

**Blackstone Neighborhood Association**

**General Membership Meeting Minutes**

**April 25, 2022 6:00 pm**

**People Present: 17**

Mark Maser, president, called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. on Zoom.

**Guest Speaker**: Matthew Placzeck business neighbor spoke about his art and his plans for the buildings he owns along Leavenworth. He’s been sculpting for over 35 years, since he was fourteen. His first large piece was the Labor Monument on the Riverfront. His studio is 11,000 square feet. The building was constructed in 1953 as the Roller Bowl. He purchased the building from his father-in-law and renovated it around thirteen years ago. He does clay work in the building and then sends it to Loveland, Colorado to the foundry. He purchased the former Chinese restaurant to the west and that is overflow studio space. He’s also purchased the Marleybone and the former hair salon, which was once a Sinclair station. These are currently being renovated with lease plans. They may be tenant ready by late summer.

**Minutes** of the last meeting: approval was moved by Margaret and seconded by Maria and approved unanimously.

**Financial Report:** Curt stated that the balance is $3200 in unrestricted funds and $2300 in the beautification fund. He has received a few dues for the new year. A reminder that it is $20 per household.

**Neighborhood Construction Developments:**

Karen Olson informed us that a developer has purchased 517 and 521 S. 38th Avenue with the intention of demolishing and constructing housing for traveling nurses. She was approached about selling her home as well, but she will not. Will be a 3 level apartment building with 28 units and 3 studios and 1 level of parking. Oak Investments is the realty and Colleen Mason the agent. BJ Malek is the developer. Protests were noted by the membership. Questions and comments were directed to City Councilman Danny Begley, who did not previously know about this development.

**Beautification:**

Rhonda sent out an email today regarding the planters. They will soon be cleaned up and planted. Scott reported that First Central Congregational Church held a neighborhood trash pickup in April that was very well attended and that Sebastian wants to organize another neighborhood trash pick up in May. Margaret recommended the Blue Bucket program. The BID also had a cleanup Earth Day weekend.

**Home Tour:**

Mark gave updates on the home tour, including that a website will go live in May. He gave us some dates to save. Monday, Sept. 19 a lunch with Mary Creighton Maxwell, local humorist who grew up in the neighborhood. Saturday, August 13 a volunteer recruitment event at the Storz house. October 7 a patron party in the Cloud Room of the Blackstone Plaza. The tour October 8 and 9th. 10-4 on the 8th and 12-4 on the 9th. There will be a brunch with Mary Shimmel Bernstein whose father owned the Blackstone Hotel. We’ve received a Midtown Neighborhood Alliance grant for the tour and have submitted for others. Sponsorship asks are out. Ten properties will be on the tour. We need 100 volunteers.

**Social:**

We still need a social chair.

**Midtown Neighborhood Alliance:**

Kathy reported that the last meeting focused on pedestrian safety. A committee devoted to such will be formed. MNA will be our fiscal agent for purposes of the tour. MNA is taking nominations for their good landlords award.

**Blackstone Improvement District:**

Jim Farho submitted a written report, attached, which Mark Maser shared with the meeting.

* Pilot project to reduce traffic lanes from 36th to 40th on Farnam St. Pilot will start in May!  Pedestrian safety is driving the change and the BID drive this effort with the City of Omaha.  The BID funded the engineering of the change for the city to implement.  This pilot will run until the final project to hard scape the changes are funded. Goal is to be part of the 2023 construction cycle. BID requested $2M in infrastructure funding from Rep. Don Bacon's office. Should know if approved by July/August.
* Christmas lights are down until later this year
* Additional trash can have been added to Farnam St.
* Banners have been repaired/ replaced along Farnam. BID is looking at smaller banners for acorn lights. The smaller banners can be changed by the BID and reflect events. Farnam Fest, 2nd Saturday events, Maha events, neighborhood tours, etc.
* All street lights have been upgraded to LED to promote safer, well lit sidewalks and streets.
* New mural was added by FNBO to the corner of 38th Avenue and Farnam. Check it out!

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at **7:32 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

**Scott Jones**

Secretary, Blackstone Neighborhood Association