

West (U. City) Loop SBD Board Meeting Minutes
Blueberry Hill, Pac-Man Room
6504 Delmar Blvd
University City, MO 63130
Tuesday, February 12, 2019

General Meeting:

Joe Edwards called the meeting to order and, after introductions, opened the floor to announcements. The next general meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 12, 2019, at 9:00 a.m. (Blueberry Hill's Piano Room).

Executive Director Rachelle L'Ecuyer gave the overall Loop update (see Executive Director's Report separately included in this newsletter). Rachelle asked business owners to make sure that their directory listings were current on The Loop website. Rachelle also mentioned that owners should stay apprised of any changes to the trolley schedule so they could keep their customers informed as needed.

Rachelle Mendolia next discussed the Loop Ice Carnival coming up on January 19 – 20 (kicking off Friday night, January 18th, with the Snow Ball at the Moonrise Hotel). Rachelle reported that event planning was on-schedule, and asked business owners to let her know of any specific in-store activities that could be promoted. Rachelle mentioned a few specific events, including the Putt-Putt Pub Crawl, and the "frozen coin smashing" (9,000 frozen chocolate coins, and 1,000 frozen real \$1 coins).

Julie Hoffman, social media coordinator for Artisans in The Loop and community liaison for St. Louis Jewish Parents magazine, next described an advertising opportunity for Loop business owners in the free magazine. Ten thousand magazines are circulated per month, with 5,000 going home in kids' backpacks. Julie described the ads as a way to promote The Loop as a safe, family-friendly neighborhood.

In the West Loop update, University City Councilwoman Paulette Carr reported that City Manager Gregory Rose has hired a Communications Director to work with him and the Plan Commission, and that an Economic Development Director was expected to be hired in the upcoming weeks. Ms. Carr also mentioned Nina Ganci's new clothing boutique on Olive Boulevard.

In response to a question, Ms. Carr stated that the parking garage behind the (former) Cicero's building would remain a free surface parking lot. The City is looking into updating parking meters to accept card payments, repairing broken meters, and increasing parking enforcement. Parking issues in general are a current focus of the City. Jeff Weintrop asked whether meters could be removed in general, but Ms. Carr stated that there is plenty of free parking and that the meters are intended to prevent the "warehousing" of cars in specific areas. Deb Henderson asked for an update on EDRST funding, and Ms. Carr stated that the overall EDRST funding process is currently being revised and updated, with additional information expected to be available in the next month. In response to a question from Wendy Harris, Ms. Carr noted that Ackert Walkway was scheduled to be renovated sometime this year, which would fix existing water and mud problems. Ms. Carr told Joe Edwards that she would follow up on the Duck Walk project and missing tree well grates. With respect to the former Create Space premises, Ms. Carr noted that the new Economic Development director would be looking into the best use of those spaces. Joe asked about the possibility of putting up a "For Lease" sign in the meantime, and Ms. Carr said she would ask the City Manager.

Joe mentioned that we still need design ideas for the U City light boxes, which would then be reviewed by the U City Arts & Letters Commission. The hope is to get one light box painted this year.

Joe next discussed professional panhandlers operating in The Loop area, and asked businesses to work with police to mitigate the issue. St. Louis City is looking into dedicated patrols. Joe asked attendees to file police complaints when appropriate.

In the East Loop update, Joe reported that Peggy Hou of Chinese Noodle Café is retiring, with a possible new restaurant opening in that space. Joe has received many positive comments on The Loop's holiday lights, including the new lights to the east of the Wabash Station. Joe hopes to order three more strands of lights for the East Loop if the CID Board approves that budget item. The new Modest 'N' Chic Boutique will open in The Pageant building in February. Joe noted that the owner of the former Church's Chicken property (at Delmar and Skinker) might develop the site for the first St. Louis branch of Chase Bank. Joe also reported on a successful, temperate December for The Loop, including eight sold-out El Monstero concerts at The Pageant and a lot of visitors in general.

In Washington University news JoAnna Schooler reported that classes will be back in session on January 21st. The Forest Park pedestrian bridge project has been completed. Although the temporary construction/safety fence has been removed, some neighbors had suggested installing permanent fencing on Forest Park Parkway close to Big Bend Blvd. JoAnna said that the university would support the community's ultimate decision if efforts were made to install a fence.

In the Treasurers' reports, Dave Mastin (on behalf of the East Loop CID) reported approximately \$200,000 in the bank, and said that the CID was continuing to update its accounting records. On behalf of the West Loop SBD, Tom Schmidt reported approximately \$150,000 in the bank.

In the Loop Trolley report, Kevin Barbeau (Executive Director of the Loop Trolley Company) discussed the recent one-week suspension of operations in order to focus on maintenance issues. The timing (during a cold week) was ultimately considered to be the right call in light of the following temperate weekend with strong ridership. A delegation from the Trolley Company is heading to Iowa for the final inspection of the third car; after delivery and testing, the trolley will commence service seven days per week. Though two cars will generally run at once, there will be opportunities to use all three cars for special events. In response to a question from Steve Stone, Kevin indicated that the trolley had yet to hit initial ridership targets, but that the hope was ridership would continue to increase in the upcoming warm weather months. Kevin also noted that the mobile ticketing app was still in beta testing.

Rachelle L'Ecuyer next gave the "Loop in the News" report (see separate section of this newsletter). Joe noted that for years he has paid for a service to monitor Loop coverage on TV, radio, and print, which he believes is important in order to understand how The Loop gets covered in the media in general and how it compares to other areas. Joe congratulated Tom Schmidt of Salt + Smoke for being featured in Forbes' recent "Best of the Midwest: Eating Around St. Louis" article. Rachell noted that The Loop's Facebook page has grown to 36,000 followers, and asked business owners to let her know if they have something specific that they would like The Loop to help them promote.

There being no further new or old business, the meeting was adjourned.

Board Meetings:

After Joe Edwards called the meeting to order, Kathy Caton moved to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2018, board meeting, as published in draft form in the December 2018 newsletter. Tom Schmidt seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Joe proposed that in the upcoming "transition" year (with Rachelle having recently been hired as Executive Director), the same slate of SBD officers be elected by the board, as follows: Joe Edwards, Chairman; Michael Alter, Vice Chairman; and Tom Schmidt, Treasurer. Nakita Smith moved to elect

those members to those officer positions, Kathy Caton seconded, and the SBD board unanimously voted to approve.

Joe asked Tom Schmidt if there were any updates on hiring an accounting firm for the SBD. Tom indicated that he would follow up, both with the accountants the board is seeking bids from and with Keith Cole (U City Acting Director of Finance) regarding the RFP process.

Joe asked the SBD board to give consideration to any new budget items or projects that would need to be considered by City Council. With respect to EDRST funding, Paulette Carr noted that a budget and report would be needed to be filed by the West Loop SBD, but that in general, the funding process is being overhauled and no forecast can be made for our budget process at this time.

Steve Stone reported that he and Joe had discussed adding new lighting to The Loop, with the possibility of having Randy Burkett Lighting Design (which worked on lighting the Arch) prepare a lighting study at the cost of \$5,000. The boards discussed whether those funds were in the current SBD budget or if an amendment would be needed. Rachelle requested that this planning be done in conjunction with the East Loop CID, and noted that the cost of the study might be shared between the boards (to be discussed at the CID's January 17th meeting). Ryan Patterson made a motion (seconded by Nakita Smith and unanimously approved) proposing that if the SBD funds are available under the current budget, that the lighting study go forward; otherwise, if a budget amendment is necessary (either to approve the funds in general, or to share the costs with the East Loop CID), then the SBD board will proceed accordingly. The two boards will first work to agree on the cost issues between themselves, and then work with Keith Cole with respect to any necessary budget amendment. Steve Stone noted that he would inform Randy Burkett that The Loop was likely ready to move this study forward, and also that he would provide Randy's contact information to Rachelle. On a related lighting issue, Joe reiterated his request that business owners keep some lights on in their premises overnight in order to increase safety and ambience.

There being no further old or new business, Ryan Patterson moved to adjourn the meeting. Kathy Caton seconded, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned.