



Neighborhood Association  
MONTHLY MEETING AGENDA  
Wednesday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 @ 7PM  
UWEC Outdoor Classroom by foot bridge

**Call to Order**

- 7:06 meeting starts
- 38 people in attendance

**Approve Meeting Minutes from last meeting**

- Minutes approved

**Chair's Report**

- Kevin has renewed our corporate standing for 10 dollars, so we are good for another year.
- We will need an indoor meeting solution for the fall/winter.

**Annual Thrift Sale**

- Susan feels we should cancel. Usually we get several thousand people. Social distancing does not exist. People are there early, people want bargains.
- Sale is canceled.

**Proposed Sober House at 311 Garfield**

- We are still working to get more information about this house, in conjunction with Scott Allen from the city, who also hasn't been able to get more information.
- It sounds like the likely route whereby this could be approved would be through using Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) law.
- The owner has communicated her feeling that not everyone living there would have a car. She has indicated that there is on and off-street parking available.
- Owner of the house has a lawyer.
- Katherine wishes the ADA a happy birthday. She clarifies that it provides equal access to employment, business, government services, programs, service animals. It says nothing about people with disabilities operating a business.
- A neighbor across indicates that she does not have a problem with the sober house. Indicates that the owner is putting money into the house, and that it will be really nice. She is not concerned about it, thinks it will be fine.
- Point made of the years the TNWA spent getting R1 into place for this neighborhood, and how this house could jeopardize all that work.



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- Sharon makes the point that if this house is allowed to operate like a business, then why couldn't anything else open up like a business in the neighborhood? Her own raspberry endeavor in her back yard has been denied—she's been told she can't put up signs, provide parking, advertise as a business.
- Sharon feels that it is not appropriate to avoid addressing the neighborhood, bypassing the city, bypassing zoning.
- Roger agrees this project is not appropriate under zoning laws. He has concerns about imposing a rough crowd to this environment we have built together. Relates a story of a very active drug house across from his house that ended up getting busted, with police coming out with dogs.
- Point that if the owner opens using ADA laws, she will have to follow the rest of the standards – building code, walk-in bathrooms, an elevator, all the rest.
- Point that this might not be a problem if she followed the R1 rule and had three unrelated people total in the house. This is a neighbor right across the street who is very concerned about the number of people in the house. If the owner were allowed to use the ADA, that opens the door up to anyone else in the neighborhood who can rent to anyone under the ADA requirements, exceeding the R1 rule.
- Point made that if the sober house goes in, and then it fails, the property would then be set up for any boarding house to go in. It could become a rental for students.
- Concern raised about parking, how this could exacerbate an already difficult situation that the neighborhood has struggled with for years.
- Point made that it's not our problem that the owner did not do her due diligence when opening a business. You don't just fly by the seat of your pants when you open the business. There are a lot of codes, a lot of rules to follow. It was from the beginning—her due diligence to make sure she did that.
- Concern raised about the fact that we did just finish our comprehensive plan, we worked for two years on these very things. The aim had been to maintain the density, maintain the zoning.
- Maryjo Cohen has prepared a petition showing that the neighborhood is not happy about this.
- Councilmember Jeremy Gragert says Assistant City Attorney Doug Hoffer will be in charge of keeping track of this issue. Scott is trying to get the information he needs. There is a lawyer involved on each side, but it is taking longer than we hoped to get information. The city can't enforce any zoning code until the building is occupied. We are waiting on information. It is hard for the city to



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- judge right now on a building that is not occupied on a proposal that hasn't been officially sent to the city.
- Question raised: If the owner has three unrelated people living there, is she doing anything wrong? There are three off-street parking spaces.
  - Kevin answers: the business model likely doesn't work with a counselor living there, and two people there. You're going to have to have some really high-end people... you can go to Betty Ford if you have that kind of money.
  - Kevin reads Maryjo's petition out loud.
  - Concern raised about the owner doing this "under the table," advertising in Minneapolis to find people with money.
  - Mary Blackstone speaks: Wanted to direct attention to a study, a peer-reviewed study of sober houses. It's called the Florida Model. There are many of these in Florida, now in California also. The study talks about two essential kinds of sober living situations. The first is the one that you're all thinking of when you think of kindly about wanting to help people. That's aftercare, post-rehab, offering the kind of support that someone who battles with an addiction might need. Counseling, continued support with a job, therapy, personal issues. The first kind is paid for by insurance or Medicare. Licensed by the right kinds of agencies, someone overseeing it. The second kind: freestanding independent sober house. This is what the owner is suggesting she will do. There is none of the support that would be there for someone who is in recovery. At one point there may be some supervision about taking medications. No qualifications required for house manager. Freestanding sober living house is a boarding house. One of the reasons that both California and Florida have looked at licensing is to do something about freestanding independent housing. It often takes advantage of people at their most vulnerable, and their families. This is not paid for by your hard-nosed insurance people. It's for people who are willing to give up their retirement money or mortgage their house to pay for their children. Do not think that "I'd like to do something kind for somebody" – at the point that she bought this R1 house, there was one for sale on Jefferson that was already zoned appropriately. This issue would not have arisen had she gone with that house. What is happening now reflects a decision on her part to buy an R1 house. Google "sober living," google "Florida model." Other thing ... sober living houses in Wisconsin. The list—is not including anything like what Ms. Markquart is suggesting. The things on that list are what would be considered "aftercare." Go to Facebook for "Safe Landings"—this is the sober living houses in Menomonie. Look at the latest Facebook postings. They're selling one of their houses, they do



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not sound like happy campers for of a variety of reasons. Founded in 2017, and the owners are selling the house now.

**RESOURCES FROM MARY BLACKSTONE:**

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

“What did we learn from our study on sober living houses”

*NY Times*, 6/20/2017

“Haven for Recovering Addicts Now Profits From Their Relapses”

*New Yorker Magazine*, October 21, 2019

“My Years in the Florida Shuffle of Drug Addiction”

“Florida Model”

*Variety*, November 5, 2019

“Inside the Fight for Regulation as Rehab Centers Cash In on Patients” by Gene Maddaus.

Facebook: look up “Safe Landing” (sober living house in Menomonie)

- Stephanie Farrar says she doesn’t think any of us would know about this except she saw a FB post about people doing gardening at the house, talked to Laura about it. Concerning to Stephanie that this person, although the intentions for this project may very well be very genuine, this person has avoided all elements of process. Stephanie has a five-year-old and a one-year-old. She wrote to Michelle. Michelle said, “Oh those are great questions. I don’t think I can answer any of them in text or in an email.” Very evasive. Michelle wrote that she was going to have an open house to have a neighborhood meeting, but she’s not here to answer any of our questions. Stephanie is also concerned about what was just discussed, taking advantage of potential clients of this business. These are people who are vulnerable and can be exploited. The house is being advertised to rich white women. That is not doing good. This is a high-end sober house being offered to wealthy white women. That does not fulfill any of our concept of what our do-gooder version of this would entail.



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### Newsletter Update

- Sharon: We're going to mail out the newsletter this year ahead of the annual meeting. That's the time when we interact with the people the most. Normally we wait until August. We want to start early this year on what we want to put in the newsletter.
- This year we receive a grant, \$200., which we will use possibly for printing, definitely for mailing. The newsletter will cost 400 dollars to mail, so with the grant money plus donations from the fall, we will be able to cover this. Rather than discuss the content of the newsletter. If you have suggestions about what should go in there, please send to Kevin on steering committee.

### University Update

- Jacob Wrasse addresses meeting is here. Mike Rindo retired.
- There have been questions about noise, speed limit on Putnam Drive, whether the TWNA will be allowed to meet at the university.
- Jacob indicates he's been looking for a place indoors where we'll be able to meet. He will get back to us.
- For those who have noticed a/c noise from campus: When it turns on, there is a loud clank. We've got two chillers that serve the whole campus. When they run at the same time, the big one freezes the other. Therefore, they can currently only run one at a time. Normally we can alter back and forth. There were issues with the larger one... that one is in the process of getting repaired. They are hoping for a long-term solution yet this year.
- Concerns about traffic speed in Putnam Drive. The University and board of regents owns Putnam Park, but the street that goes through is still a city street. There's been a question of reconsidering cars in the park in general... all this starts with Putnam Park Commission. If the park commission hears from the neighborhood, desire to change the speed limit or limit cars, we would start there.
- Original opening date announced on the website was the 15th of July. Anyone wanting to sign the petition or help out needs to go out and get signatures as soon as possible and return them to Kevin.
- Maryjo speaks on Janeway Riley's behalf. 311 Garfield used to belong to her. Janeway says if she had known the house had been sold for a sober house, she would not have sold it. She's appalled, and looking for ways to overturn the sale.



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Michelle came with her children to show them the house, and therefore Janeway had been under the impression that the family was going to move into the house.

- Steering committee unanimously approves a resolution: **“We oppose any motion for the Third Ward neighborhood change zoning from its currently designated R1. We also oppose any motion allowing a conditional use permit, and ask the city to be proactive in denying this.”**

### Police Report

- Mark Pieper addressed the TNWA. He is the lieutenant in charge of the district, which runs south of the Eau Claire River, includes a bit of downtown and the Chippewa River, wrapping around past Short Street. The Third Ward has been pretty quiet, although there has been a rash of car break-ins on the East Hill.

### Adjournment

### Next Meeting

Wednesday, August 12th, 2019 @ 7pm TBA