**Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting**

Thursday, May 30, 2019 7 – 9 pm

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

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

**Attendance:**  107

Theresa Michelson called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

**SUNA Business**

Theresa introduced herself and fellow coordinators Kathy Wallig and Pauline Mak. She thanked the church for hosting the SUNA meeting again this year, and also thanked the public officials for coming to report on their area of responsibility. Theresa stated that SUNA had a quiet year. She referred to the SUNA Financial Report which was available to attendees. The report showed a balance of $454.40 as of May 30, 2019. Expenses included $23.65 for copying of handouts at the annual meeting, $25.00 contribution to Silver-Vawter Halloween Project, $179.25 for publicity for annual meeting, and $132.00 for website charges. Theresa thanked members for paying the $5.00 contribution.

Theresa also announced there would be a clean-up of Colorado Avenue on Saturday, June 1 at 8:00 am, and asked for volunteers to sign up to help.

Kathy Wallig introduced the slate of candidates for the SUNA Steering Committee:

NW quadrant – Stacy Gloss

SW quadrant – Graeme Gilmore, Eileen Kohen, James Quisenberry, Nancy Uchtmann

NE quadrant – Mary Kay Pleck, Nikki O’Brien

SE quadrant – Jill Peckham

Coordinators – Pauline Mak, Theresa Michelson, Kathy Wallig

The slate was accepted by voice vote.

At 7:15 pm the business meeting was followed by a 10 minute opportunity to greet your neighbor sitting around you.

**REPORTS**

At 7:25 Kathy Wallig introduced the panel of elected and appointed officials asked to give reports. She explained the format for the evening. The Mayor was allotted 10 minutes to give her report, and each of the other panelists had 5 minutes to speak about developments in their area of responsibility. Jill Peckham would monitor the time limits. No questions were given to the panelists beforehand, but each would be available after the meeting for questions and/or comments from the audience.

**DIANE MARLIN, Mayor of Urbana,** introduced some city staff including new Fire Chief Charles Lauss who replaced Brian Nightlinger (retired); Police Deputy Chief Bob Fitzgerald; Planning

Manager Lorrie Pearson; City Planner Kevin Garcia; and Bryant Seraphim Interim Police Chief. The Mayor noted the retirements of Police Chief Sylvia Morgan, and Bill Gray, former Director of Public Works.

The focus of the Mayor’s remarks were the city budget and financial and economic development. They are making progress in putting Urbana on a stronger financial foundation by paying down debt, increasing the funding of city pensions, and reducing spending. She stated that her administration started with a $2.5 million structural budget deficit, but by the end of the fiscal year, over one half of the deficit will be retired.

The City had borrowed money from Champaign in the past to pay Metcad. The last reimbursement to Champaign will be made this year and the Mayor stated they will not borrow from Champaign again.

The proposed Urbana budget for 2019-20 is $59.3 million. This includes a spending reduction of $548,000 through staffing reductions ($370,000), revised equipment replacement ($119,000), and reduced funding for the library ($59,000). The proposed budget also includes revenue increases of $292,000 from an increase in the liquor tax ($220,000) and an increase in late fees for parking fines ($59,000). The sources of revenue for Urbana are as follows: 32% sales tax and use tax, 13% property tax, 12% income tax, 11% utility tax and related taxes, 7% U of I fire protection contract, 4% hotel/motel tax, and 18% other.

Mayor Marlin explained that the city only gets 13 cents of every dollar paid in property tax – of that money, 5.5 cents goes to the Urbana Free Library, 4 cents to police and fire pensions, leaving only 3.5 cents for Urbana’s general operation fund.

Mayor Marlin passed around a photograph of the Landmark Hotel from 1924. The City of Urbana has entered into a Letter of Intent with Maryland-based Marksons Affiliates, LLC, to renovate the Urbana Landmark Hotel and turn it into a 120-room boutique hotel, restaurant, bar and conference center with Hilton Tapestry branding. The proposed project would cost a minimum of $16.8 million. The City would provide the developer with at least a $5.2 million reimbursement once the project is done through a redevelopment agreement.

**Paul Poulosky, Urbana School District #116 Representative** reported that the students and staff of the Urbana schools are doing amazing things. As part of the Habitat for Humanity club at UHS, 30 high school students made a trip to Mississippi to build houses for the needy, help an after school program, and learn about the struggles of African Americans during the civil rights movement.  Aja Capel, a junior at UHS, was recently named one of the top 10 volunteers in the entire country out of over 29,000 applicants. She volunteers teaching robotics and computer science to girls, has been awarded several scholarships, is graduating a year early and will attend Rose Hullman in the fall. Mark Foley, a social studies teacher at UHS, was named the 2018 Illinois History teacher of the year.

At a special meeting on May 20, the Urbana School Board appointed Jennifer Ivory-Tatum to be the new superintendent starting July 1, 2019. Ivory-Tatum previously worked in both Urbana and Champaign Unit 4 schools. She’s leaving her position as assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction and assessment at Unit 4 to take the job in Urbana.  Prior to her work with Unit 4, she served as Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with Urbana schools and served as Principal of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School from 2005-2013. Mr. Poulosky stated there has been a noticeable improvement in morale since the appointment of the new superintendent.

Mr. Poulosky reported that the improvements at Yankee Ridge were completed last summer and it is now the largest elementary school in Urbana. The gymnasium at the school was dedicated to Nancy Thies Marshall, who formerly attended Yankee Ridge and went on to compete in gymnastics at the 1972 Olympics. The French dual language program at Yankee Ridge is underway in grades K and 1. The program pairs native speakers with non-native speakers and will be expanded to all 6 grade levels.

Lastly, Mr. Poulosky informed that a bond issue from 1999 was paid off a bit early using proceeds from the 1% sales tax resulting in a small drop in the District’s tax rate, which will lower property tax bills.

**Carol Mitten, City Manager and Interim Public Works Director** reported on the status of the clean-up from the tornado that hit the SUNA area in the early hours of Sunday, May 26. Three teams of city personnel have been operating since the storm hit and will continue through Saturday and then start again on Monday. The deadline for debris pick-up is June 4.

Several areas of capital improvements are scheduled. In order of priority, the projects are resurfacing of Lincoln and Springfield Avenues - $2 million; Vine and Washington - $500,000; Fairlawn Drive - $650,000; and Race St north of Washington - $500,000. Planning and preliminary engineering is underway in other areas including Lincoln Avenue south of Bradley, and Florida Avenue between Lincoln Ave and Vine Street. Also, there is a feasibility study of the Kickapoo Trail Extension. Phase 5 of the MCORE project continues with work being done on Green St from Lincoln Ave to Race St at a cost of $4 million. Finally, there is an IDOT project rebuilding University Ave from Goodwin Ave to Maple St at a cost of $8 million.

**John Schneider, Community Development Manager** reported that the Urbana Fire Department received a #1 ISO rating. There are a number of projects in Urbana either in the planning stage or in development. There have been 31 new single family residence permits issued. A new development called Gather at the corner of Lincoln and University Avenues will contain approximately 200 apartments, 16 townhomes and 50 extended stay rooms along with some retail. At the other corner of Lincoln and University a development of 126 units is well underway. A Culver’s restaurant is being built at the corner of University and Race Street. The Aspen Court apartments are about 50% complete. Also, a new 5 story mixed use building at the site of Niro’s Gyros on University Ave has been approved by the Urbana city council. It will have retail on the first floor and 76 apartments on the other four. Finally, 1306 E. Washington Ave (corner of Philo Rd and Washington) has been sold and is being prepared for development.

The Community Development department now has a portal where citizens can register a property, make complaints anonymously, or call to inform of developments in a neighborhood. There have been 163 complaint inspections since last year.

**Jared Miller, City Council Member Ward 7** Introduced himself to the audience. He stated that he had surveyed the damage from the storm and thanked public works and other personnel for their work on the morning of the storm and afterwards. He asked who in the audience has lived in Urbana less than a year or were attending their first SUNA meeting. Mr. Miller explained a bit about the aldermanic form of government in Urbana, and stated that he was elected 2 years ago and is the council’s most junior member. In response to a question, he informed that he lives at 2308 S. Vine St and his phone number is 217-721-9342. Ward 7 citizens are welcome to contact him with their concerns.

**Tim Bartlett, Executive Director of Urbana Parks** explained the purpose of the Urbana Park District Advisory Board (UPDAC) and had applications for anyone interested in being on the board.

He stated that the Park District has a strategic plan which has 4 pillars. The four planning pillars, listed below, are comprised of interwoven initiatives, which strive to provide welcoming, inclusive, and creative recreational opportunities for our community.

**Placemaking** features the design and creation of vibrant and engaging spaces that inspire health and recreation. The lake and trails at Crystal Lake are a current focus of development. The water quality and appearance of the lake will be greatly improved. They are building a 10’ wide multi-use path along Park Street, funded by an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Project grant (ITEP) and a match from Carle Hospital. The work on the lake, an $800,000 investment, is funded 50-50 between the State and UPD.

**Health & Wellness** reinforces the Urbana Park District's commitment to providing parks, programs, facilities and events that promote all dimensions of wellness.

**You Belong Here** promotes the creation of welcoming and supportive park and recreation experiences for everyone, while encouraging an inclusive and responsive staff culture. This celebrates inclusion regardless of age, ethnicity, culture, income, ability, lifestyle, interests.

**Trails & Connectivity** highlights the establishment of multi-use paths within parks for transportation and recreation, while creating park-wide, neighborhood, community and regional connections. This supports active lifestyles and safe transportation for those walking, biking, jogging and rolling in the community, while also stimulating local tourism and economic benefits. They are working on the Kickapoo Rail Trail from Urbana to Danville.

The UPD has a local funding goal of raising $2 million to support projects and programs.

Finally, Mr. Bartlett said they have been working on cleaning up Larson Park from the tornado. Larson Park has now been hit twice by a tornado.

**Bryan Seraphim, Interim Chief of Police** stated he is concluding his 25th year with the department. He said that 57 of the 58 positions are funded. The UPD now has body cameras, which operate on the same system as the squad cars and in the interview rooms. Also, they now have online police reporting for minor offenses. The SUNA area has by far the most neighborhood watch groups. These groups are a positive and helpful development.

Mr. Seraphim stated that there were 25,000 service calls in the last year, and 7,000 police reports. During that time, there were 10-12 citizen complaints. The most frequent call is for domestic complaints. Crime reports are down significantly.

AT 8:15, **Kevin Garcia, City Planner** reported on the results of ‘What’s in your Square?’, a survey and conversations with residents designed to gather ideas about the future of the nine-block area of Lincoln Square Mall. Over 1,600 surveys were completed, mostly from Urbana residents but many from Champaign and surrounding communities. By far the most popular reason for going to Lincoln Square is the Farmer’s Market on Saturdays, and Common Ground Co-op. Respondents would like to see more arts as well as more restaurants and business at Lincoln Square. Mr. Garcia handed out a detailed report of the results of the survey.

At 8:30, Mayor Marlin asked for another minute to thank the public works, the police department, and other city officials for their efforts after the tornado Sunday morning. She asked citizens to clean the storm drains in their area to help with drainage.

Kathy was a 911 dispatcher previously and explained the effort that goes on behind the scenes during a storm. Some have questioned why there was no siren to warn citizens of the storm but this tornado was not predicted and formed very quickly. She also thanked Pastor Bob Rasmus for allowing SUNA to meet at the church. Kathy reminded that the panelists would be available for attendees to meet with them individually until 9:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.