

WISPPA

Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action

July 11, 2015 Minutes

Date: July 11, 2015

Location: Cavalry Presbyterian Church

Present: Lela Bissner, Dollie Chapman, Betty Emirhanian, Diana Mahmud, Barbara Sinclair, Ellen Wood, Ellen Daigle, Janet Braun, Becky Thompson, Ron Rosen, Gary Pia, Nancy Wilms, Judi Barhydt, Judith Harris, Dana Farrar, Chiquita Sipos, Wayna Kato, Gloria Kilian, Kim Hughes, Lynda Sullivan, Michael Cacciotti, Debby Fox, Polly Podewell, Gretchen Robinette, Bianca Richards and Laurie Wheeler.

Betty Emirhanian called the meeting to order at 9:00. Announcement was made that meetings are recorded. Betty introduced the speaker, Laurie Wheeler, President and CEO of the South Pasadena Chamber of Commerce.

Laurie stated that even though she is newly appointed as president, she has been an employee of the Chamber for 10 years. Laurie discussed her background, which includes, being a stay at home mom and working for Huntington Hospital as a project manager in the building and planning department. She started at the Chamber as a part time employee. At that time the Chamber had 100 members and a goal of 150. The Chamber now has 236 members (plus or minus) and has remained pretty steady, even through the recession. The Chamber is an information center and a business resource center for people who want to open a business in town.

The first Chamber of Commerce was founded in France in 1599, the first Chamber in the US was in New York in 1768. The US Chamber is the largest lobbying group on the US. The California Chamber deals with state issues. They do a lot of work around employment including laws and regulations. The South Pasadena Chamber does not belong to the US Chamber, but does belong to the California Chamber.

Each Chamber develops its own personality based on the community it is in. South Pasadena is peppered with small unique businesses and it an arts community with lots of independent restaurants and other businesses. There was a study done a few years ago by the Koten Group. The purpose of the study was to find out what businesses would do well in South Pasadena based on what people were shopping for elsewhere and what people were coming to this community for and they found two big industry sectors, home décor and restaurants. That is what people need, want and will come to the community for.

A Chamber has many different goals, economic development of course is one, which is not just bringing businesses to the community, but it is also to bring customers to those businesses. South Pasadena is gaining a reputation for arts and music. The music festival started 7 years ago and

last year's attendance was over 5,000 people. The arts crawl, which sort of branched out from the music festival, occurs quarterly and is run by the businesses and supported by the Chamber.

Going forward, the Chamber is looking to improve their online presence and social media. The whole way people are getting their information is changing and the Chamber is going to change with it. One of the other things So Pas is known as "walkable, wonderful South Pasadena". Chamber is thinking about creating a walking map to help people who come off the Gold Line or come to town and want to see some of the businesses and homes that are here. They are going to work with the Preservation Foundation and South Pasadena Beautiful to develop that. The Chamber was awarded the contract to run the Farmers Market 5 years ago. They will be starting a "from the farm" program where farmers will discuss various aspects of what they do, including bees and organic growing and certification.

Short term goals for the Chamber include finding a part time person, supporting businesses in South Pasadena, encouraging businesses to be here, interfacing, getting consensus and communication between all the businesses here, and really helping the community stay on the map. Letting people know why they should shop dine, live here.

Parking - the City is working on parking and the Chamber is supporting the City. While it appears to be an issue, there are a lot of lots in town that are underutilized. There will be a citywide parking study done at some point, but at this point surveys are being done as to lengthening time limits on street parking in front of businesses.

Diana Mahmud commented that the general plan update is looking at parking.

Discussion of empty properties ensued.

There is a guide "How to start a business in South Pasadena" on the website, still in draft form. The City is looking at this for accuracy, but also looking at how they can help streamline the process. They also want to develop a one page quick-start information page, a basic business 101 for the person who wants to start a business and doesn't already have some knowledge of the process.

Scott Pia would like to see the next step in the Koten Study look at where are people in the zip code spending their money and on what. People tend to live here and shop elsewhere. Also would like to see a walking app in addition to the walking map. It can see where you are and ads can pop up for local businesses. Since it is promotion of local businesses it could even qualify for a BIT grant.

Judy raised the need for more public transportation, ie maybe trams.

Discussion of plastic bag ban and the Chamber bag giveaway.

The City a ghost town at night, and we are missing opportunities. There are all kinds of things that could be done, i.e. football nights.

II. Approval of June 6, 2015 meeting minutes, with one change raised by Dollie. MSP

III. New Business

a. Cocktail Party Recap

Everyone like the new set up. We really need two mics. We should look into buying a second mic. It was nice that the fire and police department members showed up and contributed to the raffle. Close to 200 people were invited, attendance was approximately 113. It was suggested that we have something about WISPPA's accomplishments on paper, on the tables. A big thanks to Lela for getting the wonderful speaker. Five new members joined at the party and 3 additional members have joined since. Thanks to Janet for opening her home. It was suggested that the food and beverage committee and cleanup committee get together to discuss what was left over for planning purposes. Janet is working on a notebook for future planning.

b. Tour of Athens Waste Site Facilities

Betty asked if people would be interested. People were interested. Betty will make arrangements.

c. Nominating Committee

Lela announced that nominations are being taken for Board members and officer positions. An email will be sent out the beginning of August of all positions available, so everyone is encouraged to consider. Gary asked that email include the time commitment and duties for each position.

The nominating committee will take the information and then recommend a slate, which has to be mailed out a month before the election. Anyone can run if they want to add their name to the ballot, they can do so, but the nominating committee will start with their recommendation. The nominating committee is Lela, Gretchen and Janet. The immediate past president is automatically the chair and she gets to pick who she wants on her committee.

d. Important Upcoming Events

16th anniversary of Farmers Market is Thursday the 16th
Whole lot of things going on the weekend of the 17-18th, check the list on your agenda

e. August Meeting

Bianca volunteered to bring refreshments.
There will be no speaker. The meeting will be to review our goals and objectives and the direction of WISPPA.

IV. Reports

a. NREC Update - Kim Hughes

Looking into whether to ban the use of Styrofoam in the City

The business community has been asked to contact Laurie Wheeler. Some cities have already banned or limited the use of Styrofoam. There are a lot of alternative out there.

Urban Forest - 672 trees trimmed in the month of May, 23 trees were removed. West Coast Arborist is canvassing and creating a stress list of those trees that are looking most dire. The turf replacement rebate program has ended because all the funds have been used. (\$480 million). Per the Governor, every city has to report their water use. South Pasadena saw a 31% reduction in May. We need to keep that up. They are working on a schematic of trees and water. Current failure rate with trees is 6.5%. Homeowner's are responsible for maintenance of trees. Stopped planting new trees for the summer. There is information on the website on how to water trees and what trees should be planted. They are also looking at the grey water issue. Also looking at charging stations for electric vehicles. There is an ordinance on car washing.

b. City Council Liaison Report - Nancy Wilms, Judi Barhydt, Betty Emirhanian

There were two meeting that happened since our last report. The first was fiscal year budgets and contracts.

The second meeting - report on the Gold Line progress to Asuza, it is on time and under budget. The construction is expected to be completed by September of this year. The first ridership is not until March of next year. There is a railcar issue because not enough railcars were ordered. Four were delivered, but they need 8 or 9 for part time service and 20 for full time, so we are talking about another year and a half before there will be full time service.

Regarding the 710 - AB 32 mandates reduction of greenhouse gasses by 20% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. However the 710 analysis is only looking out 15 years so they are only dealing with the 20% reduction. The San Gabriel Council of Governments voted to support the tunnel. South Pasadena may pull out of the Council and is looking at formation of a group with other like-minded communities. The deadline for comments is August 5th, they are important because they will help with future lawsuits. WISPPA has not yet submitted and should.

A contingent of renter's came to the meeting who were very concerned about the rise in rents. A number of people are being given 60 day eviction notices and also 10 day notices for 10% increases like every six months. They asked the Council to look into possible rent controls. Renters are over 51% of the population. This is going to be a hot topic. Staff was asked to look into a recommendation. The Council adopted a resolution concerning an annual levy and collection assessment for the lighting and landscaping maintenance district. This fee has not been increased for 20 years and this pays for the maintenance of medians, street lights and stop lights. Funds will be diverted from the general fund.

The Council is looking to negotiate with Cal Trans to purchase vacant houses for pocket parks. There are currently 5 parcels for sale. The City is considering two of them at this time.

The School District is moving ahead with the proposal to develop the parking lot with a 91 unit building. There is going to be an EIR and the is going to be a scoping meeting. Important to attend this meeting, it is a opportunity for the public to weight in and raise issues so they will be part of the study. Also pressure on school board member will have an impact, they have approval right.

Discussions that schools may not need the money since other funding sources have opened up. Also school board nominations are in November. It is a School Board issue not a City issue and that is where pressure needs to be applied.

Janet will spearhead this issue and discuss with Rialto committee if they should join as one committee.

c. Public Safety - Janet Braun

Thanks to the Fire and Police departments for supporting WISPPA. They donated two items to the raffle. They are trying to reach out and connect more personally with the community and Michael has been a big supporter of that.

Paul Riddle, our deputy fire chief has now applied for the tri-city chief position.

Police had a great awards luncheon on June 24th. They do a lot we don't know about, the life saving things, they give scholarships, all trying to connect the community with the public safety officers.

Thanks to Mary and Janet for participating in sponsoring the event.

In the July 4th parade they had neighborhood watch, CERT members and ham radio operators. It was a first was to show a presence.

There was a CERT refresher course in early June and new courses are planned for September and February. Ham radio training in November.

The Emergency Operations Center - another \$100,000 was funded. Thank you City Council. Emergency Operations plan is being looked at and rewritten this year. Thank you to Oneonta Church for providing the location for the trainings.

Another issue that has come up is police leaving. We and Sierra Madre are the lowest on the totem pole. We need sustainable funding. Can't just address it every three years, we need to take a broader look.

Public Safety open house is Sunday September 20th.

d.e. Treasurer's Report and Membership- Dollie Chapman

We have \$5,666.34 in our account. Dues payable notice has been sent out and about 25-30% of our members have already paid. We have 77 members.

We made \$1,207 on the raffle. 5 new members - another \$200. And we sold aprons and totes that to Ellen Daigle it was all profit.

The whole cost of the party was \$669.26 and we will make a profit of about \$537. Thanks for all the donations of food and wine.

f. Website - Suzie Abajian

Photos from the cocktail party and the Festival of Balloons have been uploaded. And the WISPPA Facebook page has a 505 increase since the cocktail party.

g. Chamber Legislative Affairs Committee Meeting - Lela

New PCC president

Helen Shaw of the Gas Company brought up the issue of AB 857 -Clean Air Act

Linda Wah discussed the emphasis being placed on a strong partnership between the schools and the business community, which will provide structured career pathways for students and result in a stronger and more prepared workforce. PCC will be instituting some workshops related to this effort.

The South Pasadena Chamber of Commerce candidates forum will be held on Monday October 5th.

h. Special Olympics - Betty

Last Wednesday night there was a meeting regarding the Special Olympics. South Pasadena host town participation is going to be on July 21st thru 24th. We are hosting Morocco and Paraguay. There are a whole lot of events planned during that time and they are asking for the residents of So Pas to come out and support the athletes. They are also trying to arrange for buses to take resident to the events out countries are participating in. Information on the Special Olympics host town website. There are 168 countries participating, 25 sports, 7000, athletes and 3000 coaches. This is a big deal.

Member comments:

Several concerts announced.

Koi summer sale - support you local merchants.

Meeting Adjourned.

Submitted by Ellen Wood 8/8/15