



**PPA Community Meeting Minutes, including comments about proposed merger.**

Virtual meeting held 6:30pm December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Community members present (23):** Ron McCoy, Richard Gilyard, Nancy Kosciolk, Rob Nordin, Joyce Walker, Joe Ring, Dan Bielenberg, Gayla Lindt, Pam Harris, David Harris, Vera Marshall, Brooke Magid Hart, Katherine Wells, Dan Ratiff, Donna Schneider, Lois Willand, Nancy Hammond, Lupe Castillo, Kari Simonson, Rick McCormick, Mary Britton, Lydia McAnerney, and John Orrison.

**Board members present (9):** Eric Amel, David Frank, Lynn Von Korff, Britt Howell, Abe Kao, Jeff Barnhart, Gabrielle Metzger, Susan Larson-Fleming, and Jerry Stein.

**Guests present (2):** Celeste Robinson, Policy Aide, Ward 2 City of Minneapolis and Chris Lautenschlager, Executive Director, Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association

**Staff present:** Liza Davitch

**Call to Order:** Eric Amel, President, called the community meeting to order at 6:36pm. A quorum was present for the Community meeting and Board meeting.

**Announcements and updates:**

**Ward 2 Update:** presented by Celeste Robinson, Policy Aide to City Council Member Robin Wonsley. All 2024 budget amendments proposed by the Ward 2 office passed, including funding to restore the Witches Hat Water Tower. Construction contracts should be awarded next year and hopefully renovation will be completed by Fall 2024. Another budget win was a city contribution to a joint study of the Grand Rounds “Missing Link” at Granary Crossing (i.e. bridge connecting Prospect Park and Como neighborhoods).

**Merger Exploration Presentation and Q&A:** Eric Amel presented a summary of the Merger Exploratory Report (presentation slides at the end of the minutes). Following the summary presentation, PPA’s merger exploration representatives, Britt Howell, Lynn Von Korff, and David Frank, answered questions about the merger proposal and process.

**Below are community members comments and questions about the merger. They are presented in two sections:**

- **Comments made at the community meeting after the presentation and extended Q&A session.**
- **Comments emailed to PPA.**

Public comments are based on notes taken at the community meeting. We omitted names since the speakers have not had the opportunity to review them. Emailed comments are presented as submitted. To be fair, consistent, and keep the focus on the views all names were omitted.

## Summary of comments made merging at 12/4/23 Community Meeting (not quotes)

**Comment 1:** I've never lived in a neighborhood with so much activity and engagement. I'm interested in neighbors – neighborliness. We'll be too large – too big – too distant if we merge. People will say neighborhood work is someone else's job. People will lose interest in who lives here in Prospect Park. I love the idea of contributing time and funds to the neighborhood I know. I don't get much enthusiasm for a bunch of neighborhoods. I'm not sure the interests are the same. I don't think, for example, other neighborhoods will care as much about the tower.

I'm not sure that the answer is an initiative that puts us in a group of people who may not have the same interests and the same circumstances. This is a hard one, but I don't think merger is the answer.

The treasure is the people who are here; they need to be motivated. I hear that the answer is more money, but that might be the wrong focus. What can we do to keep the fire and energy going in the people who live in the neighborhood?

**Comment 2** was a conversation about PPA's diversity equity & inclusion goals relative to the other neighborhoods. **Sample of comments:** Equitable engagement is a PPA priority when evaluating the merger. A community member wanted to ensure it remains a priority on our agenda and in our conversations. Prospect Park Association has been putting in the work in terms of engagement (e.g. Jackson Project, Brittfitt50 Indigenous Health and Environment Committee joint work planting trees in Glendale and Venture Academy). Among the 12 representatives from the four neighborhoods only one, PPA's VP Britt Howell, was a person of color. PPA has work to do, but we are moving forward. PPA representatives on the merger group felt equitable engagement was brushed over—something to be considered later—by representatives from some of the other neighborhoods. PPA is committed to concentrating on equitable engagement.

**Comment 3:** Prospect Park's population is growing and that has made our community more diverse, which is great. We have a long way to go, as everyone knows, in terms of ensuring PPA is representative of all the people who live here. Keeping equity at the forefront is critical.

What we will lose by merging will be far greater than anything we would gain. Could we explore a model where we share resources with other neighborhood organizations? For example, in rural area northern Wisconsin, small school districts couldn't afford certain things on their own so bought needed services from larger agencies. Maybe PPA could share resources?

**Comment 4:** I am absolutely opposed to merger. My wife and I have been involved in our community since 1995. We took on the task of getting the Tower & Tower Hill Park on the National Register of Historic Places, which was part of the NRP plan. Getting funding for the national register designation was a long drive—a \$50,000 effort. Since that time, we've worked on many neighborhood priorities. The successes have always been community successes, such as the recent funding to repair the tower. This is the second time we've had to work to get funding for the Tower. The first was in 1997. We've always been successful because we were a very strong community. When the firebell was rung, people came forward.

I love this community. I love being outside in this community; when we work in our garden or if I shovel snow or whatever, people walking stop to talk and say hi. You know, what's going on? It doesn't have to be hard core politics, just like, how are you doing?

I can't believe this neighborhood would be served better by belonging to a bigger collective group. I think a merger would have a very detrimental effect over the long term. PPA is the oldest continuous operating neighborhood association. It has a tremendous history in the city of Minneapolis. Tremendous, wonderful, wonderful stories and I would like to see it continue.

**Comment 5:** I wonder how neighborhood efforts, such as diverting Highway 94, would have played out without PPERRIA/PPA? There were many neighborhood-driven grassroots efforts. NRP projects were tied directly to neighborhood priorities and voices. As one neighborhood represented among many in a larger organization, would the other neighborhoods have cared as much about how Highway 94 tracked through our neighborhood? It's important to respect and honor the history; the legacy and hard work of the people who came before us.

Could we raise revenue by fundraising? Appeal to residents to include the neighborhood association in their estate plans and build an endowment to help underwrite expenses. It might not be a stretch given our number of long-term residents.

**Comment 6:** After Mayor Fraser stepped down, or very soon after, he wanted to do something about education, learning, and achievement gaps. After a series of discussions, neighbors from three University area neighborhoods formed a group called the “Southeast Minneapolis Council on Learning” that lasted 8 - 10 years or so. It's not distant history. The experience was that sometimes we did great things together, when the missions overlapped, but sometimes there was enmity when working across neighborhoods. Sometimes people can put their heads together and share a vision, but other times they struggle over resources. That's reality. If we merge there will be times when Prospect Park interests will be in jeopardy because the board will have 15 members and only three might be from Prospect Park. It's important to keep this in mind. We know from history, not theory, priorities sometimes differ. In this situation, by giving up our neighborhood organization, we would lose the ability to take positions we need to take.

**Comment 7:** I would like PPA to explore requesting feedback commitment from stakeholders and businesses. What is the support/giveback from new development in the North side of University, Towerside, and University Ave businesses?

**Comment 8:** I do not support a merger. Prospect Park is better off keeping its neighborhood organization. The City of Minneapolis has had many different neighborhood funding programs over time and could change programs again. It would be a tragedy to abandon our neighborhood organization.

**Comment 9:** A community member asked for clarification about the process. Specifically, whether board members are open to hearing from community members who might only learn about this after tonight's meeting and want to be heard. Would board members remain open-minded and listen to community members through January 22<sup>nd</sup> when the board will make its decision?

Several board members confirmed the board wants a broad outreach effort; the board wants to hear from community members. Most PPA's board members are present tonight to listen. PPA members

are strongly encouraged to submit comments to [finance@prospectparkmpls.org](mailto:finance@prospectparkmpls.org) by January 12<sup>th</sup> so comments can be provided to the board in advance of the January 22<sup>nd</sup> board/community meeting. Members are also welcome to attend the January meeting. We plan to hold a hybrid meeting (i.e. in-person at PPUMC and virtual) on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Along with community members, PPA board members are trying to figure out what's best for our neighborhood. Comments will help the board figure out next best steps. We're all struggling with the same issues and asking similar questions. We are all in this together. If the Board decides to move forward in January, the ultimate merger decision will involve the community at large; we've been advised that's the legal route.

### **Comments emailed to PPA**

**Email comment 1:** Many years ago I represented PP on the board of SEMPACC (Southeast Minneapolis Planning and Coordinating Committee). I even served as president for a bit. It was a productive way for all of the neighborhoods that surrounded the University to work together on common issues, since so many of our shared concerns relate in one way or another to the U. It did include official representation from the U, which of course made it more productive. We still share many issues and concerns. Working together would improve our chances of making an impact, and would provide a more robust organization because of the city's current policies on funding neighborhoods. So I am in favor of a merger. The plans for implementation sound reasonable, and seem to provide for special circumstances in each neighborhood.

**Email comment 2:** Regarding the proposed merger of SE Mpls neighborhood groups, I'm opposed for practical reasons. On the basis of actual experience working with SE Como and Marcy Holmes folks on two projects in the past 20 years: the Live Near Your Work website, the Citizen's Advisory Committee on the Completion of the Grand Rounds through NE and SE Minneapolis, I found that we in Prospect Park have many more active volunteers, and more volunteer energy than these two neighborhoods combined. This would prove to be a benefit to SE Como and Marcy Holmes, but translates into a burden for Prospect Park because we would lose management say over our own volunteers. Additionally, a management board overseeing such a combined organization would be less focused on our very local concerns here--and we know we have many every week: from parking, to environment, to safety, to cultural events, etc. Just compare the websites of our separate neighborhoods, and you can see that the Prospect Park Neighborhood website is the best one in the entire city in terms of neighborhood information!

**Email comment 3:** I am not for merging. I agree with what [named person] said [at the community meeting] (see page 2, comment 1). As neighborhoods....many needs are the same, but many are different!! (The author also contributed many fundraising suggestions.)

**Email comment 4:** I attended the meeting about the neighborhood merger issue last week, but didn't want to speak as I wanted to organize my thoughts before saying anything. I found many of the comments irrelevant to the issue about our neighborhood organization merging with the other organizations. Should there be a merger, surely members of the Prospect Park community will still speak to one another, help each other out in an emergency or a day to day situation, and be courteous to their neighbors. A merger would be a policy and organizational situation, not a personal one. Yes, being one larger organization would be hard for those who have lived here for decades, but for many, it would just be the way it is. Working together would need to be the

hallmark of the new organization, and financially, it might just be a necessity if we want to get anything done.

My view is to look at the implications of a larger organization. While we would definitely lose some of our individual identities with this larger organization, the financial necessity seems to be pulling us together. This loss and the gain would depend on how the merger happened - what about subcommittees that are made up of each neighborhood to retain some individuality and identity? This would provide the ability to work on projects that pertain to that neighborhood with the support of others. Isn't the motto - *we all do better when we all do better* - relevant here?

By combining our resources, especially financial ones, and carefully negotiating how the remaining dollars (such as our NRP funds) are spent, it seems there is strength in numbers. More people means more buying power, more lobbying power, etc. By working together, and having the University district as part of the new organization (or even if they are not) with the 4 other neighborhoods surrounding the university, we might be able to rein in their willy nilly expansion and activities more deftly. How the board of such a large organization might be composed would certainly help define who could do what. It would seem that each neighborhood would know they are losing something but gaining other things.

Having enough money to hire a competent ED and potentially other staff with some grants could expand what we could do. For each of these organizations, the goals are not that different, and working together on them might really help us achieve something. In the event that a merger did happen, I do not see how neighbors will change how they relate to each other. That, to me, is not a good reason for staying away from this merger.

**Email comment 5:** I am against merging our Prospect Park Association with other neighborhood organizations. For one thing, when organizations get too big it is harder to overcome rancor resulting from disagreements. For another thing, members would then be voting on issues that don't touch them personally. Let's not make our world more impersonal than it already is.

**Email comment 6:** Dear PPA, I have just recently become aware of a move to merge the neighborhood organizations in Prospect Park, Marcy Holmes, Como, and Nicollet Island. I started thinking about this. In wondering I asked myself some questions: What do these neighborhoods have in common? Do we have the same issues? Are the neighborhood organizations similar in their approach to representation of their neighbors?

For decades, I was consistent and quite active in neighborhood work, and am less so now, but appreciate others who represent ME. And I do think I am observant enough to answer my questions. No. No. No.

We don't have the same issues. It is clear that few from the other areas has much stake in what matters here. And I like that my friends and neighbors represent me in this. My input is asked for often. This merger would create an additional bureaucratic level between a resident and the decision-making. This is NOT a good thing. It makes communication harder and distances residents.

So, as you look at the possibility of merging neighborhood groups, I would be against it. Thank you.

### **Conclusion of Community Meeting**

Eric Amel confirmed that in addition to emailing comments to [finance@prospectparkmpls.org](mailto:finance@prospectparkmpls.org) community members will have the opportunity to comment at PPA's January 22<sup>nd</sup> Community/Board meeting at the time the Board decides whether to move forward with the merger.

Community meeting minutes written by *Lynn Von Korff*, PPA Board Member and Exploratory Merger Representative.

Minutes reviewed by *David Frank*, PPA Board Member and Secretary

**PPA Merger Exploration Report slides below.** The Merger Exploratory Final Report was also made available in advance in PPA newsletters, ppe-list, emails, etc.).

## Exploratory Merger Report Summary Presentation

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## Why Explore Merger?

Significant city funding cuts to many neighborhood organizations, including Prospect Park Association.

- up to 80% cut to PPA's current city funding ("Neighborhood Network" program).
- PPA is using our remaining NRP funds to sustain operations. (NRP is a decades old City funded neighborhood program. Although we can use remaining NRP funds; no new NRP funds will be available). Critical to adopt a financial strategy soon so we do not spend all our NRP funds and lose the opportunity to choose options.

PPA exploring two strategies:

- Merge with other area neighborhood organizations.
- Continue as official neighborhood organization serving Prospect Park.



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## PPA Criteria to Evaluate Options

- Fulfills PPA's mission
- Advances equity, inclusion, and diversity
- Remain financially sound

PPA has been raising additional funds, reducing expenses & retaining Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funds so we remain financial stable and preserve options.



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## Merger Exploration Process To Date



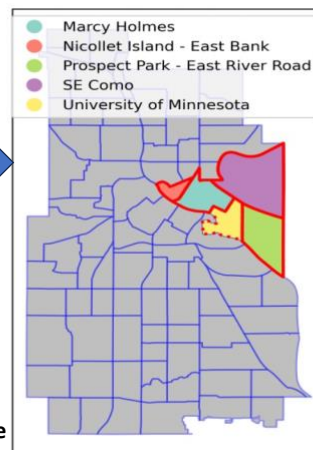
**Funding Phase:** Neighborhood Community Relations (NCR) awarded \$20,000 grant to Marcy-Holmes for four neighborhood organizations to work with Willow Consulting to explore a merger.

**Four Neighborhoods:** 1) **Prospect Park**, 2) **Marcy-Holmes**, 3) **Southeast Como**, and 4) **Nicollet Island-East Bank** (and possibly 5) **University of Minnesota**, which currently does not have a neighborhood org).

**Exploration Phase:** (July-Oct 2023): Three representatives from each neighborhood met with Willow Consulting to explore projected combined revenue and expense, program priorities, advantages and disadvantages, potential board structure, etc.

**Engagement:** (Nov 2023-Jan 2024): Board and community members in each neighborhood discuss the exploratory merger report, ask questions and provide feedback to board.

**Decision Point:** **January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024: PPA Board votes whether to move ahead.**



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## Merger Timeline - if PPA goes forward



**January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024: PPA board votes whether to move ahead.** Not binding commitment but indicates serious intent to merge.

**If yes, the neighborhood organizations moving forward create a transition team & hire legal counsel.** (est March 2024) Negotiate & prepare Merger Agreement (legal document). Create new bylaws, new name, committee charters and policies drafted, budget created, staffing plan, etc.

**PPA board and PPA membership vote on Merger Agreement.** (est Spring 2024) If approved, Articles of Merger will be filed with the Secretary of State and the merger will be final. Articles of Incorporation filed, assets and liabilities and accounting consolidated, **New organization created and current organizations cease to exist.**

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## Neighborhood Demographics



|                           | Marcy Holmes | Prospect Park | SE Como    | NIEB       | University | Total  |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|--------|
| Population                | 15,141       | 11,354        | 6455       | 2,439      | 7,090      | 42,479 |
| Housing Units             | 6,581        | 3,945         | 2189       | 1417       | 619        | 14,751 |
| Renter Occupied           | 82.8%        | 65.9%         | 77.0%      | 39.9%      | 92.2%      |        |
| Race-White                | 70.5%        | 57.7%         | 77.2%      | 84.3%      | 75.1%      |        |
| Race-Of Color             | 26.6%        | 41.5%         | Suppressed | Suppressed | 21.9%      |        |
| Language-English Only     | 84.5%        | 69.0%         | 83.5%      | 90.8%      | 81.7%      |        |
| People with a Disability  | 8.0%         | 8.3%          | 3.9%       | 8.6%       | 4.2%       |        |
| Foreign-Born Residents    | 13.9%        | 25.7%         | 13.0%      | 7.9%       | 12.6%      |        |
| With income below poverty | 43.1%        | 38.7%         | 36.5%      | 3.6%       | 72.1%      |        |

Suppressed data means that a count or percentage cannot be calculated due to low or unavailable estimates or to protect privacy of data for small geographic areas.  
 \*Source Minnesota Compass <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/minneapolis>

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## Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizations Exploring Mergers or Already Merged



|  | # of Neigh. | Population | Housing Units |
|--|-------------|------------|---------------|
| PPA, Marcy Holmes, SECIA, NIEB, University     | 5           | 42,479     | 14,751        |
| Proposed 4-Corners Collaborative (2 voted yes) | 4           | 6,374      | 3,038         |
| Longfellow Community Council                   | 4           | 21,780     | 10,510        |
| Nokomis East Neighborhood Assoc.               | 4           | 14,952     | 6,722         |
| Standish Ericsson Neigh. Assoc.                | 2           | 10,000     | 4,505         |
| Powderhorn Park Neigh. Assoc.                  | 1           | 8,440      | 3,623         |
| Whittier Alliance                              | 1           | 14,483     | 7,296         |

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## Proposed Board of New Merged Organization

### Proposed Board Representation based on neighborhood population.

- Nicollet Island/East Bank – one board member
- Southeast Como – two board members
- Marcy-Holmes – three board members
- Prospect Park – three board members
- Elected at large – four board members
- University neighborhood – two board members (if joins)

**The goal is to have a diverse board made up of a variety of stakeholders including students, renters, people of color, and businesses.**

**The board/membership of the new organization can change board representation.**



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## Some Questions/Issues to Consider

- **Will merging advance equitable engagement?**
- **What are shared neighborhood issues, priorities, and values?**
- **Merging will reduce some expenses** (shared newsletters, websites, social media, insurance, reporting to NCR, accounting).
- **Will we lose neighborhood identity/autonomy?**
- **Merging will help fund paid staff versus primarily relying on volunteers to carry out many administrative responsibilities.**
- **Volunteers will be required to organize neighborhood events and programs whether we merge or not.**
- **Combined size of neighborhoods.**
- **If we do not merge, who will carry out Neighbor Community Relations (NCR) requirements?**
- **Both scenarios require use of PPA's remaining NRP funds.**



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## PPA Criteria to Evaluate Merger



- **Fulfills PPA's mission?**
- **Advances equity, inclusion, and diversity?**
- **Financially sound?**

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**Thank you!**  
**Questions or Comments?**

You can also email questions or comments about the merger proposal to [finance@prospectparkmpls.org](mailto:finance@prospectparkmpls.org) to be shared with PPA's Board of Directors.

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