



CTM Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2013, 7:00 p.m.
Clifton Cultural Arts Center

Present: Ben Pantoja, Linda Ash, Adam Balz, Tom Dwyer, Brian Curwin, Tony Sizemore, Joyce Rich, Morgan Rich, Kevin Marsh, Bruce Bernard, Buddy Goose, Eric Urbas, Pat Knapp

Absent: Ashley Fritz, Mike Moran

Police Report

Officer Lisa Johnson reported there was an armed robbery on Whitfield. The victim was unloading groceries out of his car about 9:30 at night when the suspect held a gun on him and told him to get on the ground. Officer Johnson said don't be afraid to yell for help, but it's best not to chase the suspect. She also reported other burglaries in the neighborhood as well as a black male suspect himself, reported on Wood Ave.

Fire Department

Captain Jim Kettler of the Cincinnati Fire Department reported that there were no major fires in Clifton lately. Clifton has been quiet. The firehouse is in great shape, and so is the equipment. A neighbor attending the meeting asked if the Clifton firehouse ever gets "brownd out." Capt. Kettler said the Clifton firehouse doesn't get brownd out because it's a single-engine company.

Capt. Kettler said the firehouse is designing a new logo, something it hopes will be representative of the Clifton community. Other firehouses have their own logo. He asked if anyone knew of an artist or designer to help with it. "We want to show our community pride and open it up to the community."

Recreation Center

Tom Reese reported that the Rec Center is under construction. He thanked CTM Trustee Tom Dwyer for raising money for new A/V equipment through the first annual CTM golf outing. The center will be under construction for 14 months. The Rec Center staff are currently in the basement at CCAC and are programs are being held across the street at Fairview School. All phone numbers are the same. The Cincinnati Foundation will continue with fundraising for the Rec Center by sponsoring a Breakfast with Santa at the Rusty Bucket.

Clifton Cultural Arts Center

Mark McKillip reported that the CCAC welcomes CTM meetings to be held at CCAC while the Rec Center is under construction. CCAC is undergoing a "mini renovation" of the great hall on the third floor, an old gymnasium that was converted into three classrooms during the 1970s. The walls are being demolished and it will be one big room for classes, exhibitions, and receptions. It should be completed in February. The CCAC also has several major events in December including the Holiday Fair December 7, Christmas Carol by Playhouse in the Park December 8, and Felt and Fiber and 100 Voices art exhibits during the month.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the November 2013 CTM meeting were approved.

Update on Clifton Business District Working Group – Kathleen Norris

Each of the three organizations masterminding the project—CTM, the CBPA, and Clifton 20/20 as well as the Uptown Consortium—have been actively engaged in the process. The project goal was to figure out how to reposition the business district. The process started with research and analysis, working with the leadership group. The first task was community input and consensus from the leadership group. The second task was district marketing consultation. The interesting thing learned early on was that the consultants had a clear sense of the Ludlow “brand,” but did not find that same single mindedness in the leadership group. A lot of time was spent exploring possible brands and there was such a diversity of opinions that the discussion was tabled to allow the leadership group to explore the best branding strategies. Input will be widened through focus groups.

Another task was pre-leasing activity – building databases including a business typology list and an inventory of available sites. Ludlow has not had a huge number of available sites. One of the challenges is to figure out a strategy that would enable the business district, as spaces are available over time, to know how best to fill them. When we started, one space was available. Now it has been filled. Couple of spaces have become available since or look like they will be.

The leadership group is putting together a list of names for the project focus group, aimed at getting a good cross-section of opinion.

Learnings so far include the perceived problem with availability of parking. We mapped parking and concluded it is more of a wayfinding problem than a parking problem. People can’t find the parking that exists. We’ve made a number of recommendations regarding signage and also a valet parking service.

Another component of the project is property owner assistance. We met with proper owners to secure their agreement on a leasing strategy. In a couple of cases, we have been helping owners who have leasing challenges. We are also a realtor and can offer realtor services to landlords. So far, we have tried to informally consult with owners, helping one in particular find the “perfect tenant.”

We also identified early on that most successful retail districts these days have a cozy coffee house. That appeared to be a shortcoming on Ludlow. There are two that could be called coffeehouses, but neither of them seem to be gathering spaces. We reached out to the owner of Aquarius Star and worked with her extensively. She was receptive to the idea of repositioning her business and we made recommendations that would help her improve her business. She has completely reorganized her shop, merchandise, menu, and her hours and is programming activities in the evenings. It’s now exactly the kind of coffeehouse that is succeeding in other neighborhoods.

Communication and sales collateral are also key issues. One of the items in the contract is to develop marketing materials for the neighborhood. This has been deferred until branding issues resolved. Ludlow needs more marketing and events, including social media. Uptown Consortium has offered to handle some social media marketing for Clifton, but the neighborhood should take care of its own marketing.

We also helped developed the Pop-Up Ludlow window display event to supplement Holidays on Ludlow. We worked with UC DAAP students, a tremendous resource just up the road. This type of event could be repeated for other holidays including Valentines Day, etc.

Grocery store

The owner of the building has very high expectations regarding the value of his property and what it might bring either for rent or for lease. He might be a little ahead of the market. Ludlow has always been special for having grocery store. But this is the hardest type of merchant to attract. This is Kroger’s home town. They work hard to put other grocers out of business. The location will require a specialist rather than a generalist grocery store. We looked into specific chains that might be interested. Fresh Market appears tapped out. Trader Joes has declared we are a one-market town. You don’t want Aldi or Save-a Lot; they will characterize your

neighborhood in a specific way you don't want. We also know that Steve Goessling's broker has been trying as well, but has so far not succeeded in attracting a retailer. Until the owner revises his expectations, that space is likely to stay vacant. We are still looking for that firm that has decided they want to make a market entry in Cincinnati.

Election of 2014 Trustees

Four Trustee positions were open, and five candidates put their names forth for the election. 51 votes were cast.

Joyce Rich, Ben Pantoja, Kevin Marsh, and Adam Hyland were elected. They were the top vote-getters, in that order. Rich, Pantoja, and Marsh are current Trustees, and Adam Hyland is a new trustee. Fifth candidate Paul Buckley was thanked for his interest in participating and invited to be active on CTM committees.

Treasurers Report – Tom Dwyer

Income in November 2013 was \$9,813 including \$230 in membership dues, \$2,500 in NSP/AIG funds, and \$6,000 from TriHealth.

Expenses were \$4,423 including \$1,200 in Chronicle printing and publishing and \$1,500 for carriage rides for Holidays on Ludlow, \$430 for the Lantern Walk, and \$120 for the CCAC meeting room.

Net income for November was \$5,389.97.

CTM's current cash position is \$89,937.

The November Treasurers Report was approved.

NSP Funding for 2014

This year the City of Cincinnati asked neighborhood councils to vote on use of NSP funds for specific projects. The CTM Executive Committee proposed the \$5,000 be used for the Chronicle (\$3,000) and insurance (\$2,000). Trustee Bruce Bernard stated he thinks it would be best to use the money for more direct community-building projects instead of recurring expenses such as insurance and the newsletter. Tom Dwyer and Ben Pantoja noted that newsletters and insurance are allowable NSP uses and are even mentioned on the NSP website. Bernard added he believes the money should be spent on projects that directly improve the neighborhood. Dwyer said using these funds for the Chronicle and insurance allows CTM to free up other money for neighborhood projects.

2014 Draft Budget—Ben Pantoja/Tom Dwyer

According to bylaws, the CTM Board of Trustees votes on its 2014 budget during the January meeting each year. CTM President Ben Pantoja prepared a budget proposal summary:

--CTM's current balance is good, but there was a big drop in 2013 because of a \$10,000 deficit (estimate based on actual expenses and commitments made).

--2013 was the biggest deficit in decades (\$15,800), due to the Norris contract and website redesign.

--Pantoja proposed a budgeting principle whereby CTM's recurring expenses should match income (Chronicle, insurance, CliftonFest, membership drive costs, LLC, etc.)

--Only let the balance drop for one-time investments (welcome to Clifton signs, website redesign, etc.)

--This would be a balanced approach that is thriftier than “when it runs out, it runs out” but not as strict as “raise new money for every investment even if we have \$50,000 in the bank.”

--2014 proposed budget is based on recurring expenses only (no new projects) with a maximum loss of \$5,000 per year, considering that the major CTM fundraiser (the House Tour) occurs only once every three years.

--The draft 2014 budget so far assumes that CTM’s two biggest sources of income other than the House Tour (NSP and TriHealth) will go toward recurring expenses rather than new projects.

--He recommends cuts to limit the deficit in 2014. These cuts could include reducing the CliftonFest contribution from \$7,800 to \$5,000, no Pop-Up Ludlow funds, etc.)

Trustee Kevin Marsh noted that with “add-backs” due to money we haven’t actually spent from the 2013 budget, the deficit is really more like \$8,800. Lots of spending that is budgeted has not happened year to date. Beautification, LLC, Lantern Walk did not spend all of their budgets.

Trustee Buddy Goose said the CTM Board should consider the following when working on budgets: 1) what is the appropriate level of spending, 2) what is the appropriate level of capital to maintain in accounts and reserve for unforeseen things, and 3) understand where the funds are going. Due to the House Tour happening every three years, we need a three-year budget, not a one-year budget.

Joyce Rich noted that if the Pop-Up event is successful, we may want it to be a recurring expense. These types of new events are important in order for us to keep improving our neighborhood.

Letter for proposed TriHealth 2014 funding requests—Pantoja

TriHealth contributed \$6,000 to CTM in 2013. Pantoja noted we may want to provide them funding suggestions in January rather than in June, since it impacts the CTM budget substantially. He proposed requesting specific amounts for events such as the Memorial Day Parade and noted the final 2014 CTM budget should note the specific events.

Holidays on Ludlow and Pop-up Ludlow Update—Joyce Rich

Janelle Lee of Uptown Consortium brought posters to give out for the first annual Pop-Up Ludlow event on December 6. We are working with the same artist who did a similar project in Corryville last year, and that program has grown. It should help draw additional traffic to the Ludlow Business District. The artist coordinated the work of UC DAAP students who created Tiffany-like displays in 11 businesses. During the same evening, the Clifton Plaza Christmas tree will be lit, reindeer will be lit up, desserts will be served at Graeters, and students will be dressed in costume to help promote the event. The window displays will be up through January.

Holidays on Ludlow will be held December 13, including carriage rides, luminaries, carolers, and special events in various businesses.

2013 Late Membership Drive—Kevin Marsh

Trustee Kevin Marsh implemented a targeted membership drive specifically for people who had forgotten to pay dues last year and the year before. CTM had 389 paying members at the end of 2013, including 13 from the

new online membership feature added to www.cliftoncommunity.org in November. This is an increase of 30 from 2012.

Probasco Fountain Inquiry into Drinking Fountain Options—Pantoja

During the November 2013 CTM meeting, neighbor Malcolm Montgomery asked the Probasco Fountain Committee if they could look into incorporating drinking fountains into refurbishment of the fountain. CTM's resolution was to support development of the fountain but encourage the committee to look into drinking fountains. The committee met and replied back to CTM that drinking fountains are not feasible, primarily due to cost of maintaining them. CTM President Pantoja moved to change the resolution to officially support the development of the fountain. The motion passed.

CTM Sponsorship of Grant for Phase 2 of Utility Box Art Project—Kip Eagen

Clifton Community Fund needs CTM's organizational support (specifically, it's 501c3 status) to apply for an ArtsWave grant for phase 2 of the Utility Box Art Project. Grant monies would be issued to CTM, which will administer the funds to Clifton Community Fund for the next phase. CCF is currently in the process of raising another \$6,000 to implement Phase 2. A motion to serve as "pass through" organization for the grant was approved.

Eagen also requested that the purchase of reindeer for the Clifton Plaza be done in a similar fashion.

Trustee 1 minute Reports

Trustee Bruce prepared an update on Woolper Avenue roadway improvements and will distribute them to Woolper residents. The project will occur in Spring 2014. Bernard also prepared a flyer for residents of Juergens Avenue, who had asked CTM's help in requesting that the City repair broken curbs and pavement and address lighting concerns as well as noise issues. Both fliers are attached to these minutes.

Adam Balz reported great volunteer turnout to install the annual holiday lights and garland on Ludlow, in spite of 19 degree temperatures that day.

Public Q&A

Malcolm Montgomery noted he appreciated the budget discussion and spending money consciously. He agreed with Trustee Marsh that "we are not as bad off as we think" in terms of the 2013 deficit.

Daniel Ames noted that we are approaching the three-year anniversary of the closing of Keller's IGA. Neighbors would like to hear some positive news rather than the same old "we don't know" we heard tonight.

Next meeting: Monday, January 6, 2013, 7 p.m., Clifton Cultural Arts Center, 3711 Clifton Avenue.