



The Valley View

Newsletter of the Greater Madison Valley Community Council

Issue 100, February 2002

E-mail: gmvcc@hotmail.com

President's View

by Gary Emslie

Last month's community meeting was exciting. We had neighborhood representation from the Seattle Parks Department, Japanese Garden Club, the Arboretum Foundation, Martin Luther King School, The Bush School and the McGilvra Soccer Club. Why, you ask? As it turns out all of these organizations have joined forces to figure out how to rejuvenate the old unused field house at the north end of the playfield. Under the wise direction of Jerry Sussman, the committee charged with this project has forged ahead and if last month's meeting is an indication, the project is moving forward with all parties excited about the potential future uses of the old field house. Special thanks to Jerry Sussman for all his efforts. Kudos are also in order for neighbor Kent Johnson. Kent has drawn up the fieldhouse remodeling plans for us. If

you would like to help, or just want to know more, contact Jerry directly or Andy Sheffer at Seattle Parks and Recreation at 684-7041.

Mark your calendars: the Third Annual Neighbor Appreciation (Free) Pancake Breakfast is to be held in the Bush School Commons (off of Harrison and 36th) from 8 a.m. until 11 a.m.. Come enjoy coffee, sausage, pancakes, and good conversation with your neighbors. Last year the mayor and the Department of Neighborhoods representatives joined us and gave us another chance to share our neighborhood's hopes and dreams with our governmental representatives.

The Bush school has recently sent the neighborhood a letter explaining the next phase of its building project. It asks neighbors for their input especially surrounding the proposed 120 car undercover parking structure. The school has asked the city and the neighbors for a variance and neighbors will soon see a large white sign stating just this. The variance seems

clear: with the variance accepted Bush can build more off site parking spaces and keep a large green play space above the garage for students and neighbors play. If you have questions, please be encouraged to call the finance director, Robin Bentley directly at 326-7771.

Our Treasurer's report indicates a positive balance but wonders how we will keep this for an ongoing reality for the council. We have one neighbor checking with area businesses for advertising support. If you know of a business or business professional in the neighborhood who could benefit from an ad in the Valley View, call us with their name.

Thanks to Don Rigler, Bush science teacher, and his students for their work on the Harrison alley project. We have more to do so if you can help or have access to a backhoe or front loader, please contact Jerry (325-6308). We look forward to seeing more of the sun and new neighbors at our community events. ▼▼

THREE YEARS IN A ROW

It's the Big Annual Pancake Breakfast

Come celebrate Seattle's Neighbor Appreciation Day with a FREE pancake breakfast sponsored by the Community Council.

This is one of our most popular events. Our menu includes plain and blueberry pancakes with plenty of butter and syrup, sausage, orange juice, and big vats of coffee.

In past years we've had visits from the Mayor, members of the City Council, and the director of the City's Department of Neighborhoods. Come see who turns up this year!

DATE and TIME: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2002, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

PLACE: The Bush School cafeteria, 36th and Harrison

INFO: Gary Emslie, gemslie@helen.bush.edu

And One Hundred Issues and Counting....

This is the 100th edition of the Valley View, the newsletter of the Greater Madison Valley Community Council.

We mail out (nearly!) monthly to about 1,650 households from 23rd to Lake Washington Blvd, from Denny on the south to Helen Street on the north.

We love producing it and hope you enjoy it too. Many thanks to you, our loyal readers, for helping us reach this milestone.

Commentary

What Will Mayor Nickels Do with Neighborhoods? A Nutshell Story of Community Power

by Jerry Sussman

Community councils do good works. All over the city we see new play areas, day care centers, public school improvements, greenbelts secure against encroachment, and burgeoning garden patches that they have sponsored. The councils are models of small town democracy where candidates come to sound your opinions and seek your votes. Our own council, small as it is (we reach 1,650 households with this newsletter), has a respectable record of helping Martin Luther King Elementary School with its instructional program and furnishings, and with prodding City Hall to solve problems of flooding, street maintenance, zoning, parking, and traffic. In its twenty years this council has brought in a wonderful variety of people. It has become a forum where a citizen's voice can be magnified and heard clearly by decision makers downtown.

It wasn't always so. As we became a more urban nation, big city party machines dominated politics in many places. There was little bottom-up influence. In that setting a few generations back, the higher powers committed horrors of highway construction that carved cities up like so much dead beef. They destroyed swaths of housing and wrecked old communities. Here in Seattle the R. H. Thomson thruway was going to rip the edge off the Arboretum and lay down six lanes of concrete in the center of our valley, leading to I-90. Did you know that? But this was in the days of the Vietnam debacle when protest was in the air. The whole Central District rose up against the plan. I remember the Black Panthers joined the outcry and made effective demands for people's rights in their homes. The R. H. Thomson roadbuilders rolled up their drawings and went away.

In the aftermath of such encounters came the local councils, often an outgrowth of school parents' groups. A real innovation for Seattle in the late 1980's was the Neighborhood Matching Fund. It put us all on the political map. If we formed local entities, even becoming non-profit corporations (as Greater Madison Valley has), we could apply for city funds to accomplish useful tasks. To qualify, we must assemble teams of volunteer workers and get pledges of donations of money, tools, and expert knowledge. We did it and the city is richer for it. The system has brought remarkable benefits, mainly to the public schools, parks, and open spaces. Perhaps its most democratic feature is the empowerment of people from all groups including new immigrants in low income areas and residents in every other sector. The Department of Neighborhoods even sponsors workshops in grant writing, budgeting, and citizen participation.

Our new mayor Greg Nickels fired Jim Diers, who has

ably led the neighborhoods department for fourteen years. He said he wants to take the office "in a new direction". What does that mean? Will the matching fund be cut, will the staff be dispersed, will the invaluable community service centers be eliminated? Citizens, watch with a ready eye and prepare to fight for civic gains made that we must not lose.

Our Central Neighborhood Service Center is at 2301 S. Jackson Street. The leaders there are Ted Divina at 233-7257, and Garry Owens at 684-0718.▼▼

Fieldhouse Update

Positive Public Comment

by Miriam Roskin

The January meeting of the Greater Madison Valley Community Council served as the first official public comment opportunity on the proposed renovation of the Washington Park fieldhouse, the 1930s brick building at the northeast corner of the Washington Park soccer field by the entrance to the Arboretum.

As most of our readers know, the Council received a \$5,000 planning grant from the Seattle Department of Neighbors to enable us to hire an architect to scope out a couple of renovation options. The grant was contingent on matching contributions from the neighborhood, mostly in the form of volunteer hours. Busy volunteers have been supporting the process by procuring old blueprints, publicizing the project, and soliciting public comments.

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, which owns the building, helped the Council by sending out a mailer to publicize the meeting. About 30 neighbors crammed into the Martin Luther King Elementary School portables on January 15 to attend the meeting — the close quarters did a lot to demonstrate the rationale for a larger meeting space.

The first portion of the meeting was devoted to Jerry Sussman's quick backgrounder on the project. Kent Johnson, the project architect, followed by showing overhead projections of the existing structure and two alternatives:

Option 1: Slightly less than one-half of the interior space (or 425 square feet) would be renovated for community use. At a standard code requirement of 15 square feet per person, this space could accommodate approximately 28 people. This design could also include a very small kitchen facility and a single unisex bathroom, though those additions could potentially cut into the space available for meetings.]

Option 2: The entire interior space of the building (1014 square feet) would be renovated, creating space for meetings of up to 68 people. This option would definitely include a small kitchen and a single unisex bathroom. It is likely that folding doors would be provided to allow the space to be subdivided into smaller spaces.

The final introductory remarks were made by Andy Sheffer, a planner with Seattle Parks and Recreation. He stated that the Department supports renovating the building and would be

(Continued on page 3)

Community Council Minutes

Meeting of Jan. 15, 2002

Council President Gary Emslie called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m..

Sarah began by giving us the treasurer's report. After expenses are paid, we will have \$6,000. While this seems to be a sizeable balance, Sarah warned that income to the Treasury is trickling in while the Council faces steady monthly expenses for printing and mailing the newsletter. This imbalance is gradually eroding the balance that was built through a one-time cash infusion when the Council sold the Village Schools van. Newsletter advertisements and donations from the households who receive and enjoy the Valley View are two important strategies for improving our cash flow.

Next, Jerry told us the news on the Washington Park fieldhouse planning project. The fieldhouse, which is owned by the City of Seattle, is currently used for Parks Department storage purposes; the Community Council received a Department of Neighborhoods grant to explore the possibility of renovating the space so that it could serve as a community meeting space. Kent Johnson, the architect hired by the Council to perform the preliminary drawings, presented two alternative scenarios. The first envisions renovating approximately half of the interior space for community use and reserving the remainder as continued storage space for the Parks Department. The second was to renovate the entire building for community use. In both plans there would be an indoor bathroom and a small kitchen.

The bulk of the meeting was devoted to soliciting community views on the renovation plans, including thoughts on types of uses people might prefer. Representatives from the Japanese Garden Society, McGilvra Soccer, the Arboretum Foundation, and neighborhood schools all expressed support for the renovation concept. A representative from the Parks Department was on hand and also expressed support. (See related article, page 2.)

The neighborhood pancake breakfast will take place on Saturday morning, February 9, from 8:00 to 11:00 in the Bush School cafeteria.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00. ▼▼
Minutes prepared by Claire Levy, GMVCC Secretary

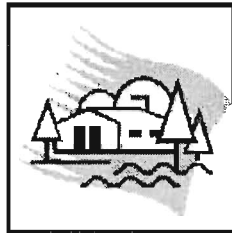
Fieldhouse, continued

very interested in running summer and day camps, environmental education programs, and after-school programs in the building. The space is currently used for storage; the Department is currently assessing other storage space options. The meeting was then thrown open for public comments.

A 4th grade teacher from **Martin Luther King Elementary School** stated that this renovation would be ideal for supporting field trips to the Arboretum. She reported that three or four other teachers would do the same for spring field days when they walk the children across to the Arboretum for a nature walk. The average class size in the school is between 25 and 28 students.

A spokesman for **McGilvra Soccer** also stated support for the renovation plan. He expressed a strong preference for the full renovation, with bifold doors to subdivide the space as necessary. He said the soccer group would use the building primarily as a meeting space for adults, probably once a month. He noted that the space was way too valuable to use for storage and said that the soccer league would therefore not be interested in using the space to store sports equipment.

A spokesman for the **Arboretum Foundation** underscored that this building is not part of the Arboretum, but termed the renovation concept an "exciting project," and said he would go back to the Foundation to research potential demand for south-end assembly space to complement space at the Graham Visitor Center at the north end of the Arboretum. He emphasized that the Arboretum Foundation would be very concerned that any renovation plans safeguarded the building's current historic appearance and architectural integrity.



A teacher from the **Bush Middle School** also voiced support for the project. He said that the space would probably be heavily used by physical education classes and team sports.

A spokesman for the **Japanese Garden Society** had a long list of potential uses, including Board meetings (ten per year); classes on pruning, horticulture, and plant identification, guest lectures; and guide training. He also noted that a Shinto priest comes to the Japanese Garden periodically and the space could serve as a changing and preparation room. Also, each year the Society sponsors a children's day where at least 1,600 people come through the garden; the fieldhouse could be a good place to coordinate the activities. He also voiced support for a common copy machine and projection equipment (e.g., screen and In-Focus projector) for all to share. Based on these intended uses, the Garden Society strongly favors the full renovation option.

Individual neighbors voiced support for the project as well. Specific suggestions focused on inclusion of sufficient phone connections and wiring for computers; improved lighting between the building and the parking lot; less jail-like security bars on the windows; a canopy to signal the main entrance to the building; and moderate storage space to accommodate little children's coats and boots, projection equipment, and general office supplies. The general consensus favored renovation of the full building.

Most questions focused on how much a project of the scope would cost and how it would get funded. Jerry Sussman noted that cost estimation is the next phase of the planning project, and on the basis of the estimates, the Council will start to explore **funding strategies**. Andy Sheffer of the Parks Department explained that City resources are very tight, but that the Department would be happy to help the neighborhood identify potential grant opportunities. An aggressive fundraising effort and donations from local residents would also be necessary, most likely. Stay tuned. ▼▼

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Vice President - Charles McDade
Secretary - Miranda and Claire Levy
Treasurer - Sarah Trethewey
Site Council Rep. - Adrienne Bailey
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Next Community Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 19, 2002, 7:30 p.m.
Martin Luther King Elementary School Portables
3201 E. Republican Street
(parking available on playfield)

Treasurer's Message

We need your help! With no steady source of income, the Community Council's reserves are in jeopardy. While we do receive some money from our yearly courtyard sale and generous donations from some of the Valley View's readers, it's not enough to keep us going forever.

You can help! If readers donated as little as \$5.00 annually per household, we'd have enough revenue to ensure that the newsletter and expenses would be covered year-round. Thanks for your support.

—Sarah Trethewey

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS

The Greater Madison Valley Community Council has a NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS. From now on, you can reach us at:

gmvcc@hotmail.com

We love to hear from you; please write early and often!

SUPPORT THE VALLEY VIEW NEWSLETTER

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Donation Amount: _____ I don't receive the Valley View; please add me to the mailing list.

Please contact me for mailing parties, writing, reporting, artwork, or other. My interests are:

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