

WISPPA

Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action

March 7, 2015 Minutes

Date: March 7, 2015

Location: Cavalry Presbyterian Church

Present: Lela Bissner, Dollie Chapman, Betty Emirhanian, Diana Mahmud, Barbara Sinclair, Connie Wardlow, Nancy Wilms, Ellen Wood, Ellen Daigle, Janet Braun, Becky Thompson, Ron Rosen, Gary Pia, Gretchen Robinette, Lissa Reynolds, Gail Maltun, Judi Barhydt, Lisa Roa, Judith Harris, Marina Khubesrian, Mary Ferrero, Margaret Autczak, Dana Farrar, Chiquita Sipos, and Waynna Kato.

Lela Bissner called the meeting to order at 9:00.

Introduction of guests: Dana Farrar is a journalist and longtime South Pasadena resident, Gail Maiorana with DMV and a new resident of South Pasadena, and also Margaret Antczak, a new member who has lived in South Pasadena for 22 years.

1. Approval of January 10, 2015 meeting minutes MSP

2. Special Updates:

2.a. Update on the Arts - Lissa Reynolds "Warrior for the Arts"

Advocate, producer, actor and founder of SPARC

Lissa discussed the importance of the arts to her and to all young people, whether they are going into the arts or not. It enhances our lives and makes us more human.

Presented a partial list from Johns Hopkins University on why the arts are important:

- The arts are the language that all people speak that cut across racial, cultural, social, educational and economic barriers and enhance cultural appreciation and awareness
- They are symbol systems as important as letters and numbers.
- They integrate mind, body and spirit.
- They provide opportunities for self expression, bringing the inner world into the outer world of concrete reality.
- They create a seamless connection between motivation, instruction, assessment and practical application leading to deep understanding.
- They are an opportunity to experience process from beginning to end.
- They develop both independence and collaboration.
- They improve academic achievements, enhancing test scores, attitudes, social skills, critical and creative thinking.
- They exercise and develop higher order thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, evaluation and problem finding.
- They provide the means for every student to learn.

And that is just a small, partial list.

Questioned why we continue to discount the arts, why when there is a economic downturn the arts teachers are the first to go. It's become a habit locally, in local school, and internationally. When economy got bad even South Pasadena cut teachers. Almost reaching the 20th year of the Fremont Center Theatre. 80 people showed up at the theater to support alternative means to bring arts to the community. The Chamber has embraced the arts. The Arts are a actually a larger economic engine than sports in CA. SPARC is taking over the gallery that is in the Chamber offices and is going to have a grand opening on Mar 26. And a benefit party at Burke-Triolo Studios.

The haunted House this year will be at the school district.

SPARC is an ongoing advocate for arts education at the South Pasadena Unified School District.

Developing their first arts project with the City painting electrical boxes in the City will be very inclusive. It's a Pilot program and will be coming up for at vote at possibly the next City Council meeting. The theme will be South Pasadena.

Last point, Actors have sued to stop 99 seat equity waiver theatres. There is an Equity referendum to get rid of these waiver theatres. You can help by contacting your local politicians.

2.b. Neighborhood Watch - Janet Braun, Chair of the Public Safety Commission.

Janet first noted that Art Miller, the new police chief has been doing an excellent job of cleaning up and revamping the police department. Also the fire department has joined with San Gabriel and San Marino in sharing a fire chief. Paul Riddle is our deputy chief, and he has been fantastic and has been working on CERT. Because of these changes the Public Safety commission has been able to do quite a lot. The second CERT training is ending today. The Commission is really trying to get the community prepared for disasters, but we are still in catch up mode.

The Commission looked at Neighborhood watch in conjunction with the emergency training and is trying to get a sense of where they are and how to grow. The idea behind Neighborhood Watch is to try to get to know your neighbors, prevent crime, and keep an eye out for one another, bring the police in, get some tips on protecting yourself from crime.

Richard Lee is spread heading the program. But it needs to be reenergized Sue Kaplan is heading the Neighborhood Watch subcommittee.

The police and fire divide the city into 4 quadrants and produced a map of where Neighborhood Watch groups exist. There are still holes and people need to be recruit block captains.

Usually when the police catch a theft, it is because a resident calls.

Commission is appealing to the City Council to waive the block party fee for the first block party.

In connection with CERT they are trying to hold four trainings a year that just relate to emergency preparedness. The first training was a first aid class. The second training is on April 22nd at the Library Community Room "LA County Emergency - Five steps to Neighborhood Preparedness"

Art has implemented "Predictive Policing". This helps the department to define a route around the city to be policing. And it changes based on the stats. Crime is down 18%.

Ellen Daigle asked James Reynolds to help with the next Coffee with a Cop and requested three volunteers for block captains: Lissa Reynolds, Gretchen and Ellen Wood volunteered.

2.c. Monterey Road - Ron Rosen

Monterey Road diet proposal would make the four lane road between Fair Oaks and the Gold Line into a two lane road with left turn lanes.

There was a micro study to see what the actual traffic on Monterey Road was now. The study came out about 8 weeks ago and the Public Works Commission looked at it about a month ago. The report says it is feasible but the data in the report talks about delays of double and a half times what it is now. The language was positive but the data was not. The Commission was incredibly thorough, they interviewed the consultants about the data in the report and were told that stoplights are graded and the stop lights on Monterey road are mostly F and a couple are D already. The gold line crossings (three) become very dangerous due to the back up.

The Commission concluded unanimously that a road diet is not a good idea. The Commission did come up with some recommendations to answer the desire for pedestrian safety and bicycle line creation. El Centro is already a good street for biking. So John Fisher suggested that if you think of it as corridors - Mission El Centro and Monterey are all one corridor.

Commission recommended that:

1. Make ADA improvements to Monterey Road sidewalk
2. El Centro should be used for bike traffic

The Commission said that the road diet was not a good idea because The risk that traffic is going to back the Gold Line tracks, the inevitable diversion of traffic onto side streets, the significant driving delays that would result and that the road diet would be inconsistent with the goals of getting traffic to flow through streets more smoothly.

A member mentioned that this slowing down of traffic on major arteries could have a negative impact on the 710 fight.

The signals will be retimed after all road and sidewalk repairs are completed.

Ellen Daigle questioned that commissions may not be given enough weight and would like this topic to be brought up at a future WISPPA meeting.

Gary suggested that the way to handle these reports is for everyone to appear and speak up at Council meeting.

Ron will attend Commission meetings and report back as to when this topic will come before the City Council.

There was a vote as to whether WISPPA would like to have an official stand on the Monterey Road diet. The Majority is in favor of an official stand to support the recommendations of the Commission. Ron will write it up. (see 2.e.)

2.d. Update on S.P. Strategic Plan - Betty Emirhanian

A lot of residents, including WISPPA members, attended. Most engaging meeting Betty has attended in three years. Meeting was very well organized, the first part of the meeting allowed residents to talk to different department heads, ask questions and find out more about what they do.

Everyone was randomly put into small work groups and asked to discuss the issues important to them and come back with their 3 top priorities. Each group put their priorities on post-its came up and put their post-its on the wall under the main operational topics of the city. Two categories clearly stood out. They were: infrastructure (which included updating the general plan and the Mission Street Specific Plan) and land use; and the transit (including all means of getting around the city and also parking.

Some people felt that the second meeting (which was for discussion between staff and elected officials) was not a clear transition from the first meeting. Diana feels that there was just a difference in terminology but that everything really did get incorporated. And that they were just using broader strokes at the second meeting.

Discussion of concern regarding developments being approved prior to the plan is developed.

2.e. Ron Rosen presented the follow language for the motion regarding the Road Diet:

On February 11, 2015, the South Pasadena Public Works Commission met and reviewed the study regarding a road diet on Monterey Road. The Commission found unanimously that there should be no road diet on Monterey Road because of (1) the risk that oversaturated traffic will back up onto the Gold Line tracks, (2) the inevitable diversion of traffic onto side streets (3) the significant driving delays that would result and (4) that a road diet would be inconsistent with the goals of getting traffic to flow more smoothly on major arterial and reducing traffic on residential streets. WISPPA support the findings of the Public Works Commission. Move to adopt Ron's motions as our official position, was seconded and passed.

2.f. UUT - Ellen Wood

I know several members were approached some time last year to sign a petition to repeal the Utility Users' Tax (UUT). So this issue has been on our radar, if only tangentially, for while. Now seems to be the time as it turns out that we really need to look at it and decide whether WISPPA wants to take a stand on it.

Obviously the petition was successful. The language in the petition not only repeals the current UUT, but it also prohibits the City from "enacting any new Utility Users' Tax or other fee, charge or assessment regarding utility goods or services;". This is a forever thing.

We have had a UUT since 1983 which fluctuated between 5% and 8%. In 2011 the residents voted with a 53.9% majority to accept a 7.5% UUT for the next ten years. Now this petition is forcing the issue to be dealt with again. The City Council accepted the petition, but did not take any action on it, instead they requested an impact study from the staff.

The impact study basically shows that we would lose approximately 16% of the City's revenues (out of a \$24 million budget). In dollars the loss would be approximately \$3.7 million.

The staff report presented two scenarios. One was a straight across the board 16% cut. The other would be a prioritized reduction.

In scenario one as you can see on the handout, the Police department would lose 10 positions (almost a 25% loss). We would also lose money that Community Services generates, because the department would be unable to provide the services to the extent to which it does now. The estimated revenue for this current year, generated by the Community Services Department, is over \$800,000.

In 2011 there was a study done asking citizens what their priorities were. The number one priority was no cuts to police, fire and all public safety. So if we used the second scenario and didn't cut the police and the fire, and we started off cutting Community Services, we would be losing senior program, youth programs, recreational services, library and all of that would only give us a \$2.6 million reduction, leaving another \$1.1 million to cut.

Another important fact is that the UUT revenue goes 100% into our general fund, which is the fund used to support our police and fire departments. The City is being run efficiently and effectively. The reasons we all appreciate the city, our quality of life would change drastically.

A long expressive discussion followed.

Diana requested that this issue not be put to a vote without alerting all of our membership of the vote. She also stated that the City Council has not yet put the initiative on the ballot because there are still problems to be addressed.

In light of the time spent on the last issue we will skip the "Reports" unless anyone has something that needs to be presented.

Need volunteers for goodies for next meeting - Dollie and Connie

Betty announced a training workshop on "How to Apply and Serve on Local, County and State Commissions" held by the National Women's Political Caucus and WISPPA is co-sponsoring it. Attendance is \$25. March 31st. Ellen, Lela, Janet, Suzie and Judy will attend.

Nomination of Woman of Distinction presented by Judi Chu
Ellen Daigle discussed our nomination of Clare Richards. A woman with not that much education, but was able to do amazing things. She was truly a trailblazer in South Pasadena.

Waynna announced that the draft EIR has come out. It is over 26,000 pages. Please look at it and send a response. We have 120 days to respond.

May meeting will focus on the 710.

Gretchen announced that there will be a showing of the documentary "Ulysses Odyssey" at her house tomorrow at 4:30.

Lissa announced a concert fundraiser.

Judy announced celebration of life for Ann Neville-Jan on March 22 from 5-8 at the Town and Gown Bldg. at USC.

Meeting Adjourned