

**Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association
Meeting notes, October 2 2014**

Meeting hosted by Axel Henry and Mikeya Griffin, 437 Banfil Street, 7:00 PM

Co-chaired by Lindsay Kimball and Mark Fangmeier

Agenda:

Meeting hosts for 2015: sign up sheet going around, or email info@littlebohemia.org

August is National Night Out; May and December are social events, not regular meetings.

Thank-you note for Officer Longen

Officers Shawn Longen and Len Wall have been part of our group for a while. Officer Longen worked with some City staff to help get a ‘stay away’ order for a long-term nuisance criminal in our neighborhood. He’s earned our thanks, and a note expressing our gratitude is going around for signatures.

Update on housing renovations (Tom, Mark, Lindsay)

***Current work:**

29 Douglas

The “really big brick house” that was moved. Goal: renovations done by end of October.

280 Forbes

Goal: renovations done by end of October.

***Future work:**

***284 Forbes**

Scope of work is complete. Bids were due yesterday (October 1). Renovations will begin over the winter.

***286 Forbes**

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***288 Forbes**

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The Fort Road Federation is involved with all these houses.

Planning and Economic Development Department (PED) and the properties in our neighborhood that will be going up for Request for Proposal (RFP) at the end of October. These are the properties that we discussed at the June LBNA meeting. (Tom, Mark, Lindsay)

There are nine (9) homes/lots “up next” for work: 326 Harrison, 301 Sturgis, 457 Smith, 41 Douglas (lot), 47 Douglas, 69 Garfield, 337 Goodrich (duplex), 310 Harrison (lot), 314 Harrison (lot), 376 Sturgis (lot), 276 Nugent. PED is going to open their RFP period at the end of October. Can LBNA be involved? A letter to Councilman Thune and the PED, expressing our major concerns, is being drafted. These are:

1. Redevelopment should include design and lot sizes appropriate for the current market. (Basically, no tiny houses and lots without garages.) *Question: what if the RFP process doesn't get good results for every house/lot?* We may come back to consider non-traditional houses, say for elderly residents, that would not be as attractive to for-profit commercial developers. Grants are a funding possibility.

2. RFP should give priority to developers for creating owner-occupied, one-family homes. Maybe even for the developers' own use. Grant-funded renovations may stipulate minimum occupancies or other requirements. We want to avoid development that creates new rental properties. *Question: does the City of St. Paul own all these properties?* Yes, they do, both existing homes and lots. Axel reminds us that the City has some programs to help owners renovate plumbing in existing homes (rolling the costs into property taxes), and this has recently been expanded to include new construction on vacant lots.

3. Developers will be encouraged to work with the LBNA to make sure their work is consistent with neighborhood goals. How about making that "required to work with the LBNA?" By acclamation, it's amended.

Thoughts on 41 Douglas: it's just a narrow lot, beside the alley. Can adjacent property owners buy vacant lots? The house beside 41 Douglas is nearly done with its rehab. Property lines in this neighborhood are jumbled. Can neighbors get priority to purchase current vacant lots, to add to their own property? We'll look into this. Marit notes that the City stands to make more in taxes from lots with houses than lots without. Mikeya adds that if there's been a lot of NSP (Neighborhood Stabilization Project) funds sunk into properties, there may be restrictions that prevent lots from being sold as additional yard space/garage space.

Thoughts on 69 Garfield: it has no garage and no room to build one. It's much easier (in terms of City regulations and restrictions) to change an existing house, even substantially, than to build a house on a vacant lot. Many of us have friends or acquaintances who would like a chance to consider purchasing houses, or lots, within our neighborhood.

[At this point Erica volunteered to get a map of properties from Lindsay, and go around the neighborhood taking pictures to put up on a Web page so that we can visualize what we're discussing. Just don't expect museum-quality photographs!]

Thoughts on 337 Goodrich: this is a side-by-side duplex, and was built as one. Can we ask that at least one of the units be owner-occupied?

Thoughts on 310 and 314 Harrison: the City wants to develop both as home sites. But the lots are extremely small. The DuPays, at 306 Harrison, are interested in buying some of the property (perhaps all of the 310 lot) to add to their small yard.

Thoughts on 376 Sturgis: it's an L-shaped lot. Perhaps the lot could be split between adjacent neighbors? There's general agreement that we value current neighbors having the

right of first refusal on property sales. As Axel says, this is a 100-year correction that will outlive us, for better or worse. Mikeya adds “let’s be loud, to make sure it’s for the better.” The source of the money makes a difference.

Do we have a preference about rehabbing versus tearing down? It depends on the house. 69 Sturgis, for example, predates the Civil War. But sometimes tearing down is the only way to go. 47 Douglas, for example, may need to be torn down. *Question: what happens when the City deems a property unfit for habitation?* It takes a lot for the City to condemn a property. One key is for neighbors to complain, loud and long and repeatedly. If a bank owns a home and tears it down, the bank pays. If the City tears a home down, the costs are assessed against the next owner of that lot. *Question: if the City is so anxious to unload some of these houses, why are they never for sale?* The City has had a hard time attracting developers to rehab these properties, given the City’s own restrictions. NSP funds come from the federal government, and that adds more restrictions. St. Paul really didn’t know what it was getting into.

Thoughts on 283 Forbes, the “splinter lot”: it’s so small it looks like the adjacent house’s yard.

Open House at 358 Goodrich—Thursday October 9, 5:00 to 8:00 PM (Marit)

This is the “big blue house.” It was a foreclosure, and was purchased by a developer collaborating with the Fort Road Federation. It’s going on the market with the ‘soft opening’ noted above. It’s a big house with a decent-sized lot. Tell your friends! Market our neighborhood!

Update on LBNA Bike Path, after meeting with Minnesota Department of Transportation.

(Jennifer, Sarah) Work continues on getting a grant for the area between Smith and St. Clair. MNDot may get involved. Safety, lighting and water have been discussed. MNDot is developing a three-point plan, and will roll it out next spring. St. Paul Forestry wants to get involved. Journeys wants to help. The DNR may donate seedlings. Bottom line: when the time comes, all of us need to be ready to help with the grunt work. Sweat equity in our neighborhood, if you will. Let’s share the neighborhood plan we drew up a while back. Tom will see about finding digital images (or maybe we can photograph existing posters of the plan). Lindsay suggests that a neighborhood STAR grant may cover the lighting—especially if we’re already getting funds from MNDot, which could be considered cost-sharing.

Dorothy Day Expansion update (Marit)

The expansion is moving ahead. Catholic Charities is raising funds. Some neighbors want to be involved in the programming, what’s possible, what input can we contribute. Sharon Lynch and Marit Brock have been volunteering. If you want to be involved, contact Marit. If you have concerns or thoughts, share them. There will be community meetings to share feedback. *Question: where and how are they expanding?* They’ll purchase the Labor building, and will rehab it. They also expect to add more services (not more housing). Irvine Park neighbors point out that reconfiguring the space, but not changing the programming (e.g. turning away drunks), negatively impacts the surrounding neighborhoods. Once again, if you have strong views, go to the community meetings and express them. There are a

number of different groups, all of whom have good intentions, but sometimes they work at cross-purposes (e.g. giving tents to homeless people, encouraging them to sleep in wooded areas). A schedule of the upcoming public meetings will be on the LBNA Web page soon.

December Social Event, 12/4: Location? Could we get a separate area for our group at, say, DeGidio's or Mancini's? Mancini's seems to have some traction. "In the bar," some suggest. Mark and Lindsay will work on this and send more information around.

Problem Properties/Safety Concerns:

The Great Garden Hose caper has been solved, thanks to a vigilant neighbor. (Children, not vandals.)

The green house, 415 Banfil, is on the market. Publicize this!

Erica has built a database of neighborhood businesses. There are over a thousand. She'll see about getting this linked from the Web site.

Next meeting: November 6, 7:00 PM, Jennifer Gelhar's home, 295 Sturgis Street