

Notes from the Fulton Finance committee meeting of February 7, 2018

Present

Jane Kohnen, John Finlayson, Ruth Olson, John Dillery, Vikas Narula and Vivek Narula from Neighborhood Forest, Dave Delvoe

Calendar

Those working to develop the neighborhood survey have finally been able to agree on a meeting date to come up with a final draft of the survey questions. It's unclear when the survey might be ready for distribution to neighborhood residents.

Council Member Palmisano presents a community dialogue with MPD Chief Arradondo and 5th Precinct Inspector Waite on 2/26, 6 to 7 p.m., at Pershing Park. The Safety committee will not meet this month and instead encourages community members to attend this event.

Environment committee

John Dillery presented a draft 2018 budget for the Environment committee which calls for \$925 to continue the successful pollinator plant program at the Fulton Farmers Market and up to \$5,000 from the tree fund for Neighborhood Forest (NF) to again distribute free trees to students at two area pre-schools, an elementary school, and Southwest High School (SWHS). Last year, NF received \$5,107 from the fund and provided 680 trees for students to plant at their homes. (See the Finance committee meeting notes from 1/4/17 and 2/1/17 for further information about the 2017 program.) Vikas and Vivek Narula from NF spoke about what they learned last year – the program faced challenges getting participation from students (6%) and support from parents and staff at SWHS – and proposed a couple of changes for this year, including partnering directly with the principal or a teacher and convening an educational and inspirational presentation for students at which the trees could be distributed. To reflect the problems encountered last year, they proposed that the cost of the program to FNA could be determined using a sliding scale tied to the rate of student participation.

There was a discussion about whether SWHS should be included in this year's proposal, given the low participation rate. A number of potential obstacles were identified and some new ideas were discussed, including focusing only on seniors and working around school schedules to come up with a date for a presentation which could work for most students. A decision about whether to fund the program this year could be made by the FNA Board at its meeting on 2/14. Dillery and the Narula brothers left the meeting at this point.

The remaining committee members discussed the options and made a recommendation to the Board: Instead of \$5,000, allocate \$1,650 to Neighborhood Forest this year for programs at the pre-school and the two elementary schools. Then make it clear to those schools going forward that this program will be funded by FNA every three years. SWHS will no longer be included in the program. The committee also recommended that the Board allocate \$925 to the pollinator plant program.

FNA 2018 budget

With help from FNA's treasurer, Ruth prepared a draft budget for FNA for 2018. One of the key questions was how to make up for overspending the 2017 CPP (Community Participation Program) budget by about \$2,500. This occurred due to the added expense of redesigning the web site. A similar amount will be needed to conduct the neighborhood survey in 2018. The committee recommended that the Board allocate \$1,000 in uncontracted NRP Phase 2 funds originally earmarked for Pershing Park youth projects (this will require a plan modification) plus \$4,000 of program income from repayment of loans to FNA's housing loan program to ongoing CPP community engagement activities. The committee recommended that the Board approve the amended budget.

Other business

Ruth has information about how some other neighborhoods are planning to spend their NRP funds which are mandated for housing; loaning money to non-profits to build affordable housing around the city appears to have some support. FNA needs to spend \$66,000 of its remaining NRP funds for housing-related programs or projects.