



Meredith Neighborhood Association
Quarterly Meeting
November 7, 2006
Hoover High School Cafeteria
4800 Aurora Avenue

Board Attendees - Those attending were Bob Wells, Wayne Thomas, Peggy Grim, Chris Craig, Ken Craig, Al Minear, Don Shaw, Emily Chafa, Jennifer Hashagen, Cheryl Musser and Keri McDermott. Over 50 neighbors attended along with an eleven member panel to report on concerns and answer questions:

City Councilman Tom Vlassis
Gary Fox, City Traffic Engineer, Traffic & Transportation
Don McLaughlin, Park and Recreation Dept
Doug Romig, Park & Recreation Services Manager
Connie Cook, Hoover Principal
Kirk Stevens, Hoover Student Council Advisor

Mike Kuhlenbeck, Hoover Student Council
Rick Hildreth - DMPD Patrol Services Bureau
Officer Ray Carrington - DMPD School Resource
Officer Luke Wilson - DMPD Traffic Section
Brian Litchfield, DART Director of Program Development

Call To Order - The Board Meeting was called to order by President Bob Wells at 7:02 pm. He asked everyone to be courteous so we could have a positive meeting. Bob amended the meeting agenda which was approved by those in attendance.

Treasurer Report – An ending balance of \$6,439.12 was reported. A motion to approve and second was made. All voting were in favor of approving. President Wells then introduced the following speakers.

Connie Cook, Principal of Hoover High School - Ms. Cook spoke about the Hoover Sports Complex project and indicated that part of the neighborhood trouble has to do with students having limited use of school grounds until construction is completed. The city, county and school district have put in \$1,000,000 dollars into lighted baseball fields, soccer field, tennis court and a walking path. Ms. Cook thanked the MNA for their part of the Westchester Park redo. She and staff have cautioned students about behavior in the park. Trees and bushes have been trimmed to help curtail the smoking areas. She thanked Westchester Church for being a good neighbor by allowing students to park there. Staff picks up litter in the parking lot after students leave. Hoover is hoping to install a security camera on the stadium press box to help with monitoring activities in the neighborhood. Connie explained that students are more mobile due to part-time jobs and classes at Central campus. Parking spots for students are awarded by good attendance. The school is striving for 100% graduation. A closed campus is impossible due to lack of staff and the number of entry doors. Students should only be off school grounds during lunch time, 11:30 am to 12:00 pm. Connie apologized for the students involved with the thefts of the mail and UPS packages. One student sent a letter of apology. Connie admitted students are loud and can be intimidating. Ms. Cook will look into the concerns and asked that neighbors keep reporting problems.

Tom Vlassis, City Councilman – Tom has received a large number of emails and was invited to attend the meeting by President Bob Wells. He will be a voice for our neighborhood and to assist the school. He promised to be of help whenever needed.

Gary Fox, City Traffic Engineer – Mr. Fox reported on areas of concerns, including speed on Meredith and parking restriction requests. He asked that neighbors put concerns on paper and send directly to him. The city does not provide "Slow Children at Play" signs. Mr. Fox feels they give a false sense of safety. Speed on 50th was discussed. The police have issued tickets. They monitored speed on Meredith and did not find excessive speeding. He can place "No Parking" signs at intersections as needed.

Doug Romig, Park & Recreation Services Manager – Park & Rec staff received 4 reports of vandalism from March until now. Doug gave a graffiti hotline number to call **248-6350** if neighbors spot any graffiti in the park. Any graffiti reported that involves offensive language or gang related markings will be removed within 24 hours. **237-1808** is the police department graffiti hotline. The Parks Department has someone available 24/7. Call the main line **237-1386** and the after hours number will be given. He reported on a suggestion of gating the park. Westchester Park was gated for 2 weeks, at some neighbor's requests, and then neighbors petitioned to have gate removed. Neighbors complained people using park were parking on the street and blocking their driveways. Illegal activities should be reported to police by calling 911 and reporting behavior and location.

He mentioned it is important to report graffiti right away, since the Park Department's budget for paint removal is larger than the vandals' paint budget; hopefully they will tire and move on or quit. Doug Romig is an MNA member, since he lives a few blocks from the park and his family has enjoyed Westchester Park. He told the people present that it is important that neighbors/families use the park. This is the most effective way to keep the park safe for families. This tactic has worked in many parks in other areas of the city. The best way to keep the park safe for everyone is to use it and have a neighborhood presence there. Our presence will drive the troublemakers away.

Kirk Stevens, Hoover Student Council Advisor – He mentioned that the comment sheet (of neighbors' complaints relating to Hoover students) read like a rap sheet. He said that there are many more good students than bad. He said that many good and positive activities are going on with Hoover students.

Mike Kuhlenbeck, Hoover Student Council – Mike was asked and agreed to be student council liaison with MNA. Mike told about all the new clubs and activities that Hoover students are involved in and with. Mike says that it is only a small number of kids that are ruining the Hoover name.

Officer Rick Hildreth, DMPD Patrol Services Bureau – Officer Hildreth reported on a number of MNA concerns. He mentioned that when people report crimes and complaints he needs to have the location, time and description. DMPD tries to respond as quickly as possible. They have used a traffic trailer to monitor speeding. These speed trailers have shown an average speed of 30 miles per hour. This is not considered a problem. They have a hard time being invisible to run a speed sting. They have limited manpower. To report a traffic concern or crime, contact Officer Steve Silver or Officer Scott Rounds. You will receive a return call but be prepared to give officer as many details as possible.

Ray Carrington, DMPD Hoover Resource Officer - He has been the school resource officer for 3 years. Ray spoke about the UPS incident and how it was handled. He read an apology note from the student and thanked Mr. Luke, the theft victim, for his cooperation. Carrington reported that bushes have been trimmed to eliminate hiding and smoking areas in the park. Officer Carrington has written several smoking citations. First offense is \$50 and second is \$100. The kids have not been spending as much time in Westchester Park, as it is easily seen by police. Carrington has been monitoring the park regularly, along with other school officials. The students have now spread throughout the neighborhood. The smoking and vandalism is proof of student mobility. Neighbors have complained about students smoking pot and throwing cigarette butts in yards. Officer Carrington asked everyone to feel free to call him directly with complaints. He cannot run radar. He is trying to establish contacts in the neighborhood. Contact numbers for Ray Carrington are **242-7328** or his cell **205-2252**.

Brian Litchfield, Dart Director of Program Development – He said the bus route on Twana Drive has been the same for ten years. The DART bus goes down a residential street to have a convenient turnaround at Hoover and for the rest of the route. He brought transit routes maps to share with the group.

Luke Wilson, DMPD Traffic Officer – He talked about traffic complaints they have received and how they have handled them. Most speeding is done between the hours of 3 and 11pm and tickets were written to adults. Patrols will be stepped up during lunch time and after school. Police need open area to run radar. City police are not allowed to use unmarked vehicles. When a crime is reported, give details and be precise on time.

Neighbors who spoke on their concerns:

Wayne Thomas thanked Officer Rounds for his help with the mail incident on Palm. He wanted an update as to how it is being handled. Wayne was the person who found pieces of opened mail on Palm Avenue. He also brought up students cutting through park to catch bus. Connie responded that they will go the shortest distance to catch the bus.

Ann Jennings suggested having important numbers put in the newsletter or made into magnets for neighbors to keep handy in time of need.

Bridget Brass asked about having no parking signs put on Palm and BelAire near the islands due to the difficulty in driving down these areas when cars are parked on both sides. MNA will meet with Gary Fox regarding this problem. The actual lead time to complete this process could be very short because there is a blanket

ordinance that allows Gary Fox this authority and this would not have to be approved by the City Council. Bridget also shared an editorial by Dr. Sebring. Bridget felt that Connie Cook was not taking concerns seriously. Connie Cook defended her self by say she is taking all concerns seriously. Ms. Cook said that 98% of the students are good students and a few are ruining it for the others.

Dave & Sherry Mongar would like a closed school campus. They asked if the officers gave jay walking tickets. Dave shared how the students (Hoover football team) walk out in front of cars and stare you down or just dare you to hit them. Citizens were told to call officers and file complaints and the officer will respond. Many neighbors agreed this is a big problem. Smoking citations are being given. Neighbors pointed out smoking is illegal and when students throw their butts on the ground it is littering.

Betty Saunders talked about trash and cigarette butts that Hoover students leave by her home on Aurora. She asked that the school be more sensitive to neighbor issues.

John Grim complained about students running through neighborhood yards. He snapped pictures of 3 boys who were down by the timber near Zion Lutheran Church. He reported a lot of trash in that timber. A neighbor child's bike was stolen by a student and discarded blocks away. He spoke of bad behavior from students, throwing trash and being disrespectful. Ray Carrington acknowledged he is aware of this problem.

Terri Golightly spoke that maybe we can turn this situation into a positive by Ms. Cook looking into getting help with an open campus, developing an area for students to go to stay on school property, and improve lunch food so kids will stay at school to eat.

Bob Wells said this will not be a quick fix. It will take time to think through the best decisions. He cautioned everyone to be patient.

Ken Craig asked for a timetable on responses and a need to plan another meeting.

Linda Lane, Deputy Superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools was in attendance, because Ms. Cook invited her to attend the meeting. She will address these issues as soon as possible. She said weather is on our side, because kids tend to stay closer to school or even inside when it is cold outside. She wants to get students and parents involved. She told neighbors she would get a team together with Connie Cook, Officer Carrington, and Hoover students to address the concerns and get back to the MNA in 30 days with some workable solutions.

As the meeting came to a close, Officer Carrington reminded everyone to report anything to him regardless how minor it may be.

Next Board Meeting is Monday, November 13 @ Carlos O'Kelly's. It is also Member Appreciation Night and families can eat from 6 to 8 pm and the meeting will be at 7pm. Everyone is invited.

COMMITTEE REPORTS (Tabled until the next meeting because of the late hour)

Beautification Committee: no report
Business Committee: no report
Community Development: no report

Communications Committee: no report
Membership Committee: no report
Westchester Park Committee: no report

Social Committee: Social committee hosted a Pie Social to all who attended the Quarterly Meeting. There were no remaining pies to auction. Special thanks to Chair Cheryl Musser, Dolores Wells and Barb Lancaster for the festive decorations, pies and refreshments.

Old and New Business: no new business was introduced. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. The minutes are respectfully submitted by:



Peggy Grim, Secretary 2006-2008