

University Neighborhood Partnership  
Meeting Minutes  
March 16, 2009

**Members Present:**

- Institutional Representatives: Scott Blair (ESF), Barbara Karper (LeMoyne), Beth Rougeux (SU), Sharon Sherman (Syracuse City – for Fernando Ortiz)
- Neighborhood/ Resident Representatives: Barbara Humphrey (WENA/ Westcott – East), Joe Russo (SEUNA/ Westcott – West), Brenda Silverman (Outer Comstock), Mark Strodel (Sherman Park)
- Investor/ Property Owners: Hugh Gregg (Westcott – East)
- Students: Alex Fernal (LeMoyne)
- Other: Christina Merchant, 2 SU Students from Chris' class

**Members Absent:**

- Giselle Guadeloupe (Student Rep – ESF), Pat Pfohl (Outer Comstock), Norm Roth (Berry Park), Win Thurlow (Institutional Rep – Upstate), Paul Walsh (Westcott – West), Student Reps from SU and Upstate

**Corrections:**

- January 19, 2009 meeting minutes: The decision regarding the code enforcement proposal and application to UNSAAC at the UNSAAC meeting (not UNP or SEUNA).
- February 16, 2009 meeting minutes: The group posed the possibility of petitioning the City Legislature (not the County Legislature) to pass a law to allow UNP to create a BID.

**Information Exchange and Updates:**

Beth will make sure that all members of UNP get copies of the Community Connections newsletter. The SEUNA newsletter mentions MayFest and other relevant information, but not all group members currently receive it.

**Consolidated Snow-Removal Options:**

Sharon Sherman spoke with Dave Mankiewicz about BIDs and special assessment districts. Mankiewicz is willing to come and answer our questions. He is head of the downtown committee, and helped set up the Crouse-Marshall BID (with Beth Rougeux). The downtown committee manages the BID, as well. We might also want to talk to someone from Corporation Council.

Some concerns were raised about BIDs. They usually provide more than snow removal, and they take a long time to set up (18 months to set up the Crouse-Marshall BID). One member felt that a smaller and simpler BID is more likely to be accepted by the community. Syracuse United Neighbors often fights to lower assessments and reduce property taxes. Its members would probably not want to pay extra taxes for something they can do themselves (like shoveling). The group expressed concern about neighbors feeling threatened by a snow-removal project, or the universities being perceived as pushing something on neighborhoods without paying for it.

*The group decided that we do not have enough information now to make a decision. Several processes were discussed, including a special meeting or multiple meetings, and the group decided to invite experts to the next regular meeting (extended). It is important that all stakeholders be represented. The group would like a refresher and chance to ask questions about the voluntary or grant-funded options, as well as more details about BIDs.*

## **Defining the Problem:**

- Safety for pedestrians/students and drivers on snowy roads
- People lack incentives to shovel sidewalks on their property.
- There is a liability risk for property owners whose sidewalks aren't clear.

## **Questions for the Experts:**

### Voluntary Program

1. Who controls the volunteer program?
2. Who brings on the people, do the outreach?
3. What would the money collection process look like?
4. What geographic area is covered?
5. If only a few people are participating, what's the balance point that makes sense?
6. What is liability coverage if they push over a bush or raise your sidewalk?
7. What entity takes responsibility for homeowner complaints and the contract?
8. How would the volunteer program deal with major arteries like Westcott and Euclid?
9. What would compel people to participate?
10. What are the costs?
11. The fit of the equipment for the job: brushes or plows, width
12. When does it get to the point that people feel uncomfortable/pressured to participate?
13. What is Paul's basis for cost numbers?
14. What contractors are available?
  - SU and other sidewalk-plowing organizations seem to hire their own people

### Pilot (Grant) Program

1. What are the costs?
2. Other than UNSAAC, who are other potential grant providers?
3. Would an UNSAAC grant cover plowing while students are on break?
4. Why would people pay for something that was free the previous year?
5. All the same questions as the voluntary program apply.

### Business Improvement District

1. Can a BID be set up in a residential area?
2. Would the downtown committee consider being the administrative entity for us?
3. Is it possible to have an assessment that's only for certain streets rather than a whole geographic area?
4. How easy is amendment and expansion if other people are interested later on?
5. Description of services that can be included legally, and what would we want?
6. What does the presenter think of a BID started with one service only? Will it work?
7. How do you handle tax-exempt organizations under a BID?
  - Beth indicated that there are special provisions in the Crouse-Marshall BID with lower rates for SU
8. How long it takes, and what does it cost to get set up (legal fees for bylaws, etc.)
9. Could you have different services in different parts of the BID for business and residential areas? Two separate BIDs?

### Additional Options/ Considerations

- We may end up trying a pilot program before establishing a permanent BID.
- Can we look for Syracuse to follow Rochester's example, providing snow removal?
  - It takes a lot of political will
  - Syracuse likely doesn't want the liability

- In Rochester, anyone with a sidewalk gets assessed a fee
  - Barb Humphrey offered to invite someone from Rochester
- Enforcing the ordinance with fines, or clearing uncleared sidewalks and charging for it in taxes?
- Pay students to shovel?
- Involve people who live in the community?

#### **Work Plan for Next Meeting**

- Our next meeting will be **Monday, April 20 from 5:30 to 6:30** at Westcott Day Hab.
- Barbara Humphrey agreed to call Paul before the April meeting to ensure he can come, provide a refresher on his proposal, and answer questions. She or he will also find a contractor to bring to the next meeting to answer questions.
- Barbara Humphrey will serve as temporary liaison for Upstate until we hear from Win.
- Sharon Sherman will invite Dave Mankiewicz and someone from Corporate Council for the April meeting.