

**Driving Park Historic District
Annual Community Meeting
September 15, 2021**

Board Members in attendance:

Betsy Rubner (President), Ann Atkinson (VP), Rick Romig (Treasurer), Heather Roark (Secretary)

Other Members in attendance:

- Robin Benckart (Lafayette); John Angelo (5th Ave); Charlotte Ward (Franklin); Michele Steed (Gilpin) - former Chun Board member; Patricia Peterson (Marion); Natacha Kiler (Gilpin)

Members absent:

- Lydia Eiguren (High); Stockton Baker (Humboldt) - former President; Alissa Laux (Williams)

Call to order at 6:11pm via Zoom

Betsy reviewed the agenda. She added that each of our guest speakers were provided with a set of questions for tonight's meeting and asked if anyone had any additional questions to please use the Chat feature on Zoom.

Betsy introduced the board and explained the Board's duties and roles. Additionally, we've established a book club, a virtual speaker program, and hosted a neighborhood picnic that was widely attended. Betsy expressed her thanks to Chris and Becca for sharing their parkway for the picnic and thanked Gretchen and Natacha for organizing it. Communication of our events are via neighbor signs/QR codes, emails, and by posting information on our website (www.drivingpark.org).

Betsy surveyed the attendees regarding interests that people might want to participate in the coming year and encouraged suggestions. Results will be posted on our website.

Next up is voting for the board. Everyone currently serving on the board have agreed to stay on for another year. **Charlotte Ward moved to approve the board for another one-year term, John Angelo seconded the motion.** Everyone in attendance voted, the board was renewed for another term.

Guest speakers:

Community Resource Officers (CRO), Officer Kate Young and Antonio Pacheco:

Officer Young presented crime statistics from June 1 to September 14, 2021. There were **2 burglaries**, and both were garage related. Officer Young reminded everyone to please lock your garage, roll up the windows of your car and lock your cars. If your garage is connected to your home, lock the inner garage door as well. There were **no thefts reported but 2 thefts from a vehicle** were reported. One of these was reported from our neighborhood, but the theft actually happened downtown. There were **6 reported motor vehicle thefts** and 2 of these were "attempts". Officer Young also reminded everyone to keep your valet key with you and remove the valuables (perceived and real) from your car. Removing the garage door openers from cars is also a wise idea. Car keys should not be left in the vehicle when the car is parked in the garage. Regarding catalytic converter thefts – they have not found anything that is 100% theft proof. If you see someone committing a crime do not confront them – they could be armed. Instead, call 911 and be a good witness for the police. The DPD are offering free anti-theft license screws and suggested steering wheel clubs as they are the best car theft prevention device they have seen.

There was a question regarding lighting and crime prevention. It has been proven that lighting is one of the most powerful crime prevention tools available. Having your house number lit up is also very helpful.

Regarding car racing, there is a task force that goes out every weekend. They ticket heavily to discourage this activity. However, they concentrate on large groups, not the small groups. If anyone is a witness to street racing, they should call the non-emergency number (720-913-2000) or go to www.reportstreetracing.com (this is a state-wide site).

The car accident at 6th and Downing two weeks ago resulted in a death. An arrest was made, and the perpetrator was charged with vehicular homicide and vehicular assault. *Note: Barbara Weller was the individual who died. She lived on the 400 block of Humboldt and was on the MaxFund Board. Her daughter was also in the car and is still in a coma.*

The next Neighborhood Watch training will be on September 22nd at 6pm. This will be an in-person training and they are encouraging community involvement. Their training focuses on suspicious behavior, how and when to call police, and resources that are available. The neighborhoods who have participated have seen crime in their areas go down.

Crimes can be reported online, but there is no app to use on your phone. You would still want to call either the non-emergency number (720-913-2000) or 911.

The homeless issue is now being taken care of by civilians as they have more resources at their disposal and can write tickets and start clean ups. DPD helps by transporting the homeless to shelters. However, any unsafe activity should still be reported to the police.

Security cameras can be put in your alley if the camera is not pointed into a neighbor's back yard, if they are not mounted too high, or too close to a light that would create a visual interference (halos).

City Councilman Chris Hinds – District 10 Representative:

Councilman Hinds expressed his gratitude for being included in our meeting. He especially appreciated receiving the questions in advance.

Bond issues: There are 5 proposals that will be on the November ballot, and the most contentious is the \$190 million bond for a new arena at the National Western Complex. The other bond issues involve funds to expand and improve transportation projects, parks, housing and shelters, as well as repairs and improvements to Denver facilities such as the museum, zoo, and theatre complex, and would also include two new libraries. These are projects that are almost universally supported by everyone. People seem to be evenly split on the bond for the National Western Complex. Councilman Hinds did not indicate his support one way or another to these issues as he is happy to leave it to the voters to decide.

Mayoral Race 2023: Only one person has officially announced their candidacy for mayor in 2023 and that is Jesse Parris – a long-time activist. Other potential candidates might include some term-limited state representatives (i.e., Alec Garnet (D) and Leslie Herod (D)). Kelly Brough, President and CEO of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce might be a viable candidate as might Tami Door of the downtown Denver partnership. It is really too early to tell, and all of this is speculation.

Homeless issue: Unfortunately, homelessness is part of our society. He has spoken with national representatives and Denver is doing what it can. The STAR Program (Support Team Assistance Response - 720-913-STAR (7827)) is the civilian program that Officer Young mention earlier. This was launched last summer and is a partnership between the Mental Health Center of Denver, Denver Health, Denver Police, and the Denver Department of Public Health. This program is taking the lead on homeless outreach so that police intervention is lower. Currently STAR is only available from 10am to 6pm right now but will be getting additional funding and will become a 24/7 service with 4 vans. When a call is made to dispatch regarding a homeless issue they can determine if a response from STAR is needed or if it should go to the police because it was a crime related issue. This program was borrowed from Eugene, Oregon's Cahoots model. There are currently two Safe Outdoor Spaces, both of which are in District 10. In his view these have been successful, but the issue is a city-wide problem and District 10

cannot host all the Safe Outdoor Spaces. District 8 and Regis will be hosting Safe Outdoor Spaces, too. Councilman Hinds announced that there will be a Homeless Townhall on Sept 21st and encouraged folks to attend.

Please feel free to connect with him or his new assistant, Haley Clark. For general inquiries 720-337-7710, district10@denvergov.org or chris.hinds@denvergov.org.

Denver District Attorney, Beth McCann:

Ms. McCann is the chief law enforcement officer in the City and County of Denver. The primary work of the Denver DA's office is the prosecution of criminal offenders and the support of the victims of those crimes.

Increase in property crime: They don't know what to attribute the increase to. But people are anxious, frustrated, and angry and are acting out more. There are a lot more guns in our community than there used to be which has led to more gun violence. Some people are out of work and are struggling economically. Is there a connection with the homeless camps? Probably, but that is a better question for the police. There is crime and drug use – but it is hard to say if this contributes to the general increase in crime. The general policy in the DA's office is if they have the proof to prosecute, they will. It is not true that perpetrators of motor vehicle theft are not being prosecuted. Again, if they have proof, they will prosecute.

“Revolving Door” criminals: Ms. McCann explained the process that they go through in booking a suspect. Suspects are arrested and booked. Then there is a bond hearing where the person is seen by pre-trial services for risk assessment (including failures to appear in court). The judge then reviews the suspect's prior criminal history, prior failures to appear, domestic violence, etc., and then makes the decision whether to grant bond. She emphasized that this is a decision that the judge makes. It is important to understand that the primary purpose of bond is to make sure the suspect shows up in court. They don't just jail people – if they can make the bond, they can get out until their appointment in court. This process is not “Catch and Release.”

Decrease in incarceration rates: Jail capacity was considered and analyzed due to the Covid pandemic. They have tried to reduce the time of people were spending in jail.

Ms. McCann mentioned that the driver who caused the deadly accident at 6th and Downing has been charged with the harshest of crimes – homicide and assault.

Allocation of resources in the DA's office: The DA's office looks at all the factors involved in the charged crime. They often make offers to plead guilty to a lesser crime, but in some cases, they don't make offers at all. This is not letting people off – they are still pleading guilty. They have to look at how strong their evidence is, the nature of the crime, and the other elements that

are considered. Sometimes the less serious crimes are the ones that more frequently get offers. There is a back log of cases which are prioritized - the more violent crimes are more likely to go to trial.

Ms. McCann echoed Officer Young's recommendation to call the police rather than confronting someone who is committing a crime.

Ms. McCann provided her email address should anyone need to contact her:
Beth.mccann@denverda.org

Betsy thanked the speakers and said that she will upload to the Driving Park website the DA's community update, the Neighborhood Watch information, and a flyer from Ridwell that has a special promotion for our neighborhood.

Betsy introduced Rebecca Hayes, the General Manager with Ridwell, to explain their program. Ridwell is a startup that was launched two months ago. They make it easy to waste less by giving life to material typically not accepted in recycling programs (i.e., plastic bags, light bulbs, and batteries). They also partner with local non-profits to help local residence re-purpose their stuff. They charge a membership fee for their service and the flyer that will be on the Driving Park website will offer 10% off of a subscription.

Meeting adjourned.