

## **Comstock Neighborhood Council Meeting**

### **Minutes**

Date: Wednesday December 18th, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Location: Manito United Methodist Church (Fellowship Hall), 3220 S Grand Blvd (parking and entrance is on E 33rd).

As a year end holiday celebration, Elizabeth brought desserts for the enjoyment of all participants.

Jim McCurdy served as Secretary and took minutes.

The previous month's minutes were approved.

### **Police Report**

Sgt. Dollard, SPD, stated that speeding on main arterials was a priority.

A new group of Sgts. would be assigned for the new year.

He reviewed the actions generated by the shooting at Comstock Park: two juvenile males were involved, probable cause does not exist for arrests. Two juveniles were later picked-up for stolen guns.

Comstock Park was designated a "hot spot" at the station, but no criminal activity has been detected and in comparison to other Spokane neighborhoods, there is little criminal activity at Comstock Park.

Lt. Yrigollen, SPD, asked for questions and concerns from the floor:

Elizabeth Goldsmith asked about jail time for repeat offenders. The Lt. responded that jail capacity and crowding were problems.

Dave Randall recommended a "minimum security facility" alternative. The Lt. replied that the Geiger Facility may offer alternatives.

### **City Council Report**

Paul Dillon, Spokane City Council member, commented on the City Budget tasks confronting the City Council, given the \$50 million deficit. A pilot program grant is provided to SPD to combat retail theft. Funding is set for community clean-up and action regarding junk vehicles.

The "C.O.P. Shop Program" is funded for 3-months with existing funds available for further evaluation of the program. On the state-wide agenda, compliance issues with the Waste to Energy operations are being addressed.

Gretchen McDevitt expressed the need for emergency lodging for some offenders taken into police custody.

Bruce Millsap communicated concern regarding the potential loss of the C.O.P. Shop program.

Council member Dillon explained the difference in the City of Seattle legislative process and that of Spokane. For now, either jail or a hospital emergency room are the two alternatives. We need an alternative facility. A smaller number of perpetrators commit a large number of crimes. He outlined the 5-steps from arrest to release and regretted there is little post-release activity.

### **Neighborhood Council Reports**

Elizabeth Goldsmith provided an update of the Comstock Park situation and communications. She has had discussions with Ryan at Avista re lighting and Carl at SPD re park signage. Nine additional lights may be installed along the perimeter of the park. She posed 2 questions:

- 1) Should we have lighting on the east side of the park along Howard?
- 2) Should the lighting face the street or interior of the park? Interior lighting is not in the budget.

The group agreed that the west side of the park is the priority and the lighting should face into the park.

Dave Randall commented that lighting was needed around the fireplace and picnic tables and that the fireplace needs a spark arrestor. Parks has indicated that lighting for the interior of the park is unlikely.

Chair thanked Pastor Sandy for the use of the Fellowship Hall. Residents are invited to bring non-perishable food or toiletry items for the Manito United Methodist Church food pantry.

-Introductions of officers were made and the need for new elected officers and unelected volunteers was presented.

-Asked for a raise of hands for first time members, and made a kind reminder that new members cannot vote during the first meeting attended in the last 12 months.

-Due to a scheduling conflict, Spokane Police Chief Hall has been rescheduled to speak at the January 2025 CNC meeting. Elizabeth Goldsmith has talked with Chief Hall and would like to forward a list of topics to the Chief. Her current list includes: update of parks; C.O.P. Shop status; juvenile crime; police officer recruiting; repeat offenders; how to access 311 crime check data; and 2025 priorities; and others.

Sandra Wicht stated there was no need to ask regarding jail.

Gretchen McDevitt mentioned that the Chief of Police has said there is a need for another alternative with staffing in addition to jail and the emergency room.

Jeff Mergler suggested the topics of speed cameras and status of the SPD Traffic Unit.

It was also mentioned to ask about the rationale for the police retirement program initiative and the Chief's support of the Mayor's Budget.

Dave Randall suggested the status of detox centers as a topic.

Gretchen McDevitt recommended that we ask if the Chief is frustrated with the court system and the time it takes to transfer convicted felons from the local jail to prison.

-Election of officers to be held at Jan 2025 meeting. Gretchen who is chairing the Nominating Committee (members Gretchen McDevitt, Bruce Millsap, and Greg Plummer, Committee) summarized the candidates:

- Jeff Mergler will run again for Chair for 2025 but will run for a lower office position in 2026.

- Mary Ann McCurdy has indicated she will vacate vice-chair at the end of the 2024 term and will run as Secretary for 2025

- Sandy Wicht will run again for Treasurer and CA rep in 2025

- Elizabeth Goldsmith will run for Vice Chair and Communications

- Bruce Milsap will run for CA Rep alternate

- Vacant positions without a candidate: Community Engagement Grant Coordinator, Cleanup Coordinator

-Swag update: trucker hats have been ordered. They will be sold at upcoming meetings for a suggested donation of \$10-15.

<https://emblemheadwear.com/product/trucker-hat>

## **Old Business**

-Meeting Decorum: a motion to adopt the Meeting Decorum document and amend the bylaws was made (Dave Randall), seconded (Bruce Milsap) and passed unanimously by the members. The bylaws will be amended with new decorum language.

-Volunteer Task Force: a brief discussion of the concept was made and the Volunteer Interest Form was introduced and explained. Google Forms link: <https://forms.gle/ENctGL4Obf6otL6p9>

More details:

The Comstock Neighborhood Council (CNC) would like to establish a volunteer task force consisting of Comstock residents that are interested in making a meaningful impact on the community through participation in a variety of tasks or projects. This is a great way to get involved without the commitment of an elected Officer position. Regular Council meeting attendance is not required. Activities might include, for example, getting more trash cans installed in the park participating in strategy sessions that guide the council's efforts during the year, coordinating a city sponsored events such as our neighborhood cleanup day, manning a table for a couple of hours at one of our main events such as Summer Parkways, or Symphony in the Park, developing marketing materials for neighborhood outreach, attending a city sponsored meeting on a topic you are passionate about, and so much more. Contact the chair or any of the officers if you have questions or interest.

## **Reports**

Office of Neighborhood Services (Pollyanne Birge):

January 3, 2025: Spokane Neighborhood Leadership Academy

ONS Office moving to 7th Floor, Communications

Treasurer and Community Assembly (CA) Representative (Sandy Wicht):

Traffic Calming funds: 2 year grant

Neighborhood Resource Officer: not sure how the new program will look; many options are being considered.

ONS Good Neighbor Award awarded to Comstock's own Elizabeth Goldsmith

CA Issues: Emerson-Garfield Zoning; North Hill Parking: there are increasing concerns about the lack of a parking requirement in the current zoning law.

## **New Business**

Goals and Accomplishments handout (attached) was presented by Elizabeth Goldsmith and the chair made brief additional comments by the chair. An emphasis on “Active Listening” and “Leading with Humility” was mentioned.

Greg Plummer praised the accomplishments and “excellent document.”

Elizabeth and Jeff discussed the City of Spokane climate change planning meeting. Topics included falling trees; street parking and emergency access; Latah Valley problems impacting the Comstock Neighborhood; and the lack of a tree replacement program when lots are cleared for development.

Pastor Sandy Ward suggested that an existing faith-based climate change organization should be involved. She also invited everyone to an “Ecology Anxiety Café” held the first Saturday of every month at UMMC.

Elizabeth Goldsmith requested the development of the council's 2025 strategic initiatives, such as public safety, traffic calming and zoning, which were the priorities for 2024. Requested further discussion at the January meeting.

## **Public Comments**

Larry Longhurst thanked the CNC for its work to create a climate for business in the neighborhood. Larry and his spouse are opening a business in the Dental Building at 37th and Grand that specializes in strength training for persons over 40 years of age.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm

## **Ongoing recruitment for Comstock Neighborhood Council officers**

-Community Engagement Grant Coordinator: works with ONS to get grants for community outreach projects within the Neighborhood. Grant Training recording available via ONS

-Clean up Coordinator for 2024 (12 hours per year). Training available via ONS

-Website: maintain and improve the current Comstock website