

EPIC Block Club

Minutes of Annual Meeting

March 27, 2010

President Michael Bergmann (MB) called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Other members of the Executive Board in attendance were Lynn Pierce (LP), and Nick Peneff (NP). Clare Lake and Bob Smith were absent. Guest presentations from the rostrum were announced for State Representative Harry Osterman (HO), State Senator Heather Steans (HS), and Cook County Commissioner Bridget Gainer (BG). Representing Alderman Mary Anne Smith during certain discussions was Ernie Constantino (EC)

HO discussed the \$80 – 100B State budget deficit in terms of solutions based on a lower-cost formula for new employees, reduced early childhood programming in Chicago Public Schools and an income tax increase. In terms of neighborhood capital spending:

\$10M is allocated for the new Metra station near Peterson Ave, with details an early spring press conference,

and plans to fund the two-story library replacement are firm, with no demolition of existing strip mall properties including Patio Beef. .

Armory renovation plans include early childhood area and a dedicated senior center

Walking safety on Thorndale near the CTA has worsened due to unchecked gang activity despite years of neighborhood activism, particularly on the part of the Task Force volunteers, most notably Lynn Pierce. Continued efforts to increase foot patrols and to manage police district boundaries more effectively with respect to the increased activity have not won the attention of policymakers in the administration.

HS pinned budget woes on over borrowing in the past, particularly to fund pensions, and warned that the State bond rating has been reduced. Solutions offered from the HS standpoint of Education Committee Chair include savings attainable from both school district consolidation and government lease renegotiation, as well as improved pension financing shifts. Regarding capital spending, HS is seeking federal assistance for CTA Redline track and station renovation affecting Edgewater commutes. Finally, nursing home policies which mix the elderly with the mentally ill to the detriment of care for both vulnerable populations are the focus of new community-based housing initiatives.

Questions from the floor took issue with the sheer number of governmental bodies in Illinois, compared to other states—HS opined that political will needed to reduce this number of boards and commissions is not been mobilized to change the status quo. Details on pension reduction details, including a police and firemen exemption, as well as developments in school voucher issues were aired. Both Metra and CTA projects were confirmed as “on track.”

BG views policy revisions in County Departments of Corrections and Hospitals as key to reducing budget shortfalls. With prisons, the focus is on developing alternate programs, or diversions, to incarceration. With hospitals, the focus is building on the positive effects of the depoliticizing of the new hospital board, although a cogent succession plan for board members is needed, and to decentralize County health services based on community-based needs assessments in the neighborhoods. BG warned that flat-rate budget cuts may be unfair to certain constituencies, and may not account for federal mandates over certain types of spending in County government.

Questions concerning use of County health services by non-paying, non-residents were met with a call for development and application of better collection systems during intake.

EC had no comment when quizzed over scrapped plans to relocate library to new site next to the Armory, but offered news on local sustainability efforts in Edgewater Community Council (EESP), including green roofs, vegetable gardens, and an organic vegetable initiative with free seedlings on May 8. When asked if new EPA Lead Renovation rule would be worked into local policy for permitting renovations on pre-78 housing, he referred to Dana Fritz for environmental affairs in the ward.. An April 13 meeting sponsored by Cook County Dept of Public Health on the new rule was announced. Bob Solomon was congratulated on his son's invitation to play piano at Carnegie Hall.

President's report highlighted school news, including a new principal at Senn HS and the pool reopening at Swift ES. Worsening conditions on Thorndale were cited, including threats to business owners from local gang members. Treasurer's report refers to small, incidental expenses as annotated on block club's website. Same officers as last year were slated for re-election, except for Bob Smith, stepping down due to term limit. Rob Meyer, Nominating Committee Chair, advanced Bob Kaplan's candidacy for this vacancy. New slate was nominated and unanimously confirmed for next annual term. New members of nominating committee include Bob Solomon with Mary Stoner as an alternate. Call for a new block captain was answered by Sara Bornstein.

All were reminded of Garage Sale on June 5 and Pot Luck on June 19th at 5944 N. Magnolia, Three Edgewater Beach art deco posters were raffled off as meeting was closed.