SOUTHWESTERN HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 16, 2022

The Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association held the Fall General Meeting at Brody Middle School on November 16, 2022, at 6:30pm. Over 70 neighbors braved the cold weather to attend this meeting. Board members in attendance included: George Davis, Nick Van Patten, Ginny Renda, Heather Carman, Penny Harrison, Jon Shelness, Steve Utterson, Joe Harrison, and Pete Conrad. City officials in attendance included: Ben Page, Parks and Recreation, Carl Voss, City Council Person at large. Sue Ann Donovan, City Code Enforcement, Scott Sanders, City Manager, and Josh Mandelbaum, City Council Person for our 3rd Ward.

The annual election of board members was held. Board Members Heather Carman, Pete Conrad, Joe Harrison, Jon Shelness, and Penny Harrison ran and were reelected to the board for a 2023/2024 term.

Ben Page, Parks and Recreation Director, announced the department won the prestigious 2022 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Management among many other city candidates from many states. He explained “being selected as the 2022 Gold Medal Winner was an incredible honor”. “This award was due to all those who work in the Parks and Recreation Departmentand givethe citizens of Des Moines the best possible service and programs”. Neighbors in the audience had several questions and congratulations for Mr. Page.

Carl Voss shared the City of Des Moines will be partnering with Des Moines Public Schools to increase funding for Early Childhood Education and Reading Progress from preschool through high school and translating information into eleven different foreign languages.

He discussed Vision Zero, the City of Des Moines plan to eliminate traffic fatalities and enhance the safety of our transportation system. This past year meetings were held in neighborhoods to determine where the city needed to focus on cars that move too fast. He brought creative signs to distribute and have neighbors place them in their yards. These signs had messages to drivers about slowing down and were provided by him for free.

Sue Ann Donovan, Code Enforcement Department, shared information regarding sobering group homes in neighborhoods. Group homes need to pass city inspections and must abide by parking laws around the properties. Most group homes are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding drug and alcohol abuse even though other issues are may be present.

City Manager Scott Sanders addressed the future for Des Moines. He reported that two classes of firefighters are graduating. Usually, it takes 2 to 3 years training to become police and fire personnel, but the process can be speeded up if the individuals have had prior experience as firefighters and paramedics in other communities. He stated Des Moines would be getting federal funding from the American Rescue Act (ARPA). This money is to combat the impact of COVID 19, and it will be used to assist small businesses, households, and hard-hit industries, premium pay for essential workers, and investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Some of this money will be used to develop a new community center, and add resources for the library, early childhood education, solar panels and removing blight. Mr. Sanders told neighbors that the City of Des Moines was in the process of acquiring the Nationwide Building. This will allow many of the city’s departments to be in the same place as well as providing a new fire station. The City manager told the group that even though property evaluations have gone up over 20%, this will not affect taxes this year. The city will be holding meetings in the neighborhood before the 2024 property taxes are determined.

Josh Mandelbaum discussed the need to improve the City’s transportation system. He is committed to improving our transit system. The project will take time but will happen. He also addressed needed improvements in our storm sewer systems and addressed water runoff in residential areas.

Several members asked questions and voiced their concerns. Many members stayed after the meeting to speak with city officials who also stayed later.

The meeting concluded at 8:16 PM.

Minutes Submitted by – Ginny Renda- Secretary of SWHNA