

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance – January 2012 Board Meeting
January 26, 2012
Lincoln Center

Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to Order: 7:12 PM by Chair Ken Lerner

Members Present: Wallace Brown, Gordon Goodman, Gregory Hose, Ken Lerner, Timothy Meaney, Chris Saricks, John Schofield, and Mark Thoman

Members Absent: Jane Amorosi, James Cavallo, Sonja Tiegs Ebel and Dave Schulz

Quorum Satisfied: Yes

II. Review and Approval of Minutes of December 8, 2011 Meeting

John Schofield moved and Mark Thoman seconded that the minutes of the December 8 meeting be approved. Gordon Goodman requested clarification of a reference in the October 20 minutes. Ken Lerner will investigate whether or not the cited amendment led to any action that should be posted on the PDHA website. Minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

III. Treasurer's Report

Gordon Goodman recognized Community Bank of Downers Grove for their generosity in providing refreshments for the PDHA annual meeting on December 8. He noted that, as of January 23rd, PDHA assets totaled \$2,660.27 and that the copies of his report provided for tonight's meeting also included data for the 2010 fiscal year for comparative purposes. He further stated that PDHA had \$2,508.70 in the bank as of year end, 2011, an amount which would allow PDHA to function throughout 2012 even without additional revenue. A move to accept the treasurer's report was made by Mark Thoman and seconded by Chris Saricks. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

IV. Brainstorming Session to Identify PDHA Activities for 2012

Ken Lerner observed that the past several years have been ones of steady and stable activities, including participation in the rain barrel sale, recycling extravaganza, support of the Little Sprouts program, Chicago Wilderness, the Illinois Environmental Council,

and environmental advocacy at Village Council meetings. Chris Saricks asked, what are the emerging hot button issues that we should be addressing? Ken Lerner advised that PDHA step back further and first ask: 1) how are we dealing with our constituencies? 2) how are we realizing our objectives? and 3) should PDHA be reaching out to partner with other organizations, and/or revitalizing our constituencies in some way?

John Schofield pointed out that PDHA's mission is to advocate for a) open space and tree canopy and b) for historic preservation, and that we should be careful of "mission creep", or drifting from our stated objectives. For example, the light bulb program may be off target for PDHA, relative to our stated mission. Chris Saricks noted that "green principles" are not really in the mission, making our involvement in the rain barrel program somewhat tangential. Gordon Goodman observed that it was the Coalition for Managed Redevelopment that previously picked up tangential issues like zoning. A question was raised: With the Coalition currently moribund, are its issues now to be brought back into the PDHA? This needs to be discussed. Chris Saricks offered that the Coalition and its mission, which included a focus on issues related to residential construction in the Village, may again become relevant when the economy improves.

Gordon Goodman said that with the transition of Blodgett House to the Park District, PDHA's involvement is now largely complete. He asked if there are other historic homes PDHA should consider. Chris Saricks said that School Districts 58 and 99 are using student volunteers to conduct a survey of historic homes, and that PDHA might consider offering support. John Schofield mentioned that the Village plans to inventory vacant properties in spring 2012.

Regarding other organizations, Mark Thoman noted that in addition to the Coalition for Managed Redevelopment being currently dormant, the Downers Grove Watch is in transition, the Historical Society is on the rise, and the Organic Gardening Club is stable. Gordon Goodman observed that the Downers Grove Heritage Preservation Organization is continuing its advisory role with the Park District. It was also mentioned that broadening this list beyond Downers Grove organizations could include joint PDHA activities with organizations such as DuPage United, the Morton Arboretum, the Nature Conservancy, the Naperville-based Conservation Foundation and the Chicago Suburban Alliance.

John Schofield felt that the overall point to be gained from inventorying related organizations in this manner is to lead us back to the question: How does PDHA define its core mission relative to all these other organizations? Chris Saricks pointed out that the broader PDHA becomes, the more it dilutes its activities and mission. John Schofield said that seeking landmark status for the Pierce Downer homestead is a worthy objective for PDHA. Chris Saricks said that the Historical Society's current program of publishing photos of historic buildings provides an impetus for historic preservation.

Following this general discussion, John Schofield proposed that PDHA consider its current and future activities under its two stated mission priorities: 1) open space and tree canopy preservation, and 2) heritage and historic preservation.

Discussion yielded the following activities as potential items falling under Open Space and Tree Canopy Preservation:

- 1) Redevelopment issues (since DGCMR is currently dormant)
- 2) Little Sprouts program
- 3) Lyman woods/Belmont Prairie
- 4) Tree canopy preservation
- 5) Support for the Village parkway program

Activities having PDHA involvement potential in the Heritage and Historic Preservation category are:

- 1) District 58/99 historic home survey project
- 2) Inventory of vacant home properties
- 3) Pierce Downer homestead preservation landmarking
- 4) Sears home tours
- 5) Landmarking education
- 6) Resident oral histories

Subsequent discussion expanded on the above and added more potential activities:

Heritage and Historic Preservation

- 1) District 58/99 historic home survey project: PDHA's involvement could include recognition of students' efforts at the PDHA annual meeting, favorable mention in the PDHA newsletter, and "moral support" for the efforts being undertaken
- 2) Inventory of vacant home properties: John Schofield asserted that this is not central to the PDHA mission. All present indicated their agreement.
- 3) Pierce Downer homestead landmarking: Although this property's historic significance is recognized by a plaque on the premises, the current owner has not been approached with regard to landmarking. It was generally agreed that this is close to PDHA's core mission, in the sense that the homestead is a cultural rather than an architectural landmark
- 4) Sears homes and tours: these homes have now been cataloged and occasional trolley tours are in operation. Sears homeowners appear to be generally proud of their home's status. John Schofield suggested that PDHA involvement could be rationalized as a legitimate aspect of its heritage and historic preservation mission. It was also pointed out that the Lustron home in the Village should also be considered within the context of the Sears home recognition program
- 5) Landmarking education: it was observed that the Village Council has forbade Staff to market the landmarking program, and that PDHA could market it in place of Village Staff. The Village currently has printed materials on hand that could assist this activity
- 6) Resident oral histories: Mark Thoman pointed out that these offer a powerful opportunity for PDHA.

Open Space & Tree Canopy Preservation

- 7) Loss of tree canopy: John Schofield offered that this is close to PDHA's central mission, and suggested as a hypothetical example that PDHA could advocate replanting Nelson Meadow as an orchard. It was also mentioned that vocal support from the Park District for preserving the tree canopy has been absent.
- 8) Support for the Village parkway program: No additional discussion followed on this item.
- 9) Lyman Woods: A suggestion was made to broaden the Little Sprouts educational program to include older students, including middle school, high school and college students. It was observed that this effort is at the core of PDHA's mission, as evidenced by the fact that PDHA donates \$1,000 annually to the Little Sprouts program.
- 10) New Parks: Mention was made of the fact that historically the Village has purchased clusters of homes and converted these areas to green space for stormwater detention, in cooperation with the Park District.
- 11) Preservation of pocket parks: It was observed that the Park District apparently wants to sell off these properties and exit the pocket park program. Mark Thoman said that when passing these parks, he consistently sees them occupied by children, both with and without their parents.
- 12) Village tree sale: At PDHA's annual meeting in December 2011, Village Works chief Nan Newlon recommended that PDHA support such a program.
- 13) Stormwater: Discussion linked this issue to stream restoration and stream bank stabilization. At PDHA's December meeting, Nan Newlon described Public Works' stream bank projects done in 2011. It was suggested that these activities were related to broader drainage conservation efforts. PDHA's involvement could consist of ongoing efforts to popularize the Village's Public Works projects in the area of stream bank restoration.

Discussion moved to efforts to prioritize the above and arrive at an activities agenda for 2012, but was deferred both in the interests of time and the fact that not all members were present to offer their input. It was decided to use these minutes to publicize tonight's brainstorming results to all absent members. The issues to be decided by all would be:

- 1) Is PDHA's two-part mission statement – environmental and historic preservation – still valid for all PDHA members?
- 2) Which items from tonight's brainstorming session are central to PDHA's mission?

As a way to achieve consensus, John Schofield recommended that Tim Meaney implement a prioritization process like the one he employed to help the Coalition come to agreement on its 2010 agenda.

V. Budget

This topic was not discussed completely. Treasurer Gordon Goodman posed a question regarding a specific budget item, namely, Should the PDHA continue to contribute to the Illinois Environmental Council? He was in favor of doing so, as was Ken Lerner. John Schofield moved that PDHA contribute \$150 to the Illinois Environmental Council; Gregory Hose seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous voice vote.

In additional budget comments, Gordon Goodman pointed out that 2012 revenue projections differed from the 2011 actual revenue, in that the latter reflected \$1,500 in donations from two generous donors; 2011 actual income and expenses were impacted by the rain barrel sale, an activity absent from the 2012 draft budget. John Schofield suggested approval to the draft budget as a good template/working budget and moved for its approval, which was seconded by Gordon Goodman and passed by unanimous voice vote. Follow-up comments recommended revisiting the draft budget in future meetings.

VI. Other Business

Gordon Goodman mentioned that that the Swamp Oak planted in Lyman Woods in the name of a longstanding and now deceased PDHA member, William Runyon, is not faring well, and that the Park District Forester has generously offered to replace it with a healthy tree. Chris Saricks suggested scheduling time to maintain the tree as a regular part of PDHA's Highland Avenue clean-up days.

Ken Lerner formally welcomed two new board members: Gregory Hose and Timothy Meaney.

The next PDHA meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 23, 2012 at 7PM in Lincoln Center.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:07PM

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Meaney
Secretary