day, which needs to be brought down.

Over 85 customers have taken advantage of the grass replacement program and there are still funds available. There are also funds still available for the toilet replacement program. Also rain barrels are available and are an import part of storm water capture. Synthetic turf is still an issue. There is still grant money for electric car charging stations and locations are being looked for.

The sustainability committee that is being looked into would be an ad hoc committee.

The Commission is also looking into supplemental watering of existing trees.

3.g. Community Garden – Gretchen Robinette reported that a community meeting was held on November 17, 2014. The garden site is located on Magnolia just east of Meridian. The City has a 5 year lease from Cal Trans. The Community Garden will consist of a small pocket par, individual member plots and a demonstration garden. The current design is featured at <http://www.ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/index.aspx?page=496>.

Another community meeting will be held in February. For more information contact Sheila Pautsch, Community Services Director at 626-403-7362 or email spautsch@southpasadenaca.gov.

3.h. Website Update – Betty Emirhanian said that we had less hits in December, probably due to the holidays. Betty and Suzie have resolved the problem with the online calendar so now everything will be posted on to the calendar as well as the events page. Please check as more events are being added every week. We try to post events related to South Pasadena, and the things that are of general interest to the residents of South Pasadena as well as items that are in line with WISSPA goals. Event information can be sent to Suzie, Lela or Betty.

New Business

4.c. Strategic Planning Community Forum

This is a forum where City Council members, Commission members and members of the public all can come together to hear about what has happened in the past year in the City and then determine where to go for the next year and beyond. It is looking at the big picture, what are the City’s priorities? Where should the City be spending their money?

This is a really important meeting and WISPPA members really need to be involved. If we are going to have an impact on the City, we need to be at that meeting.

The WISPPA Board has determined that rather than having a WISSPA February 7th meeting, all members should be encouraged to attend the strategic planning meeting instead. Everybody has input about what they think are the most important things for the City and the Council takes that and incorporates those ideas into their budget.

Diana stated that as a result of last year’s meeting, there was funding for the dog park, the community gardens, repairing streets and sidewalks. It is the community’s opportunity to identify and prioritize where the City should be spent its discretionary funds. Diana also mentioned that the City has been sitting on a reserve that is equal to 50% of the operating budget.

Gretchen suggested that the co-presidents contact other organizations in town and urge them to encourage all their members to attend.

Since we are not having a February meeting we may schedule an August WISPPA meeting because there are so many issues coming up in the fall.

March meeting we will be voting on WISPPA’s position on the Utility Users Tax.

Monterey Road – Diana reported that the Council ordered an impact study of the “Road Diet” and was supposed to receive the results at the end of the year. So results should be known soon. The study will first go to Public Works who will make recommendations and then to the City Council.

A Monterey Road Committee was formed. The committee will be Ron, Lisa, Barbara and Gretchen.

Kim Hughes announced that the 710 study will also be out soon.

Meeting adjourned 11:00.