

THE ASSOCIATION OF ST. PAUL COMMUNITIES: A Brief Review of Its History: March 1977

The organization of the Association of St. Paul Communities was the outgrowth of suggestions to activists in several neighborhood organizations of St. Paul in 1967 by James Dalglish, at that time a City Commissioner of St. Paul.

He felt the need for a medium to bring the problems of the various communities to the attention of the council and a channel through which city government could respond and inform the citizens of legislation and actions for which their government was responsible.

Finally, Douglas Kelm of the Merriam Park Community Council, sent out a letter to all identified neighborhood associations calling a meeting to consider organizing a city-wide association. Dr. Fredric Steinhauser, a past president of the St. Anthony Park Association, convened the meeting on Thursday, February 29, 1968, at the Merriam Park Community Center.

No minutes of the meeting are found in the files but, from an imperfect memory, those present were thought to be: Dalglish, Kelm, Charles Prior, David McDonald, all from Merriam Park; Joseph Holewa, director of the Merriam Park Center; Steinhauser; Pamela Jackson of the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association; Merrill Robinson of the Hamline Community Association. There may have been others.

The intent to organize was agreed upon and a second meeting was set for March 28th, at which by-laws would be developed to propose name, objectives, officers, meeting time, eligible memberships, voting rights, and a formal organizational meeting would be scheduled.

At that meeting, Dr. Steinhauser, a guiding force during the early years of the Association, was temporary chairman. Objectives of the organization were proposed as: 1. To promote effective exchange of information among St. Paul communities and between the communities and the government, public and private agencies at all levels.

2. To identify and study individual-community and city-wide problems.
3. To advise residents and community organizations on neighborhood problems of organization, planning and action.
4. To encourage resident interest and participation in responsible community organizations.
5. To act on issues and problems affecting individual communities and the city as a whole in order that the benefits of St. Paul residency might be achieved for every inhabitant of the city.

A third meeting was held on April 17, 1968 at the Riverview Library at which fifteen community organizations were represented. Details of the objectives and by-laws were refined and a formal organizational meeting was set for May 1st. It was proposed that meetings be held the first Wednesday of each month, that membership be open to all non-profit neighborhood groups in St. Paul whose main objective was over-all community improvement, that each member organization be entitled to one voting delegate and an alternate and observer, that public elected officials not be voting members.

The May 1st meeting was held at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in St. Anthony Park, at which the Association was formally organized and the by-laws adopted provisionally. First officers elected were: President, Fredric Steinhauser; 1st Vice-president, Rev. James Almqvist of the North End Community Organization; 2nd Vice-president, George W. Winter, from the Dale-Selby Action Council; Secretary, Mrs. Earl Caflisch, of the Riverview Citizens Association; Treasurer, Bernard L. O'Connor, from the Payne-Minnehaha Community Council.

Organizations represented, and their representatives were:

Community Organizations represented and their representatives:

Capitol Area Association of Neighbors
Mrs. Charlie Mae Hollins

Capitol Area Community Council
Mrs. Anne Jackson

Dale-Selby Action Council
George W. Winter

Dale-Western Improvement Association
Mrs. Violet M. Hughes

East Central Community Council
Mrs. Lorraine Reis
Robert L. Johnson

Frogtown Community Council
Kenneth F. Spielman
Ben Votel

Hemline Community Association
Merrill N. Robinson
Rev. Robert D. North

Merriam Park Community Council
Joseph D. Holewa
Douglas Kelm

Merriam Park Improvement Association
James J. Dalglish (non-voting status)

North End Community Organization
Rev. James A. Almquist

Payne-Minnehaha Community Council
Bernard L. O'Connor
Eleanor L. Edmeier
Doris E. Bibeau

Phalen Area Community Council
Rev. Thomas Payne

Riverview Citizens Association
Mrs. Marie Caflisch
Mrs. Don Appleby

St. Anthony Park Association
Fredric R. Steinhauser
Robert L. Shoffner

Summit Hill Association
John W. Greenman

Summit- University Community Federation
James Mann

West End Improvement Council
Joseph M. Buchmeier, Jack Schneider, Rev. Donald W. Sneller

At the May, 1968 meeting, the Association immediately plunged into vital issues with a presentation by Samuel H. Morgan, Chairman of the Capital Long-Range Improvement Program for St. Paul (now the CIB). The Association followed through with action directed at the State Legislature and the City Council to assure that the program would be continued. At the June meeting, Bernard Edmonds, at that time Superintendent of St. Paul Parks Department detailed the effects of the CIB on the future of those facilities.

During the summer of 1968 assistance was obtained from the Community Health and Welfare Planning Council through assignment of Arnold Solomon as Executive Secretary of the Association on a trial basis to handle correspondence, help staff committees, and advise on organization. This was discontinued after three months, by mutual consent. Although of value at the time, we felt that we needed more financing and much more professional assistance for our needs.

President Steinhauser then arranged for secretarial assistance from the University of Minnesota Department of Urban Affairs, which ended in 1969. The CHWPC continued to provide duplicating and mailing services for the Association, which again made a request for staff assistance. This was not approved until 1973, at which time more help was provided.

In 1968, Mayor Byrne sought to get the Association involved in a "Better Neighborhoods Program" for rehabilitation of housing and facilities throughout the city. The Association wished to remain independent but set up a survey committee under F.J. Alexander, Jr., which provided some exhaustive research on the issue. When it became clear that Federal funds would be available, the Association supported the program, while leaving each member organization free to seek to participate.

The Association filed Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State on December 2, 1968. In September, 1968, the regular election of officers was held and all incumbents were re-elected for a one-year term. The issue of a new city Zoning Code to replace the old code, which went back to 1922, was becoming a public concern, and Roger Ryan from the Planning Department presented some of the proposals.

As chairman of the Association Zoning Committee, Merrill Robinson was appearing frequently before the Zoning Board and the City Council, usually to oppose requested "spot" rezoning or variances from the code which might infringe on residential neighborhoods. These were burning issues in many of the neighborhoods, and continued to be until the new code was adopted in 1975. One such controversy involved the Merriam Park Community Council, which fought the issuance of five variances for an apartment development at Iglehart and Prior avenues all the way to the State Supreme Court, but lost. The Association contributed \$50.00 to the council for legal assistance.

Some we won: Industrial Supply Company sought rezoning for a location directly across from the Alexander Ramsey Home on Sherman Street, one of the most unique historical treasures. Unbelievable as it seems, the area was also being considered for NDF, a neighborhood development project. Robinson appeared before the city council for the Association and pointed out the absurdities. Action was postponed through the auspices of Mayor Byrne, and finally the proposal was killed.

When the City Council started to take up consideration of the new Zoning Code, Mayor Byrne invited Robinson to sit in while the Council was being briefed by the staff in the Planning Board office. In the middle of the first meeting the alarm was raised of a bomb scare in City Hall, and all the Council members fled. Public hearings on the Zoning Code were held throughout the city from 1973 to 1975 before its adoption, and members of many of the neighborhood associations

had a part in the final document. Before that eventuality, the Association was instrumental in getting amendments to the old code which restricted the development of some "nuisance" establishments, such as fast-food drive-ins, in neighborhoods by requiring special use permits for parking lots and forbidding exits onto residential streets.

In January 1969, Edward Kraemer of the Dayton's Bluff Community Council replaced Mrs. Cafilisch as secretary. At the annual election in October, new officers were: President, Robert North; 1st Vice-president, Bernard O'Connor; 2nd Vice-president, Maceo Moody of the Summit-University Federation, Inc.; Secretary, Edward Kraemer; Treasurer, Otto Hummer of the Highland Park Community Council; First Director, Fred Steinhauser.

Standing committees of the Association were established at that time, i.e.: Better Neighborhoods, Legislative, Schools, Human Relations, Parks-Playgrounds.

It is interesting to note that over the years a number of citizens have come from member associations which the Association helped to establish who have gone on to public office. Robert North became a State Representative and then a State Senator; Walter Hanson from the Lexington-Hamline Community Council was elected a State Representative; Leonard Levine, from the Highland Park Community Council went into the City Council, as did both Ruby Hunt and Jack Christensen from the Edgemoor Playground and Neighborhood Association. As a citizen member, Otto Hummer has been chairman of the Capital Improvements Budget Committee (CIB) and a member of the Planning Commission; Douglas Kelm has become head of the Metropolitan Transit Authority. Others have continued to be involved in civic affairs and politics, for the common good.

In 1970, officers elected were: President, Fred Steinhauser, repeating; 1st Vice-president, Maceo Moody; 2nd Vice-president Robert J. Ferderer of the Phalen Area Community Council; Secretary, John K. Rutford, of the St. Anthony Park Ass'n; and Pamela Jackson of the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association.

In 1971, officers elected were: John Rutford, President; Paul Caldwell, from the Summit-University Federation, 1st Vice-president; Rexford D. Singer, from the Hamline Community Association, 2nd Vice-president; Pamela Jackson, Secretary; Maceo Moody, Treasurer.

In 1972, officers elected were: President, George Winter; 1st Vice-president, Jack Christensen, Jr., 2nd Vice-president, Elizabeth Clark, from South St. Anthony Park Association; Secretary, John Rutford; Treasurer, Richard Kass, Battle Creek Civic Association. In November, 1972, the Association passed a resolution calling for a public hearing by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the proposed coal terminal at Pig's Eye Lake. The following year the Corps held public hearings and prepared an Environmental Impact Statement on the proposal.

In November 1973, the State Department of Natural Resources held additional public hearings, and in Feb., 1974, the State Pollution Control Agency set up public hearings on the Pig's Eye issue and named D.D. Wozniak as a hearing officer to determine whether permits should be issued for the coal terminal. The Association had gone on record opposing the terminal as destructive to a unique open space and wildlife refuge and named Merrill Robinson to represent the Association as an intervener in the case against the Port Authority and Northern State Power Co. He, and Ruth McLeod of MEOCA, attended every day of the hearings, from February into May. Marilyn Lundberg represented the League of Women Voters as an intervener, and two other groups were involved, all in opposition to the terminal. Hearings were resumed in the fall and finally in December Wozniak ruled against the terminal. Hearings were re-opened in January by the PCA and continued at times into April when the PCA finally denied the permits. Sometimes we win.

In January, 1974 the Human Resources Planning Council responded to a request of the Association for assistance of professional and secretarial staff with an agreement to provide such services. This has been of inestimable value to the Association and enabled officers to seek a better structure for the organization

The Association has been in the midst of every local issue affecting communities over the years, such as in school plans and financing, Capital Improvement Budget task force, housing rehabilitation, or citizen participation organization.

Mayor Cohen set up a select committee on Citizen Participation which met regularly for some sixteen months from 1973 into 1974. Members from the Association included John Rutford, Todd Lefco, George Winter and Merrill Robinson. The City Council, which received the final report, seemed to feel that some of their authority was threatened, filed the report and forgot it.

In January 1975 the City Council was forced to recognize the need for citizen participation as a requirement for obtaining Community Development Revenue Sharing funds from the Federal Government, so acquiesced when an Ad Hoc Committee of Citizen Participation was formed. This citizens Forum was well-represented by neighborhood organization members from throughout the city. Regular meetings of the Forum and of four sub-committees continued from January through October and came up with many of the same conclusions as the City Council as had the earlier Mayor's committee. Some permanent good came out of the effort, namely the establishment of seventeen General Planning Community Development Districts, an "early warning" system to notify communities of proposals by city agencies that might affect them, and funding of the district councils for help from city staff and with printing and mailing costs.

In 1974, Todd Lefco was elected president of the Association. Elizabeth Clark, 1st Vice-president; Logene Treichel, from the Lexington-Hamline Community Council, 2nd Vice-president; Charles Prior from Merriam Park Community Council, Treasurer; and John Rutford, Secretary.

Barbara Boulger succeeded Rutford, and Ruth Dixon succeeded her as President.

Some of the notable activities of the past year were: the full page ad to the city council detailing the flaws in the process of involving citizens in the Community Development Revenue Sharing Program; the leadership training seminar at Luther Seminary; and earlier, the overnight Retreat and Conference at the Y.M.C.A. Camp at Hudson, Wisconsin.

Mention should be made of the invaluable service we have received from Anne Conley and from Dennis Dorgan, far beyond the call of duty, and of the benefits the Association has received from the Human Resources Planning Council and from the Community Planning Organization.

Respectfully,

Merrill Robinson