

**Driving Park Historic District  
Quarterly Board Meeting  
October 21, 2020**

**Board Members in attendance:**

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

**Other Members in attendance:**

Patricia Peterson (Marion St.), Robin Benckart (Lafayette St.), Stockton Baker (Humboldt St.), Alissa Laux (Williams St.), Michelle Steed & Natacha Kiler (Gilpin St.), Lydia Eiguren (High St.), John Angelo (5<sup>th</sup> Ave.).

**Call to order at 6:30pm via Zoom**

1. Betsy welcomed everyone and asked those in attendance to inform her how they found out about tonight's meeting since this is the first time doing this virtually. She then explained the new agenda – doing the neighborhood business first, then moving to the community business.

Betsy thanked the board for their service and entertained any new volunteer/additions to the board. She reminded everyone that only dues paying members could vote (per the bylaws). Before voting, however she spoke about the tiers of membership to the association and asked Ann Atkinson, the current VP, to explain what the dues might be used for. Dues could go to alley clean up, picnics, annual meetings, or special meetings, etc. Michele Steed introduced new ideas for other activities and explained the brief questionnaires that Betsy would be presenting tonight. Ideas included a food drive to benefit the East High School/East Angel food packs; a shredding event; Neighborhood Watch trainings with the District 3 resource officer; virtual book clubs; presentations on recycling and historic preservation, among others. The questionnaires were launched, and the results were shared.

2. **John Angelo moved to approve the board for 2021 as presented:**

Betsy Rubner (President), Ann Atkinson (VP), Rick Romig (Treasurer), Heather Roark (Secretary). Patricia Peterson (Marion St.), Robin Benckart (Lafayette St.), Stockton Baker (Humboldt St.), Alissa Laux (Williams St.), Michelle Steed & Natacha Kiler (Gilpin St.), Lydia Eiguren (High St.), Charlotte Ward (Franklin St.), John Angelo (5<sup>th</sup> Ave.).

**Lydia Eiguren seconded the motion. The members voted and the motion passed.**

3. Betsy asked Stockton Baker to talk briefly about real estate interests in the neighborhood. Stockton spoke about the Esquire Theatre which is currently being listed for \$3 million and includes the building and the adjacent parking lot. Because of zoning any building can be only three stories high. He suspects that someone will purchase the building most likely for restaurant redevelopment. There are only 2 offers in play right

now. The building on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Downing is also for sale. The prospective buyer is an ophthalmologist for pets.

4. Betsy explained the features and resources listed on the new website which can be very useful. She encouraged everyone to check it out.
5. Betsy introduced Dr. Carrie Olson, the current President of the DPS Board of Education. She described the process that each school must go through to be approved for reopening during this pandemic. Dr. Olson explained that all the elective officials meet on a weekly basis and are constantly evaluating the situation. All the DPS schools follow the protocols from Denver Health who provides a Covid-19 dashboard that they follow. They watch the metrics closely and added that this has been a very stressful time for all educators. All adult meetings are done virtually, and each school has the flexibility to meet the standards of 10 hours of minimum of in-person teaching.

It will be a long time before schools go back to the way they were before Covid-19. Schools will be doing hybrid education where there will be a combination of in-person and virtual learning. She noted that nothing will take the place of in-person learning and one of their concerns is equity and reaching those students who struggle with getting access to technology. They have been vigilant in tracking students who have not shown up for school. Covid-19 is definitely hard on our students. SEL (Social Emotional Learning) is REAL. We need to constantly check in with our students to see how they are doing. Even when we are stressed, we need to keep the communication lines open; monitoring eating/sleeping/moodiness is important. She suggested engaging in things that your children are interested in would help immensely. It is also okay to let your children know you are also stressed. Your school and teachers are great resources. In closing, she reminded everyone that we have never lived through a pandemic before and they are learning as they go. There was discussion.

6. Next Betsy introduced our new community outreach officer, Kate Young. Officer Young gave a brief overview of the crime in our area. Burglaries are down 10%, car theft is down 30%. She emphasized that the data is only based on reports, so, if a crime isn't reported, it isn't tracked. Garage doors need to be closed - let your neighbors know if they are open. She suggested the use of garage door timers. Bicycles have been stolen in the past month on more than one occasion. She encouraged everyone to register their bikes. If they aren't registered, they can't be recovered easily. If you can't register your bike, at least take a photo of the bike and yourself with it. Also, photographing the serial number of your bike can help in its recovery.

Regarding the upcoming holiday season, try to get help from your neighbors if you are expecting any deliveries. She reminded everyone of the Whole Foods delivery lockers. The current trend in theft seems to be stealing license plates. District 3 can provide specific anti-theft screws. Also, don't leave *anything* of value in your cars. There have only been two vehicles stolen in our 10-block area. But they are starting to see a trend

of people breaking into cars and targeting garage door openers. They are reminding everyone to not leave their openers in their cars.

In other community news, the National Drug Take Back will be this Saturday, October 24th. And there will be no more Neighborhood Watch training for the rest of the year. Every district now has an outreach coordinator for social services. There are two officers dedicated to homeless outreach – their focus is getting the homeless into safe situations. The best resource officers to contact regarding the homeless is either Kate Young ([kate.young@denvergove.org](mailto:kate.young@denvergove.org)) or Antonio Pacheco ([Antonio.pacheco@denvergove.org](mailto:Antonio.pacheco@denvergove.org)).

Officer Young spoke briefly about the homeless camps' clean ups. Their goal is not to move them to the next block, but to get them to a shelter or homes and get them into better situations. There are some who are very resistant to this. But their outreach officers have been persistent in trying to help them.

7. Betsy introduced Chris Hinds, District 10 City Council Representative and Teresa St. Peter, our direct contact in his office. Councilman Hinds spoke about how much things have changed in the past year. Issues that were important a year ago are now not quite as important as the current homelessness and equal rights issues. He noted that there have been multiple attempts to burn and damage city buildings. Unemployment has spiked 10% and a budget that was once healthy is now in trouble. Additionally, they are worried about the eviction moratorium which keeps being extended. The sooner we beat Covid-19 the sooner we can re-open businesses.

Councilman Hinds is working hard on a new survey mechanism that should help keep him connected to his neighborhoods. His hope is to engage everyone so we can all participate in staying connected and better understand what the community needs.

He spoke about the Group Living Amendment. Councilman Hinds reached out to community planning and development as early as April 6<sup>th</sup> and asked them to slow down the process so that this wouldn't be rushed through. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Currently they are in the budget process for 2021. Councilman Hinds will be taking the four different components of this bill and will break them down individually. This will likely be the first use of their new survey tool. Stay tuned.

Councilman Hinds then spoke about ADUs (Auxiliary Dwelling Units) and noted that this was unanimously rejected. ADUs can be a mother-in-law cottage, or an additional (small) dwelling on a property. This adds density to the neighborhood and has the potential to change the character of the neighborhood. It might also change private property rights. There are current restrictions for ADUs including protecting the character of the neighborhood or other structures on the property. It is unknown how this will impact the country club area or historic districts. There are some benefits to ADUs. We have people aging in place and some want to have their family near them; in

this case, an ADU would make sense. Property taxes are going up and renting an ADU could help.

One question that Councilman Hinds gets a lot is, “how do we get more streetlights?” Essentially this can be frustrating process. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has impacted and complicated the process of getting things done. He suggested reach out to Teresa St. Peter to see where your requests are in the queue.

Lastly, Councilman Hinds acknowledged the work that Officer Young has done with the homeless. They have started enforcing sweeps of the homeless camps (Morey, Liberty Park, 14<sup>th</sup> and Logan, and the Governor’s mansion). They do not know where the camps are going. Many are going from major encampments to much smaller encampments. Their focus is on humane options. This is a tough conversation and a complicated issue. City Council has asked for more money to provide non-police resources for a pilot program in the city. This program is modeled from one in Eugene, Oregon and is called the STAR Program, which goes after the root causes of crime and homelessness. He noted that homeless has increased 60%.

Councilman Hinds entertained questions. One question concerned the road closures in Cheeseman Park. He said that they will be closed for a while. The residents around the park do not advocate for this because it moves parking to the streets making it harder for the residents to park in an already a dense area. Personally, Councilman Hinds is for having the roads permanently closed to vehicles. He also mentioned that he is considering advocating for the closure of 16<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues as well.

Contact for Councilman Hinds and Teresa St. Peter is below:

**Email:** Chris Hinds and Teresa St. Peter: [district10@denvergov.org](mailto:district10@denvergov.org), or [teresa.st.peter@denvergov.org](mailto:teresa.st.peter@denvergov.org)

**Phone:** 720-337-7710;

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Betsy thanked Officer Young and Councilman Hinds for participating in tonight’s meeting.

**There being no further business or discussions Natacha Kiler moved to adjourn. Robin Benckart seconded the motion, none opposed. Meeting adjourned.**