

Minutes of the May 30, 2013 meeting

Of the

Vista del Monte Neighborhood Association

The meeting got started at 6:47 PM, President Katy Brown, Treasurer Amber Anderson, and Secretary Steve Allen were present, but Vice President Ed Doran was not. There was a good attendance and a number of new people. Katy, mentioning that it was election night, announced that she had been the president for the past 15 years, and that other officers had been in office for other lengths of time, and that the neighborhood would profit from a broader participation on the board.

Then the discussion proceeded to the fact that the wards have changed, and the neighborhood now is split between Wards 3 and 6. Representatives from both wards were present, including Councilman Steve Kozachik.

Katy then mentioned that the cell phone people had finally withdrawn their request for stationing a tower in the park.

Officer Keene of the Tucson Police Department then spoke. One woman spoke of a graffiti problem near her property or on her back fence, and was wondering if there had been a detected increase in graffiti in the neighborhood. Officer Keene said that no upswing was visible in police statistics. A man in the audience then said that he had observed graffiti on utility boxes and the like near his domicile, and had painted them out. The woman who spoke earlier said that the graffiti that had raised her concern was appearing about once a week on the fence, and it looked like it was the same person each time. Then a third man added something about the issue that I did not hear.

Judith Anderson of Ward 3 said that there is a city committee for graffiti offenses, which studies them and assembles investigative leads and cases, helping the police to catch and the courts to penalize the offenders. For this reason, neighbors should report, and if at all possible include a photograph of, graffiti prior to painting it over.

Then the subject of an apparently homeless mentally ill woman that has frequented the area came up. She wanders the neighborhood.

Then someone mentioned how the noise regulations for the park, despite being posted, are frequently ignored and largely unenforced.

Then there was something about suspected drug dealing at a neighborhood home. The occupants of the house were reportedly busted for dealing in marijuana, and there have been signs of possible crack cocaine dealing there also. Officer Keene did not know the status of this. Another woman present said that the mentally ill homeless woman harasses dogs and wakens neighbors. Another man reported seeing her at the corner of Blacklidge and Laurel. Officer Keene said, for such situation call police, and they can refer the case to the mental health people (crisis response center). However, that is all they can do unless there is an actual crime involved or an immediate danger. Another woman in the audience spoke of a street person, apparently the same individual, seen going through people's mailboxes. Officer Keene said that the limitations of TPD staff limit to what extent they can respond to reported incidents. The number to report mental cases to is 622-6000, and private individuals are encouraged to call this number in the case of a suspected mental problem requiring attention. That would be what the police would have to do anyway. Also useful would be to assemble photos of significant behavior such as her committing a crime such as mailbox-raiding or trespassing, and that multiple neighbors who have seen various such behaviors pool their pictures and other testimony so that the mental health people would have a clearer picture of the existence of a problem and its nature, and greater legal ability to take action. Another man mentioned having seen her climb over the fence out of a property where she once resided. Katy said, let's write all this down and start a petition to have the mental-health people do intervention in this case. The phone number of the crisis center is 622-6000, There will be formed a neighborhood mental health committee for looking further into this matter, and it will include Pat Fox and Michael Goody. Somebody further mentioned seeing the woman around Fort Lowell Road screaming profanities.

Then someone brought up the subject of reckless driving along Laurel Avenue from the Ft. Lowell-Camp Lowell junction to the 4-way stop by the cemetery, and also from there east along Fort Lowell Road to Swan. The problem, he said, is habitual. Speeding and running of the stop signs are common, despite speed bumps. The road could use additional speed bumps. Also, it was mentioned that there is excess traffic to the west of the four-way stop at Laurel and Blacklidge since motorists don't realize it's a dead-end street. Officer Keene said that this problem is the responsibility of the Department of [Transportation?], to which it should be directed.

Another person reported that some people had been seen having sex in the park during daylight hours.

Then the subject of loud music came up: the problem of loud music from vehicles along Grant Road and at the Circle K at the corner of Columbus and Grant, and the difficulty of getting

any police response. Officer Keene said such noise problems should continue to be reported, on the chance that an officer might be available in the area and could ticket the offender. Then someone mentioned loud music coming from fixed sources, which include a steakhouse. Officer Keene then talked about the noise ordinances, saying that the amount of allowable noise differs depending on the time of day. The general rule is that from 7 AM till 10 PM more noise is allowed than at other times, but that in no case is unreasonable or excessive noise allowed. Katy then mentioned that people should sign up to be in groups about the noise problem and other problems, and she wrote on a paper what issues existed that warranted groups. Noise was one, and mental health was another, lighting in the park a third, and there was one other. No one signed up on the lists.

Then the subject of the ward changes came up. Councilman Kozachik then got up and addressed the audience. He mentioned that in Ward 6, there are around 30 to 35 neighborhood associations. He mentioned that both Wards 6 and 3 have very helpful staffs, and that they frequently collaborate. Please contact them for any issues. He mentioned that for reporting graffiti, call 792-CITY. Again, include pictures if at all possible. Also, another graffiti reporting number was given but I did not get it. He stated that contrary to many people's expectation, the typical graffiti artist is not a teen ager, but an adult between 25 to 35 years of age who does this in order to display his greatness on Facebook to his peers, with whom he competes. Regarding these and other minor offenses: Do not think that the police department is annoyed by these things and does not want to hear them. That is why we have police. Even if the police do not send anyone out, at least not immediately, people should call and report things that are offenses against public order. This information is accumulated by the police. The Ward 6 office phone number is 791-4601. Councilman Kozachik intends to be accessible to his constituents. The dividing line, said he, between Wards 6 and 3 is Monte Vista and San Francisco Boulevard. North of these is Ward 3, and south is Ward 6. However, voting precincts have not changed.

Then Judith Anderson of Ward 3 said that there were certain flyers and handouts that she had brought that people could pick up.

Shortly thereafter, a man in the audience asked about the state of street repairs in Tucson. He indicated that the city is neglecting certain areas, which are in poor repair.

Katy then repeated that people should call 911 and report questionable or anti-social activities even if a police response seems unlikely.

Then the park lights were discussed. Katy reported that the wiring had been replaced and the park lights were back on. A representative of Parks and Recreation said that they have

been reinstalled using a new method that is harder to break into, namely, eliminating ground-accessible pull boxes, and hardening the installation with poured concrete over certain areas, with boulders on top of that. He hopes this will stop the thefts, but it cannot be guaranteed. The subject of fake utility trucks came up. Katy said that if anyone sees a truck working on wiring in a park, especially if it lacks official markings, it would be well to call Parks and Recreation and report it. Statewide, cities lose around \$10,000,000 annually to wiring theft these days, much of which is committed by fake utility workers. Someone in the audience suggested powering the lights with solar panels instead. However, the man from Parks and Recreation mentioned that solar panels also are stolen, and in certain locations have had to be secured with metal cages.

Councilman Kozachik recommended that the park lights be shut off at 9 PM. However Parks and Recreation said that usually park lights are on all night for security reasons, and that in any case, parks do not close till 10 PM. Someone then suggested that parks use partial lighting during certain hours, shutting off part of their lights. Parks and Recreation said that such an arrangement would require costly redesign of the system, and would also result in calls from people who would think that there was a defect in some of the lights, wasting city electricians' time.

Then a woman said that she does not like walking in the dark on early winter mornings. Another woman said she works various odd hours and may want to walk at any hour of the night, and therefore likes the lights. There was more discussion of the relations of street lights to crime. A lot of people want lights at night because they have to be out at such hours. One person said that prior to the lights on Columbus, the street was a "war zone". Katy then spoke of the Back to Basics event some years ago, when money became available for neighborhood improvements, and these included street lights, new trees, side walks, yard lights, speed bumps, and other improvements. At that time, the understanding was that the lights in the park would be on only during the park's open hours. The new policy, now that the lights have been restored, of having them on all night, is something new and not in accord with the original plan. Katy took a survey of residents adjoining the park and found that their weighted opinion scores were 27 points in favor of operating the light only during park hours; 13 points in favor of operating them dusk to dawn; and 26 points for a strategic lighting plan. Katy, who lives next to the park, does not like them on all night because they are annoying.

Then there was a discussion of forming a focus group to further discuss the issue of park lighting. Until then, Katy would like them to be shut off when the park is closed. Parks and Recreation indicated that it would be technically feasible.

Something was mentioned about setting up a meeting date about the issue, probably in July . Parks and Recreation said we need to do a follow up meeting about the lighting issue.

Then Councilman Kozachik mentioned that the grass in certain parks is not being mowed as required by City Code. The lady from Parks and Rec responded that recently the department has been swamped with other work and has not been able to get to it, but it is on the agenda and will be seen to shortly.

A Committee on Lights will be formed. It will involve street reps and Parks and Recreation.

There was a brief discussion of the passing out of the flyers that announced this meeting, and the attendance.

Regarding the cell phone tower: The history of this was briefly retold, and that the neighborhood learned that the tower must be accompanied by an equipment building measuring about 10 x 10 x 20 feet. Certain people of the neighborhood went and looked at some of the other installations, and found that the great majority of them were in commercial locations such as along Speedway, and that what the company had proposed was not suitable for the park location. The company then proposed putting it in the location of an existing light pole, but there was still the issue of the equipment building. After further debate, the neighborhood people involved said that this was not acceptable. After that, the company dropped its plans to place the system in the park. However, it was mentioned that they could still seek to put it somewhere else in the neighborhood. One man spoke that the objections to it are cancer, ugliness, and noise. He said they are a health hazard. Judith Anderson from Ward 3 then showed the process that the cell companies must go through to get approval for such an installation. This gives opportunity for public input. Someone said that the thing we must do is continue to have our objections heard. It was also mentioned that many of us use the devices made possible by cell phone towers, and that cities and even neighborhoods make money off of siting payments from cell phone companies. Katy said that in our neighborhood we thought it was not worth the downside.

Katy, I believe, then said that we have a street rep system that works. Many neighborhoods do not have such a system. We should keep it in good order. Also that a yard sale needs someone to manage it. In the past, yard sales have been promoted by voluntary contributions of participants toward an ad that would be put in a newspaper.

Then elections were held: Katy listed the offices on an easel up front, and wrote down the names of persons who had indicated their willingness to run. That included all present officers, but also Ruth Blunier and Spencer Davis. Further discussion revealed that Ruth Blunier

was willing to take the presidency, but that Spencer Davis was thinking more of a committee position. That was noted, and then there were brief speeches by the candidates, and then it was decided to put the slate as listed to a vote. The slate was

Ruth Blunier, president

Ed Doran, vice president

Steve Allen, secretary

Amber Anderson, treasurer

This slate was adopted without a dissenting vote.

Then someone spoke thanking Katy for her long faithful service to the neighborhood.

Meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Allen, Secretary.