Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association

General Meeting April 15, 2025

The April 2025 General Meeting was called to order by President George Davis at 6:32pm. Board members president were George Davis, Nick VanPatten, Ginny Renda, Heather Carman, Penny Harrison, Jon Shelness, Steve Sarcone, Joe Harrison, Pete Conrad, and Steve Utterson. There were approximately 80 neighbors at the meeting.

President Davis began the meeting by introducing board members and city officials. Davis said that Mayor Boesen planned to attend the meeting but there cannot be more than three City Council members at the meeting.

Davis explained to attendees that monthly Board meetings are open to all members which include treasurers’ reports and balances that are reviewed at all Board meetings. Members may also present concerns that impact our neighborhood or city.

President Davis told those present about the possibility of a social event this summer at Jasper Winery. He also encouraged everyone to become a member of the Southwestern Hills Neighbor Association.

Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy was the first to speak. He told the audience there was a 9.9% increase in property tax assessments. He said the Iowa Legislature has put a 3% cap on property tax increases. Property taxes go to schools 40%, cities 40%, and the county 20%. The 2026 budget will be certified on April 22, 2025. Supervisor McCoy discussed the Sobering Center on Carpenter which is a collaboration between the City of DS MOINES and POLK County. He also talked about another City/County collaboration, Global Neighbors, which aids refugees. Someone in the audience asked about salaries for supervisors and whether the position of supervisor was a full-time job. Supervisor McCoy said that supervisors would not be getting a raise in 2026. He also said that he thought the job of supervisor was a full-time job and he does not have another job.

City Manager Scott Sanders was introduced, and he talked briefly and turned the meeting over to Josh Mandelbaum who is City Councilman for Southwestern Hills. Councilman Mandelbaum told the audience that the city had to make significant cuts to make up for a $17,000,000 gap. He said the current State Legislature will hurt individual taxpayers and all citizens will be impacted. Councilman Mandelbaum discussed the demolition of the tennis courts at Harmon Park. He said the 2026 budget which goes into effect July 1, 2025 would include $200,000 for another option at Harmon Park. Neighbors may have the option of tennis courts added in the 2027 budget if that request remains a total neighborhood priority. Penny Harrison asked why the fence was torn down around the tennis courts if the plan was to rebuild the tennis courts.

The Des Moines School District is building new tennis courts at Brody Middle School. Some of these courts will be lite. Neighbors living adjacent to the tennis courts at Brody Park said that they were never notified of the construction of additional courts and lighting. Some neighbors asked for a meeting with the school district.

Councilmen Carl Voss and Mike Simonson had to leave the meeting to attend another neighborhood meeting. Before he left, Councilman Simonson stated that neighbors should have been notified about the new tennis courts construction. Some neighbors reported that they were told that they could not use the park during school hours. City Manager and Councilman Mandelbaum said they would investigate these concerns.

Council Mandelbaum was asked about budget cuts, and he said the largest expense in the Operating Budget was for personnel – First Responders, the Police and Fire Departments. The City of Des Moines does not want to make cuts that would impact citizen safety and wellbeing. City Manager Sanders warned that next year the city will be forced to make even more cuts. Someone asked about Knapp Property. This property has been sold to Waldinger Corporation and there has been no information about what they planned to do with this property.

The meeting concluded at 8:28pm, with some neighbors staying and speaking with city officials.

Minutes Submitted by SWHNA Secretary Ginny Renda