



March 23, 2021 Ratepayer Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Minutes

Date: March 23, 2021

Location: Zoom Meeting

Present:

Tom Malone, CKM Associates
Lekh Burns, re-soul
Mike Kahrs, Central Ballard Residents
Michelle Rosenthal, Veris Law Group
Christine Ackerman, Hjarta Condominium
Davis Carvey, NOMA HOA
Eric Nelson, National Nordic Museum
Scott Koppelman, AMLI Mark24
Mark Craig, Henbart

Absent:

Stephanie Carrillo, Equity Residential
Jim Riggle, Olympic Athletic Club
Mike Anderson, Compass Housing Alliance
Lanne Stauffer, Ballard Square Representative
Barry Blanton, Greenfire Campus, Commons at Ballard
Kasia Konieczny, Swedish Medical Center

Observers/Presenters:

Phil Lloyd, Seattle CFO
Erin Goodman, SODO BIA
Tim Burgess, Former Council Member and Mayor
Mike Stewart, Devin Reynolds, Anndrea Dohring and
Kiana Ballo

1. Welcome and Introductions (Tom Malone)

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. and all present gave brief introductions.

2. Public Comments

None.

3. Finance Report (Phil Lloyd, Mike Stewart)

Tom Malone announced that the Alliance is entitled to financial support with the new COVID program with both PPP and Employment Tax Credits. This means there are some changes to the financial report with the way the BIA billing is set up with the Alliance.

Phil Lloyd presented the finance report. Currently, the BIA is only being billed at half the normal level due to the complications with the COVID relief funding, the billing will be made up after April or May. The underspend is essentially that the Alliance is not billing the BIA for employee payroll because it is being compensated with the federal COVID programs. We have also done some work with the business community to spread the word about these programs to Ballard businesses.

4. Meeting Minutes

Tom Malone asked if there are any questions or comments about last meeting's minutes.

Davis Carvey moves to approve meeting minutes.

Mike Kahrs seconds.

Motion approved by all.

5. Ballard Alliance Update

Mike Stewart announced that it has been a busy first quarter of the year for the Alliance.

Anndrea Dohring announced that the Alliance received the Port of Seattle's tourism marketing support grant this year. The Alliance is working with the Port to do something more adaptable to the current environment, the Alliance's grant proposal included media visitations to attract writers, influencers, and bloggers to Ballard. The goal is to promote Ballard as a COVID-safe travel destination. The first part will happen this spring, the second part will most likely happen in the third quarter, and the return on this investment will likely come in 2022.

Dohring stated that the Alliance is also working on a business retention webpage to use as a tool to recruit new businesses to Ballard. This page is just about complete, it highlights many of the great features in Ballard and demographic information for the neighborhood. The Instagram account has been growing quite a bit with organic activity. The Alliance collaborated with the folks who developed the Visit Ballard Website and the Ballard Marketplace to do some enhancements for the shopping page. The enhancements include both an additional interface function that allows people to create a favorites file for items listed on the Marketplace, so people have easier access to those items and a message the merchant button to make it easier for customers to connect with the businesses.

Stewart added that the Alliance's other board of directors, the Operations Board, last year engaged in a race and equity training over the summer and fall. One of the outgrowths for the Alliance as an organization was realizing that there is very little representation for Native and Indigenous cultures in Ballard. As a result, the Alliance has been working proactively to identify ways to be more inclusive. One impactful step the Alliance took is reaching out to and engaging with the United Indians of All Tribes. The Ballard Marketplace now features some of their gift shop items from the Daybreak Star Cultural Center.

Kiana Ballo spoke about the Alliance's zoom networking event in January that featured three local businesses, Fleet Feet, Root Plant and Coffee, and Steele Barber. The Alliance also hosted three webinars for businesses this quarter including the topics of PPP, Sound Transit updates, and Swinbuy (a local application that provides same-day delivery for retailers). The Alliance is also bringing back the Ballard ArtWalk after a yearlong hiatus. For now, to make the ArtWalk more COVID-safe, instead of having a single day event, participating ArtWalk businesses will feature artwork all month long and people are encouraged to visit businesses to see the artwork on their own time.

Devin Reynolds discussed a new event the Alliance is organizing called Ballard on the Rocks. After doing a few zoom networking events, the Alliance wanted to try and engage people in a new type of event. Ballard on the Rocks is a creative new take on zoom events. With this event, participants will pick up their cocktail ingredients prior to the event, local restaurateur Tommy Patrick will lead participants through the making of two different cocktails, and local band Nite Wave will have performances featured after each cocktail is completed.

Stewart mentioned that last year the Alliance had to cancel the Wine Walk but remains hopeful that the Wine Walk will be able to happen again later this year. The first Wine Walk in 2019 was a great success that sold out all 450 tickets, so the Alliance is excited about bringing this back to Ballard. The Alliance is also looking at different options for SeafoodFest for 2021, there are many hurdles with the pandemic, the City of Seattle, and funding for off-duty Seattle Police Department, which is a requirement for events like SeafoodFest. As the Alliance plans for a modified event, there is a focus on looking at ways to do it without any police officers. SeafoodFest is a 47-year tradition so it will be great to get that going again.

Reynolds announced that the Alliance has been working with the Economic and Urban Development committee to fill vacancies and attract businesses to Ballard. Compared to other neighborhoods, Ballard is doing well with vacancies, but the Alliance wants to be proactive. The Ballard Blossom building was slated to be torn down and replaced with a hotel, but with COVID those plans changed. The Alliance worked with the property owners to cover this building with murals, and now the Alliance working with them to bring pop-up month to month businesses to occupy the space. The property owners are offering space at a super low rate with the intention that this will upstream these businesses to regular brick and mortar businesses in Ballard. Most of these businesses are women, BIPOC owned or both. The Alliance has been working with the Office of Economic Development to make this Ballard Blossom incubator space a pilot program for vacant buildings across the city while they are in-between uses. This creates a lot of opportunity for businesses to grow and try new things.

Stewart stated that the Alliance will be working with other BIA organizations in some capacity over then next year study what other city's economic development departments do well to make Seattle's office of economic development more involved in these types of programs across the city. There will be a new director for the Office of Economic Development with the new mayor next year. The Seattle Office of Economic Development needs a real focus on encouraging business growth. Vacant spaces are problematic spaces that can be used for good to create a more vibrant streetscape. The Alliance will collaborate over the months ahead to identify other cities that are doing economic development in an appropriate way to give recommendations to the newly elected mayor.

Stewart discussed that the Alliance has been working actively with all the street cafes as they extend their permits. The Alliance is the permit holder for the one-way conversion of Ballard Ave which was renewed until October 1st. The Alliance is getting a lot of feedback that many people are really keen on keeping the street cafes open beyond October 31st. At some point, the Alliance will need to start some work to get that conversation going and to make sure to mitigate any impacts of that.

Stewart announced that the Alliance did a webinar on March 9th which included presentations from folks with Sound Transit for plans for ST3 and the realignment process that is underway. Sound Transit has some issues with the pandemic and the EIS work with updated property value reports. The Alliance knew this already, but property values are significantly higher than the 2013 values Sound Transit was using. The good news is that the relative cost between a bridge structure and a tunnel structure are now nearly the same. The EIS process is currently delayed by at least six months to a year. What the Sound Transit Board has to do with the increase of cost and reduction of revenue, is to figure out how to make this project happen. The board is going to be deliberating to make some determinations this summer. The Alliance is organizing to put messaging together to continue to support the tunnel location at or west of 15th Ave NW. The Alliance is also going to try again to bring the location of the station closer to the core of Ballard. This time lag may give the Alliance an opportunity to get further analysis. A cut and cover tunnel requires more space, a mined station has a smaller footprint up above, which may allow

the station to be closer to the downtown core in Ballard. The Alliance will continue to monitor that situation.

Malone added that there may be 1.9 billion dollars for Sound Transit coming from a couple Washington Senators. That would be a substantial help if that passes.

Reynolds presented updated numbers for the clean street team, the Alliance got funding from the City of Seattle's Clean City Initiative to bring out our Uplift NW (formerly Millionair's Club Charity) to do some additional cleaning in Ballard.

Malone replied that the elephant in the room is homelessness, tents, and crime. What is an overview of the situation here in Ballard?

Stewart responded with updates. Starting with Patrina Yuenger, she has harassed many people in Ballard over the years and she suffers from severe mental health issues that are exacerbated by drug abuse disorder. The latest information is that three weeks ago, she assaulted St Luke's grounds keeper with a brass pipe and spray-painted anti-Semitic symbols on the church, she assaulted a Starbucks worker later and broke one of their windows. The Alliance has been working for a resolution for her for a long time because if Petrina Yuenger is off the streets of Ballard, issues in the neighborhood drop by 20%, that is how much of an issue she is. St Luke's has gotten a restraining order for her so she can no longer be within 1,000 feet of the vicinity, both Swedish and Carter Subaru have similar set ups with her. She was involuntarily committed to the hospital for mental health issues last week and she voluntarily agreed to an additional seven-day hold. On Friday, there will be a hearing at St Luke's and then further decisions will be made about her. There are currently three felony counts that she is facing, there is a fourth charge pending as well. The Alliance is hard pressed to push that as far as it can go. The Alliance is going to be able to send statements into the courts regarding Patrina. **The prosecutor said pleadings would be available for submission for Petrina's upcoming arraignment. Petrina is currently residing at Swedish Ballard.**

Chris Ackerman added that Hjarta Condominiums has another lady that has been residing around the condo's grounds and she has attacked staff. She can be violent; they have filed police reports about her.

Malone replied that a picture of her is needed to identify her.

Ackerman responded that 90% of the time she is docile, but she did bruise up a maintenance person.

Stewart stated that a call with Ackerman to discuss further is necessary. The Alliance has been working to put together a de-escalation workshop for businesses to educate people on how to deal with these situations. It is a two-hour workshop to empower people to deal with these issues before they escalate into a crisis or violent situation. The Alliance may do future events like this if it is popular. Erin Goodman and Tim Burgess are working on a charter amendment that creates a plan for the city to start actually tackling these issues by funding services and requiring the reopening of public parks, which will be discussed later in the meeting.

6. Ballard Commons and Marvin's Garden Park

Stewart presented updated for Ballard Commons and Marvin's Garden Park. At this point, everyone knows about the problems in these parks, the problems are extensive. Now there are RVs parked on 57th running generators all night, and Legh witnessed what may have been an overdose in the park last

night. The Alliance has been in continuous contact with the mayor's office, police department and HOPE team with these issues but has not made much headway. The Alliance asked the mayor to do another walkthrough of Ballard to make the case that these issues need to be a priority. It is necessary to get prioritization of the Ballard campers into whatever shelter and hotel rooms are available in order to clear the parks. With CDC guidelines recommending that encampments should not be cleared but that may change. This situation is hitting a tough point where the neighborhood is not getting the kind of action that is desperately needed from the city. There is more organized criminal activity, particularly Ballard Ave businesses are being broken into. It is not being addressed at the level that it needs to be, and the Alliance is taking every opportunity to raise these issues. The Alliance has continually brought up public safety as an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. At this point, Seattle has a mayor that is on her way out and has lost a lot of leaders in the city, right now there are 15 people managing thousands of contracts for the human services department.

Malone opened the floor to comments from board members. To start off, the city has been saying that very little can be done for the situation in Ballard while they have acted on other parks like Cal Anderson and Denny Park. Why not Ballard Commons or Marvin's Gardens?

Mark Craig added that everyone knows the situation around Ballard Commons. People do not want to sign a lease in the apartment building due to the issues at Ballard Commons Park next door, managers and staff should not have to deal with these issues either.

Davis Carvey agreed, stating that there are the same issues at NOMA. With all the sharps, garbage, and break ins, it is a royal pain. There needs to be more effective leadership at the City and the Alliance needs to look down the road to identify strong candidates to fill these rolls. The work the Alliance has done deserves applause; it is unbelievable. After reading all eight pages of the Staff Production Update, and the neighborhood should be pleased and grateful for the hard work. Maybe it would be possible to start a GoFundMe site to pay for some of the things that need to be done and raise some additional funds that could be useful.

Stewart thanked Davis for his kind words. The Alliance does not directly engage with politics and fund raising but these are things that are often discussed, the Alliance is a convener of conversations.

Ackerman mentioned that Hjarta has had a lot of graffiti lately.

Stewart replied that this issue can be discussed on a call later this week.

Malone stated that there needs to be a discussion about the street cafes and the future of Ballard Avenue.

Lekh Burns responded that it is a pretty fluid situation currently, if the restaurants are any indication, the sidewalk cafes are packed Thursday – Sunday. The street cafes definitely need to stay for at least the summer.

7. Homelessness and Behavioral Health Charter Amendment Review/Q&A

Erin Goodman and Tim Burgess join the call.

Stewart introduced Goodman, the executive director of the SODO BIA, and former council member and mayor, Tim Burgess.

Goodman thanked Stewart for the introduction. The frustrations and situations that are being experiencing in Ballard are being experienced across the city. SODO is definitely dealing with a public health and public safety crisis. What is happening now is not working and the city has no plan to address the situation. It has become untenable for businesses, employees, residents, and customers. Despite declaring a state of emergency in 2015 and spending millions of dollars, the city has left thousands of people living on the street. These conditions threaten the economic recovery of all neighborhoods in the city. The charter is the city's constitution, which is why using a charter amendment as a solution to these issues is a strong move forward. Number one, this charter would require that the city fund treatment services for low-barrier, rapid access treatment for individuals experiencing homelessness. Number two, it would open our parks and public spaces, as people receive treatment and housing. The key to this, is that it requires the city to make and publish a specific plan to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment with access to public housing. This requires regular reporting to the public. This plan must be implemented in 6 – 12 months following the implementation of this charter. There are some really key best practices that the city is not doing. The key is to get everyone going on the same plan, same goals, and same metrics. There needs to be accountability and the ability to contract with entities that will share metrics so they can be held accountable.

Tim Burgess added that the charter amendment still needs fine tuning and will need to be completed by next Monday. There are a couple reasons why the city charter amendment was chosen as the pathway forward. The city cannot tinker with a charter amendment, it cannot be changed unless the come back to the voters to get the voters to change it. The charter amendment is asking the voters to adopt city policy to tell the city what to do. A poll was completed during the first week of February regarding this charter amendment, and it had 60-71% support. If there is 60% or more in political polling, that is a good sign. There is a strong opportunity to get this passed in November.

Goodman stated that the other aspect of making this a charter, includes changing the department of human services to a charter level positions like police, fire, parks, and law. It is necessary to scale up human services and establish a special fund at the city that no less than 12% of the city's budget will be allocated for a special fund for these services. There is money coming in from the state and federal governments as well, and this special fund can accept donations that are tax deductible. One of the elements a charter amendment is that you cannot budget a charter amendment or get into to a great amount of detail. This measure does require coordination from the courts and city departments. Currently, there is no coordinated conversation going on. Now that the framework has been put for this plan, it needs to be implemented. This charter amendment needs to get to council by June and they have to move it by August. After that, there will need to be 33,000 signatures collected in support, with the requirement that a charter amendment can only be proposed in an election year. Another key element is fundraising. The initial goal of a certain percentage to fundraise, which was significant, was raised in three days. People are really looking for the city to take some leadership role. Any questions?

Burns asked, if a charter amendment were to pass, how are people held accountable for making sure the work gets done and are there consequences for not getting it done?

Burgess replied that it is very difficult for the city council or mayor to avoid the charter. However, elections matter. There is the mayor and two at large city elections, if this is on the ballot while those positions are running, this is an opportunity to get pledges of support from them.

Goodman added that there are some city council members that are just advocates but a majority of them are politicians that want to get reelected. Right now, council is listening to the loudest, which does

not necessarily mean the entire city. This is allowing the rest of the community to have a say, this is shifting the voice of the people from those who call in to everyone.

Malone responded that even if this were to fail, it will certainly become an issue that needs to be addressed in this election.

Burgess discussed that this fund that the percentage serves, is not just the homeless situation but all services that the city provides like childcare, domestic violence prevention, after school programs, etc. The requirement is only being raised from 11 to 12 percent, which is not unreasonable.

Craig replied that his company will be happy to support this.

Goodman mentioned that this effort is accepting donations and support; this information will be shared with Mike to share with everyone.

Burgess discussed that the giving page on our website is open right now. It is important that it is noted that this is not a quick fix, except for clearing any encampments that pose a public safety and public health threat. This is going to take time and consistent attention and good work.

Davis inquired about the people who want to defund the police.

Stewart responded that the opposition from the activist/public services camp comes from this being a threat to them. After seeing the polling early on, while the defund SPD effort has garnered a lot of support and traction, that may not be the opinion of the majority.

Ackerman stated that there may not be as much conflict with that group, it is more the people who are jaded about these types of programs.

Burns added that people have been saying there is no quick fix for years. After attending a couple of these forums, it is tiring being told that these things will be better in the future.

Davis mentioned that it is important to get the right folks in the city to bring about this change to make this work.

Malone brought up that is that no one at the city seems to be taking responsibility. The problem is lack of leadership.

8. 2021 Meeting Schedule

Malone discussed this year's meeting schedule. This group typically meets on the fourth Wednesday, with an exception for today. Mike will send out a proposed schedule in an email and if it works for everyone, it will go forward.

Meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.