

Notes from 4/10/24 VNA meeting

Attendees: Teresa Day-Fickell, Doug Carlson, Ann Rivlin, Mike Rewey, Chris Conrad, Officer Dan Hurd, Bonnie Gruber, Craig Stanley, Jodi Williams, Alder Tag Evers, Roz Woodward, Bethany Nelson, Ben Biltz, Wendy Fearnside

Introduction by VNA president:

Invitation to join Vilas listserv. Donations to VNA welcomed.

Motion to approve February 2024 meeting minutes was made and approved.

Introduction of Officer Daniel Hurd from MPD, our new Vilas liaison

Officer Hurd is here to help us with whatever our priorities are. He is here if we need an officer response, but would also be happy to be proactive and work with us. His hours are noon-8pm in the midtown district (near Mineral Point), 6 days on, 3 days off, but he'd be happy to give us his cellphone. His email address is in our agenda and in our VNA weekly digest sent by Roz Woodward.

Neighborhood concerns: Doug mentions cars speeding down the presidential streets from Grant to Oakland. There is occasional vandalism, so Doug reminds us to lock our cars. There are occasional (not frequent) bike thefts and loud house parties. Officer Hurd agrees that tracking and preventing property theft is a priority, and they want to know about any incidents. "If you're on the fence about whether to call, please always call us" (as it may be part of a pattern). Officer Hurd also states that if there is noise that is unreasonable or persistent, feel free to call and they can talk to the noisemakers if indicated.

Chris Conrad notes that since he moved to the west end of Adams (near Edgewood) in July, that every few weeks there are many motorcycles that come

down Edgewood, through Vilas Park Drive (which is illegal) and into the arboretum. Chris' concern isn't so much noise as safety. Officer Hurd requests that we call if it is happening in case an officer is in the area and welcomes any information about when it tends to happen and any identifying information that can be provided.

Tag Evers notes that speed checks on Monroe are welcome if budget allows. Officer Hurd agrees that speed checks on Monroe, as well on Whitney Way and Odana Rd, are priorities..

Doug mentions that maybe we can welcome Officer Hurd Back in the fall when the students come back and/or could repeat "Walk with the Cop," noting the last one was fairly uneventful.

Brief report re. ADU zoning bill

Ben Biltz notes that the zoning bill to remove the limitation that ADUs need to be owner-occupied has passed through the Planning Commission and House and Strategy Committee and will be in front of the Common Council next Tuesday. Wendy notes they will be allowed on residential properties with up to 8 units.

Mike Rewey doubts this will significantly affect population density and expresses concerns that a when a 2-story ADU is built, it is often too close to the property line of the house next door. He wonders if a firewall is needed between such an ADU and a neighboring garage, which might be too close to each other. Feels that a 2-story ADU should have a 6 feet setback in the sideyards (1-story ADU only needs 3 feet setback). He suggests these zoning modifications should be looked at.

Doug reminds us that we filed our survey results, and Tag concurs that the results have been passed to the Common Council to review before next week's decision. Those survey results favored having consistent setbacks. Tag also notes that the current proposal does not say anything about setbacks and they could consider going back to the ADU rules in the future. He does not feel that adding an amendment is feasible at this late time. Craig Stanley wants to make sure the fire department is aware (Tag believes they are).

Alder Evers

He recommends seeing the magnolias now blooming in the Arboretum.

Yard waste collection (the first of 3 collections) will start getting collected next week.

Also, some follow up regarding Edgewood's lawsuit against the city of Madison over the city's refusal to allow the installation of lights at the school's athletic field. A three-judge panel for the Chicago-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit concurred with Madison's district court in dismissing the case. At this point Edgewood has the option of appealing to the 7th circuit or the US Supreme Court. However, Tag notes that it seems unlikely, looking at the text of the decision, to think that Edgewood's position is favorable. However, we do not know what decision that Edgewood will make about that.

Edgewood is not participating in the liaison committee with the VNA or DMNA at this time and he hopes that will happen again in the future. (Regarding liaison committee, Craig Stanley received an email from one of the Sisters at Edgewood yesterday but has not had a chance to reach back out yet, and notes that there has not been any significant reasons to meet).

Alder Evers note that Edgewood wants to keep the rear fencing (lakeside) which needs repair and Alder Evers believes this will be repaired.

Tag notes that, in the event of an aggressive/dangerous dog in the neighborhood, there is a process available to complain about this to the city, potentially resulting in the owners being fined \$500. In more extreme and rare cases, the dog could be declared "dangerous" and euthanized Tag is advocating to introduce a rule that, in less extreme situations but where the dog has shown a propensity to attack a dog or human, the owners of such a dog could be required to keep the dog muzzled or kept inside a fenced yard.

Regarding the empty Arby's building on Park St., Starbucks wanted to create a drive-thru restaurant only. This was denied by the city due to its feeling that this neighborhood should be walkable, so Starbucks has agreed to change it to a sit-down and drive-through restaurant. An ordinance is in place to prevent drive-through businesses only in order to improve the walkability of the neighborhood.

At the next Council meeting, they're introducing an amendment to get the last bit of financing for the grocery store on Park Street. Hopefully the grocery store will open by the end of 2024 (and the Pick'n Save will close).

Alder Evers finishes by offering that any of us can reach out to him to talk about any issues.

President's Report

Earth Day activities a week from this Saturday. There are opportunities to help with Klief Park near St. James' Park and volunteers are invited to sign up.

We will know within a couple weeks whether we have received the city grant to repair/replace the Vilas neighborhood signs.

Treasurer's Report

Checking account balance is \$8586.35. In 2024 so far, we've brought in \$4640 in advertisement revenue and \$406 in donations.

We will go ahead and donate \$250 to the Good Neighbor Gathering, as we have budgeted for it. Budget-wise we have more to spend than usual due to the advertising revenue so may be able to provide more donations this year than other years.

Social Chair Report

Nobody has volunteered to run the block party, unfortunately.

Bethany notes that the time she can spend for the committee is very small, and if anybody wants to replace her, that would be welcome.

We have confirmation that the fire truck will be here for the 4th of July party, and suspect that Sara Bahauddin will likely volunteer again to put out a table for popsicles.

Bethany notes that, while the holiday party at Garth's is well-received, other wintertime initiatives we've done (e.g. coordinating with Senior home to provide

cards/ gifts and the craft party) may not be worth the work that was put into them. In the past, Bethany worked with a home where they provided an Amazon wishlist that we could use to send gifts directly to the home, but her contact there has left. (Roz volunteers to put all of these requests into the newsletter if Bethany wants).

Doug mentions that the garage sale was well-received and it's not too early to search for a coordinator/location/date for this. Bethany agrees that they got great feedback, but they would need volunteers for this, as it took a lot of time and effort. If it was coordinated with DMNA (she believes they have a garage sale also), that could increase foot traffic and the success of the venture.

Regarding a VNA table at the Boo at the Zoo, Alice Rivlin notes she has asked the Zoo director but hasn't heard back. She will ask again.

Wendy proposes that if no block can be found to have the block party, maybe we could use the Vilas shelter. Doug agrees that if we can find a coordinator, this would be a lot easier than shutting down a block and renting a portable toilet.

Zoning

More comments regarding the ADU Zoning bill:

Wendy and Doug note that there was little discussion at the Plan Commission or in the House and Strategy Committee meetings before it was passed. Wendy does note that the idea of "prefabricated ADUs" may be in the future. (Ben confirms this, showing a prefab ADU for \$15,000 available on Amazon) . Wendy notes there is no way to assure consistency of ADUs with a historical neighborhood. Craig Stanley thanks Ben for following this closely and informing us, and to Doug for putting out the survey. He wishes that we had more notice about this issue from Alder Evers than we did. Doug may or may not be able to attend the Common Council next week and speak.

Ben notes that a police check was made last Friday at Lucky's, and out of 190 people in the bar, 30 were under age 21.

Per Doug, the neighborhood survey will be going out prior to our next meeting, to be distributed by block captains. Drop off locations will be Doug Carlson's house

or Sara Bahauddin's house although there will also be an online option.

Edgewood Liaison committee

As previously stated, Craig Stanley notes that there is not much to discuss at this point. It is mentioned that Edgewood is very invested in addressing any unfortunate student behavior in the neighborhood.

Transportation

A yield sign has been placed at Little Street where it meets Monroe.

Joint Campus Committee

Doug has become aware that an expected enrollment increase at UW is "generally known" but there is no official announcement or numbers yet.

Vilas Ink

Next edition will be online only around June 1. Please provide any submissions to Bonnie by mid-May.

VNA Website

Chris reports that we've reimbursed Leon for the bills he's paid for our Squarespace account and now it will be directly billed to the treasurer's debit card. Chris is working on updating our website, highlighting our Vilas Ink advertisers.

Vilas Park liaisons

Ann Rivlin notes that the Zoo's Party for the Planet is May 4. It is a big event where they will have arborists, give away trees, etc..

March 21 Vilas Park meeting was well-attended. Eric Knepp (park superintendent) provided lots of information. The tennis courts are very unsafe and will be removed soon, to be replaced in 2026 per the Master Plan. The dinosaur climbing structure has to be removed due the structure no longer being safe. Due to being near the mounds, it will be cut off at the ground level.

The two playgrounds in park are scheduled for renovation in 2026. The shoe will remain. There will be meetings for public input before then. An accessible beach mat will be placed at the beach prior to Memorial Day.

The shelter need to be re-done but will be expensive, and currently it is safe for use, so no immediate plans to replace. Work on the lagoon, Vilas Park Drive, and Randall/Drake Zoo lot are lower on the list. What happens with the budget will determine what can be done.

Ecology teams are providing input into the park. It is noted that the park has beautiful mature trees in the park, but not young trees to replace them. They've been removing invasive species and hazardous trees due to safety for humans as well as safety of the younger trees. Some tree removal will need to occur.

Bonnie notes frustration that nothing has been done to prevent visitors from parking in the grass near Randall, and that plantings have been proposed but not actually carried out.

Complements were given to the park employees for presenting an excellent meeting, and Roz also notes that the work done so far in the woodland near Edgewood Ave looks terrific.

Next meeting 5/22/24

Will be hybrid, held at Mike Rewey's house at 1921 Jefferson