**Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting**

**Thursday, May 31, 2018 7 – 9 pm**

**St Matthew Lutheran Church**

[www.sunaurbana.org](http://www.sunaurbana.org)

**Attendance:** 95 signed in

Theresa Michelson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**SUNA Business**

Theresa introduced herself, Kathy and Pauline, and welcomed the audience members, thanking them for coming out on the rainy night. She thanked the panel members for giving up their evening time to be part of the meeting. Saying that there would be a different format for this evening’s meeting, she turned the rest of the business meeting over to Kathy.

Kathy Wallig thanked Pastor Bob Rasmus for once again allowing SUNA to use the Fellowship Hall. She reminded folks that payment of dues makes one eligible to vote, and provides funds to publicize the meeting and maintain the website. She noted that SUNA also has a Facebook page.

Kathy recounted SUNA’s activities in the past year:

~ Two Steering Committee members attended 2 separate CU Fresh Start Call-ins.

~ Theresa and Kathy attended the 2017 Regional Neighborhood Network Conference in Evansville, Indiana. They also attend the Mayor’s Safety Task Force meeting which convenes every three months.

~ We continued to follow the Paul Zerrouki court case.

~ We continue to promote Neighborhood Watch Groups and neighborhood block parties.

Kathy reported that the Silver/Vawter neighbors have been working to promote community. They hold a regular Bible study and community dinner on Sunday nights. An ice cream social, including games and a raffle, will be held on June 30 from 3 – 5 pm in front of 2014 Vawter. They are planning a neighborhood block party and carnival to be held August 11 from 2 - 7 pm. They continue their outreach to the neighbors surrounding the Silver/Vawter area.

The Financial Report was presented and accepted.

Theresa announced that the Colorado Avenue clean-up was scheduled for June 9 at 8:00 am, and asked for volunteers.

Kathy presented the slate of volunteers for Coordinators and Steering Committee:

NW quadrant: Stacy Gloss

SW quadrant: Graeme Gilmore, Eileen Kohen, Pauline Mak, Nancy Uchtmann

NE quadrant: Theresa Michelson, Neil Parthun, Mary Kay Pleck, Nikki O’Brien

SE quadrant: Jill Peckham, Kathy Wallig

The slate was accepted by voice vote. A call was made for additional volunteers to join the Steering Committee.

At 7:10 pm the business meeting was followed by a ten minutes “greet your neighbors” interlude. This was a new feature added to give attendees the opportunity to get to know their SUNA neighbors.

**REPORTS**

At 7:20 Kathy introduced the panel of elected and appointed officials asked to give reports. She explained the change in format from past meetings. The Mayor was allotted 10 minutes to speak, and each of the remaining panelists had 5 minutes to give their report. Jill Peckham would strictly monitor the time limits. No questions were given to the panelists beforehand.

**DIANE MARLIN, Mayor of Urbana**, thanked city staff for a productive year. She focused her report on the 2019 fiscal year budget which, she said, was the result of a ”realistic and transparent approach “ to meet the financial challenges facing the city with “disciplined action”. She outlined 4 main challenges and proposals to deal with them.

1.To eliminate structural deficits in the general operating funds and restore the balance between deficit and revenue. To end the underfunding of police and fire pensions, and to fully fund them. To rebuild the city’s financial reserves so as to be prepared to meet emergencies.

2. To make $600,000 reductions in staff, vehicles, and facilities. The Civic Center, which is deteriorating due to no prior funding for maintenance, is to be closed by December 31, 2018. Other facilities will be evaluated and priorities set for future facility needs.

3. To explore options to fund infrastructure needs on a long-term basis to catch up with short-term fixes.

4. To promote economic development to grow the tax base. There is “growth on the horizon”, the mayor said. Meetings have been happening and projects are in various stages of development.

Mayor Marlin noted that the new city administrator will take over the professional management of the city on June 4.

Also noted was the goal to update the city’s website to make it more user-friendly, efficient, and readable on mobile devices.

Folks were encouraged to sign up to receive the city’s e-newsletter.

**PAUL POULOSKY, Urbana School District #116 Representative**, reported on highlights of the year at Yankee Ridge Elementary School. The rebuilding project is on budget and will be completed by Fall 2018. Renovations include a new roof, a gym, a multipurpose room, a drop-off parking area, a wait shelter, and 8 new classrooms for grades 3 to 5.

In Fall 2018 a French dual language curriculum will be initiated at Yankee Ridge starting in grades K and 1, and eventually expanding to 6 dual language classrooms.

The good news is that bonds taken out in 1999 will be paid off in full by Fall 2018, resulting in a drop in the District’s tax rate. Expect property taxes to decrease.

**TIM BARTLETT, Executive Director of Urbana Parks**, addressed two issues.

He encouraged residents to apply for advisory positions on the UPD Board of Commissions or the UPD Advisory Committee. Application forms were made available.

He announced the kick-off of the 2020 strategic plan. Its vision is to better serve under-represented populations in the community, to develop the Weaver Park Trailhead connection with the Kickapoo Rail Trail, to continue to clean up Crystal Lake and improve the Park’s amenities, and to undertake a Health and Wellness Facility Study for which opportunities for public input will be hosted.

**JOHN SCHNEIDER, Community Development Manager**, referred to the “What’s in Your Square” vision project now underway. He noted the cooperation between Community Development and other city departments in addressing building safety. On the Zerrouki-owned apartment buildings, he pointed out that Mr. Zerrouki had until Nov.1 to pay off fines. The second round of building inspections is underway with a full staff. Since May 2016, 2500 inspections have been carried out.

On other matters: the make-over of the former County Market to Salt and Light is completed. Streetlights have been installed on Kinch Street. Aspen Court renovation is soon to be completed. New businesses have opened at the Pines.

**SYLVIA MORGAN, Chief, Urbana Police Department**, indicated that the department is at full strength. Of new hires, five are females, and two are African-American males.

With funding from the first portion of a grant, Melissa Haynes, the staff expert in statistics, has been analyzing crime patterns and mapping trends to identify “hot spots” where the highest number of crimes is occurring. The second portion of the grant will use the results of her statistical analysis to implement strategies for more effective policing in those “hot spot” areas.

Her good news is that crime is down from 2016. Traffic stops are fewer. Vehicle burglaries are down significantly.

**BILL GRAY, Director of Public Works**, addressed the city’s problem of 700 diseased Ash trees. Forty will receive chemical treatment in an effort to preserve a few. Thirty remain to be removed. 240 new trees have been planted throughout the city. He invited residents to ‘think trees’ – if you have a vacant spot on your street for a tree, and if feasible, the city will share the cost of planting a tree.

He commented on the 2019 phase of the MCORE project which will totally reconstruct the portion of Green Street that connects the Campus to downtown Urbana. There will be no on-street parking. Bike lanes and safer walking will be given priority.

Mention was also made of laying new sewer lines in east Urbana where sewer back up has been a problem.

At 7:50 pm all reports ended.

**LORRIE PEARSON, Planning Division Manager, Community Development Services**, led attendees in an input-gathering activity on the future of the 16 acre site that includes Lincoln Square Mall, the hotel and the surrounding parking lots. The activity centered on the question “What’s in Your Square?”.

Mayor Marlin kicked off the activity, pointing out that the site is at a crossroads due to the hotel closure, the loss of Health Alliance from the Mall, and the ongoing change in type of the Mall’s occupants. In addition, the MCCORE project will enhance Green Street as the main corridor from the University to downtown Urbana, hence the push to revitalize the area. However, there are constraints as to what can be done given the reality that the hotel and the Mall are privately owned, and the parking lots are owned by the city.

Attendees were asked first to fill out a one-page survey then, or do so later online. Next came 3 writing tasks : 1) to think of a great place they have visited and tell what features make it great; 2) to describe what emotions this place evokes and what features they would want the “Square” to have; and 3) to mark on the map they have where they would place these features.

At 8:20 the input-gathering activity ended and the formal part of the meeting was adjourned to allow time for attendees to interact individually and informally with officials. This replaced the more formal Question and Answer finale of past annual meetings.

At 9:00 pm the meeting came to a close.