

Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association
Meeting notes, January 8, 2015

Meeting hosted by Lindsay Kimball and Mark Fangmeier, 455 Banfil Street, 7:00 PM
Co-chaired by Lindsay and Mark

***Sign up to host a meeting.** Lindsay circulated a sign-up sheet. Please volunteer!

***Home Tour.** The *Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine* Parade of Homes is coming up. This will be our fourth year. We're looking for people to open their homes to this tour. You can volunteer or nominate others. The tour will be held at the end of April.

***Housing RFP update.** Two houses on Forbes are being fixed up, 29 Douglas (the big brick house that was moved there) and 280 Forbes (currently covered with plywood). The plan is to have these on the market by the end of February. They may be on the April Home Tour. The Federation has secured bids on 284, 286 and 288 Forbes; they are next in line to be rehabilitated. Again, most of the work is slated to be done by the end of February (this strikes many of us as overly optimistic). The block should look very different by the end of Spring.

The city's RFP deadline was December 5. All bids were submitted and are under review. There were several bids for properties in Little Bohemia. We will share these when they become public in February.

The two vacant lots on Harrison are quite small. The city has taken our advice, and the current plan is to sell half of the 310 plot to the next-door neighbor (Jim DuPay), then join the other half of the lot to the next lot, thereby creating a single more reasonably-sized lots.

***41 Douglas.** Tom Schroeder joined us, along with Kathleen Korley and John Yust plus Will O'Keefe from Preservation Minnesota. Tom is not the developer, but is interested and is bringing us up to date. He is the guy who is working to restore the Stone Saloon on Smith. (The goal is to reopen it as it was from 1850 to 1864, as a time-traveling taproom!) There is a neat little cottage beside the Stone Saloon that was moved there in 1898. It sits right on top of the Stone Saloon's water and sewer connections, and is an impediment to continuing to fix up the Saloon. But why tear it down? It's a cool house, and is currently vacant.

How about moving it to the vacant lot at 41 Douglas? That's the idea. Tom is willing to give the house away and has found a willing buyer. Will has brought in a developer who could move the house and fix it up on the 41 Douglas lot. He is hopeful that the RFP process will work with the city. It will be 2 BR, with a 1-car garage. Some of the property is being offered to the city to create a garage for another house, at 47 Douglas, that does not currently have one. Will's developer works on one or two houses at a time, on a small scale.

John shared with us his plans for the lot and the moved house. It will include a full basement to make room for a second bedroom. The plans are not final, and can still be altered. Preservation Minnesota is offering a façade easement to preserve the house and its historic character. This means there would be some restrictions on what future owners could do to change the building, including preventing it from being torn down.

Kathleen lives in the neighborhood and has some older friends who would like to live in a neighborhood rather than a condo or facility. Our neighborhood seems ideal for this purpose. One of these friends is interested in purchasing the house at 41 Douglas. It would still have to go on the market, but there is already this interested buyer.

Will hopes to hear back from the city about this proposal by the end of January.

What can we do? John notes that a letter from the LBNA in support of this proposal would show that we value it, and that we think this is a good path to take in the continuing improvement of our neighborhood. There is general agreement that we do agree, and Lindsay volunteers to draft a letter of support.

***Community Improvement Budget (CIB) grant.** Proposals for 2016 are due Friday 1/16. Mark is going to re-submit our older grant proposal for reconsideration. It's been pared down a bit. The main goal is to fix up the bike path, add plantings and lighting. MnDOT is doing some work outside the scope of the grant, e.g. removing buckthorn and repairing the wall. Progress is waiting on several city departments, who in turn are waiting to see what budget dollars they will get. It could happen as early as summer or fall of 2015. CIB is about two years out. If we get the grant, we'd have to wait on doing the work.

Question: is there a plan to extend the redevelopment across Saint Clair Avenue? No, MnDOT's plans currently end at Saint Clair.

The goal is to submit the grant proposal on time, by next Friday.

***Financial update.** Meredith Nguyen has been helping out as Treasurer. We are an informal group of neighbors, not a legal entity. We have about \$1,600 right now, some of which is tied to specific projects (like plantings). If we wish to become a legal organization, we have to have a 'fiscal agent' to handle our money. There are several ways to do this, ranging from staying informal to becoming a full-scale 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a governing board. NeighborWorks is willing to work with us, but we have to make decisions about our structure first. This leads to the next agenda point.

***Visioning 2015 and Beyond.** What is the future of this group? How formal do we wish to be? How do we want to grow, and what do we want to do?

Becoming a 501(c)3, with our own Board, would give us more structure and more autonomy. It's unclear how much more influence we would have as a nonprofit. Mark has a graduate degree in nonprofit management. His research shows that, despite the fact that there are 30+ models for nonprofit organizations, our neighborhood association doesn't fit neatly into any of them. Keeping the democratic (informal, friendly, civil but not really organized) methods we've used to date is attractive. And it's a lot less work.

We might approach the Fort Road Federation to become our fiscal agent: collaborating with the Federation seems to be of mutual benefit already. Jennifer notes that the *Community Reporter* could also be a fiscal agent for us; they already do this for other groups, and they're

rather hands-off. Sharon will check in with the Federation about this idea at their Monday 1/12 meeting. Having another group as our fiscal agent, e.g. the Federation, does not mean that the other group would have a greater degree of ‘control’ over LBNA.

***Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association T-shirts.** We still have t-shirts available in an assortment of youth and adult sizes. At only \$10 they make a great holiday gift for the neighbor for whom you forgot to get a holiday gift! Contact Marit and Tom Brock.

***Problem Properties and Safety Concerns.** Officer Wall is now on the Force Unit, and can keep a better eye on things. 290 Harrison Avenue continues to be improved by a private developer, and perhaps will go on the market this spring. Eerie Street neighbors have received a letter from the city about a zoning nonconformity change, that would permit a foreclosure sale to become a three-family rental home, as it had been for years (creating several problems). There is a petition about this change, asking that it be made a single-family dwelling, and this petition will go out via the LBNA site.

Some of the seniors living in the Osceola Place high-rise have expressed an interest in joining with the LBNA. Let’s follow up on this.

There have been some people walking up and down the block in the morning while cars are warming up. It seems a little odd. Please keep your eyes open for this.

Remember to call 266-8989, and report nuisance properties to the City!

Upcoming Events:

1/17, 6:00-10:00 PM: St. Mark’s Arson Benefit @ CSPA Sokol Hall. The Hall Board has volunteered the space for the benefit. There will be beer from Saint Paul breweries; local restaurants are donating food; there will be a silent auction, including original art and items from the Minnesota Twins; seven (!) local bands will be performing. There’s a call for volunteers—see Tom Schroeder (Lindsay will have his contact information). Come, and bring your friends. Voluntary donations of \$10 per individual or \$25 per family are requested.

1/24, 2:00-4:00 PM: King Boreas Grande Parade from Smith Avenue to Rice Park along West 7th Street

1/23-1/24: Crashed Ice @ St. Paul Cathedral

The next LBNA business meeting will be February 5, 7:00 PM. We’ll look into potential sites, and will put a note up on the Web site. Send agenda ideas to info@littlebohemiaspaul.org

If you find glaring errors in these notes, please send corrections to sisk@macalester.edu