



Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play
www.giffordparkomaha.org

November 2012

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

The Ups and Downs of Dealing with OPS

Editorial by Mike Caban

About a month ago we received news that OPS had a plan in the works to restore Yates School to a fully functioning 2-6 grade school around the 2014-15 school year. Needless to say, this news brought a welcomed ray of hope to those of us who have been working with OPS to do just that since they closed Yates in 1998. Of course, there were no guarantees, and of course we had been down that road before, and suffered disappointments a plenty in our efforts to keep the school open as an elementary school going back to the 1980's.

I've lost count of the numbers of meetings that I've been involved in, with past and present administrators and superintendents, in our attempt to keep that school open, and even after they shut the doors and bussed our kids out to a dozen different schools, or had them walk that dangerous gauntlet to Kellom, we have kept trying to work with OPS... hoping that they would see that as a community, we have done everything in our power to demonstrate a good will effort, and concern for the well being of our neighborhood children.

So, ever since we received that hopeful news a month ago, we've been giddy with anticipation... until today. Today we received information that the plan to re-open Yates has been scrapped. In conversation with our OPS contact, we floated several scenarios that could possibly work for our neighborhood, if it was impossible for Yates to be re-opened. One of those scenarios was the old Tech High School/TAC building. Of course, that building would be able to accommodate not only K-6 grades. It would most likely be able to have pre-K through 8th grades. Of course, that was out of the question, because where would all those OPS offices and administrators go? Personally, my response to that is the same response we've been getting from OPS about our kids, in so many words... I don't give a hoot where they go!

Something else said during conversations with OPS...

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**Next General Meeting
Thursday, November 8
Officer Elections**

**7:00 pm
Morrison Seminar Room
Creighton University Medical Center**

2013 Officers, Board Nominees Announced

By Luther Larson, GPNA President

The GPNA Nomination Committee will present the following slate of officers and board members for the GPNA in 2013. Voting will take place at the November 8th general meeting. Please plan to attend since a quorum will be necessary for passage of this slate.

OFFICERS

President: Eric Purcell
VP: Travis Lavender
Treasurer: Dana Carlton-Flint
Secretary: Jill Westfall

At-large: Ricky Green
At-large: Mark Trampe
At-large: Darryl Hutton
Business Representative: Martin Janousek
Landlord Representative: Chris Foster

I would like to thank all the nominees above for volunteering their time and leadership to helping our neighborhood develop into Omaha's best place to live, work, learn and play.

2012 GPNA OFFICERS

President

Luther Larson
330-3286

Vice President

Jeff Spiehs
457-9979

Secretary

Jill Westfall
213-3105

Treasurer

Dana Carlton-Flint
346-4575

Board Members

At Large

Darryl Hutton 706-7597
Travis Lavender 605-321-8142
Eric Purcell 719-5108

Business

Martin Janousek 558-4070

Landlord

Chris Foster 290-8187

COMMITTEES

Community Garden

Chris Foster 290-8187

Membership

Travis Lavender 605-321-8142

Neighborhood Market

Martin Janousek 558-4070

Newsletter

Jill Westfall 213-3105

Newsletter Distribution

Chris Foster 290-8187

Park

Sandy & Roger Freeman
345-2668

Pubic Relations

Dana Carlton-Flint 346-4575

Spring Clean-up

Jeff Spiehs 457-9979

Neighborhood Watch

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

From the President

By Luther Larson

As my two year term as president of GPNA comes to an end I would like thank you, the members and residents of GPNA that have helped make Gifford Park a better place. There are so many of you that have committed your time and resources to improve Gifford Park that I am not going to mention you by name in fear that I will miss someone. Maybe the most visible changes have been in our park, the playground, benches, trash containers, bike racks (including the bike rack art sculpture) and planting of shrubs. Thanks to the many of you that have helped in this park transformation. In addition I have noticed new shops in the business district, less graffiti and many improvements to homes throughout the neighborhood.

Even with all these great strides in the right direction, there is still lots of room for additional improvements. What do you think should be the next improvement that GPNA should undertake? What is your priority? GPNA wants your input. Please make an effort to attend our next GPNA general meeting where the focus will be on you and what you want for the neighborhood. Looking forward to seeing you on Thursday.

GPNA Needs Your Ideas

By Martin Janousek

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Board would like to hear your ideas or suggestions. Every year around this time the GPNA Board starts to think about projects or activities for the upcoming year and the grants that are available to possibly fund them. Omaha is very fortunate to have generous foundations, businesses, and city Mayors over the years that have seen the benefit in helping neighborhoods find financial resources such as grants to fund or supplement projects. They understand what strong and vibrant neighborhoods can do for a city such as Omaha.

This year the GPNA Board would like to hear from you. In the past, the GPNA Board has had plenty of “to do” items on their list, between community gardens, youth activities and numerous other projects there was always something going on that there didn’t seem a need to ask . However, this year the GPNA Board thought maybe they should ask the question, “So, what would you like us to write a grant for this year?” If you have an answer to this question please attend the next neighborhood meeting on November 8th at 7:00pm at the Alegent-Creighton Medical Center in the Morrison Seminar Room across from the Cafeteria.

The GPNA Board has already received a couple ideas such as funding the continuation of the security lighting around the neighborhood, as mentioned in past neighborhood newsletters. Along with a request to improve the ball field in the park and add adult exercise equipment. These are but a couple ideas so far, so put your thinking caps on and the GPNA Board would really enjoy hearing from you at the next meeting. Even if you don’t have any new ideas please attend and listen to what others may have as grant opportunities for the neighborhood.

Editor’s note: If you have news of interest to the Gifford Park Neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for the monthly newsletter. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board. Please include your contact information. Articles may be submitted by email to jill.lynn.westfall@gmail.com.

Weaker Alcohol Ordinance Passes

By Margie Magnuson, Chris Foster

Alcohol Impact Coalition and LOCAL Campaign

On September 25, the city council voted to throw out the city's original alcohol ordinance asking for a three-pronged approach to address problems associated with alcohol-selling businesses. What they did pass was a weaker amendment by Councilman Pete Festersen to implement just the operational standards for all alcohol businesses, but the original language of the operational standards that the neighbors agreed to was changed and never brought to light. Those changes are highlighted below. Of all the organizations in Omaha, we were especially surprised and disappointed the Omaha Chamber of Commerce actively fought against the ordinance, even providing misinformation publically.

While some are calling the vote for the operational standards a victory, to some of us it felt like a hollow victory. Yes, we do have some operational standards and a business's certificate of occupancy can be taken away if declared a nuisance, but no money (original proposal included \$75/year fee for businesses selling alcohol) for city personnel to provide enforcement. Instead the adopted weaker ordinance puts "enforcement" back on the backs of the neighborhoods and the planning department. Those neighbors who have had personal experience working to correct a problem business or protesting a liquor license all the way through the state system understand we needed so much more from our city on this issue than they were willing to give to our neighborhoods. So this means our work is not done; we need to stay involved to make sure the city does follow through in enforcing these nuisance standards.

Changes made to the operational standards in Councilman Pete Festersen's amendment:

- In the first standard, the word "demonstrable" was added before the phrase, "operations and activities of the business shall not result in adverse effects to the health, peace, or safety of persons residing in, working in or using the surrounding area." By adding that word does that mean neighborhoods will be required to provide data outlining the adverse effects caused by a poorly run business?



What is that proof- official police reports that shots were fired, fights took place, noise was reported late at night? Will they take a call from a neighborhood president who tells them they have gotten complaints or will they need us to produce official documented proof?

- The list of nuisance activities that were removed were: public drunkenness, illegal parking, police detention and arrests. Why? One of the comments we heard from folks when we were out talking about this ordinance was that police do nothing about drunk persons even if a business calls 911. We assured them we were trying to get language to address this concern. We acknowledge that there's no state law that prohibits public drunkenness, which the city was willing, through this ordinance, to address this chronic issue by including public drunkenness as a nuisance. Why take out police detentions and arrests- wouldn't we want police calls (like neighbors complained about for months at Silhouettes on south 16th street) to be part of the nuisances the council could take action on?
- Removed all of #4 which had the language requiring businesses to comply with city, state or federal laws, regulations or orders, as well as any condition imposed on any permits issued pursuant to applicable laws, regulations or orders, including payment of any city business taxes and fees. Again, why? Many years ago, we fought a liquor business owner who did not pay their property taxes, scammed the federal government to obtain small business loans, but wanted to continue to sell liquor in our city. Shouldn't we expect all business owners to abide by the law?

The Ups and Downs of Dealing with OPS

Continued from page 1

“It’s always a few people talking to OPS from the neighborhood association, and most of you don’t have children.”

There are over 400 children of school age in the Yates attendance area... how many of these parents do you want to see, and hear from? Especially when they learn that one of the reasons OPS has a problem with us having our local school, comes straight from OPS Administrator Dr. Thomas Harvey’s mouth, at our last meeting, back in October 2011... He said something to the effect that one of their concerns was that bringing all these children back here to their neighborhood school would throw off balance the socio-economic diversity that they have established in the schools these children are attending now.

So, we had a school that from the beginning was one of only two schools in OPS exempt from the court ordered

GPNA Leaders Call for Neighborhood School

The last year that Gifford Park had a public neighborhood school was the 1998-1999 school year. There were 205 K-1 and 4-6 students enrolled that school year (Grade 2-3 were enrolled at Kellom). In 2010-2011 there were 394 K-6 students living within the Yates boundary (40th to I-480, Cuming to Dodge). Of those 394 students, 149 were enrolled at Kellom Elementary. The other 245 were bussed to other schools outside of our neighborhood.* Though we don’t have numbers from OPS for the 2011-2012 or current school years, not a whole lot has changed from 2010 so the numbers are probably very similar.

Why doesn’t Gifford Park have a neighborhood school today? Why did OPS close down Yates in the first place? The two answers most often given are: Yates is too small to accommodate all of the students, and it would be too expensive to renovate Yates or build a new school.

I understand those two reasons. They are very real and pragmatic; but it seems that finance is king. No issue is ever simple and I’m sure there is more involved, but is this sufficient reason to deprive Gifford Park-and the nearly 400 students who live here-of a neighborhood school? Must we bus our kids all over Omaha?

Our neighborhood has had its share of trials in the last 25 years. Today Gifford Park has begun to reemerge as a

bussing because our attendance area has traditionally been a model of diversity, and you close this school and bus our children to other schools, and in doing so you create a socio/economic balance in those schools, and that is one of the reasons you are reluctant to allow us to have our neighborhood school? Because it’ll affect the balance at “those” schools?!!! Give me a break!

Folks, parents, concerned neighbors, I got used to being jerked around by OPS a long time ago. I continue being involved in this issue because I care about our kids... and our families... and our neighborhood. There are several of us doing all we can to restore our neighborhood school to what it once was and will be again, a great school. Here, in our neighborhood. Are you with us?



vibrant, safe, diverse and promising inner city neighborhood. But there is one very important thing that Gifford Park lacks. It is one of the first things that any young family looks for when considering purchasing a home in our neighborhood. A good school. The long term health and sustainability of Gifford Park continues to hang in the balance without one!

Perhaps most of us are unaware that there is even the possibility of a school within walking distance for our neighborhood. As recently as October there were talks within OPS to bring Yates back as a neighborhood school, but with the abandonment of the Kellom/Conestoga school changes, Yates has also been indefinitely tabled. The fact of the matter remains that Gifford Park needs an elementary school AND it is not unimaginable that we have one!

What will it take for our neighborhood to once again have a public school within our boundaries? I’m not sure, but it certainly won’t happen if we do not speak with a LOUD and UNITED voice. Several of us in the neighborhood would like to find out if there is a voice and what it would take to unite it. If you’re interested in this conversation, please contact one of us.

Eric Purcell
eric.purcell@crmladers.org

Mike Caban
caban3321@cox.net

Travis Lavender
travis@incommoncd.org

Chris Foster
foster3413@cox.net

*OPS Yates Elementary Report 10.25.11

Bounce Event by Flatland Church

The Bounce event on Sunday afternoon October 21 in Gifford Park was enjoyed by many neighborhood families, and the weather was perfect with temperatures in the 70's. This free event was organized by Flatland Church, it featured inflatable rides, carnival games, hot dogs and other fun activities. Flatland Church also hosted a neighborhood gathering Saturday September 15 morning in Gifford Park by the new playground equipment. They provided free pastries & coffee (5 different flavors!) from Delice European Bakery. During the past year Flatland Church members have volunteered at several of our neighborhood events.



Turning on the Neighborhood Lights

by *Martin Janousek*

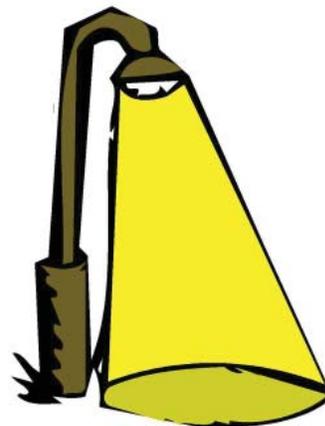
As mentioned in the last couple newsletter articles, our funding for the lights is coming to an end. With that being said, some of the Neighborhood Security Lights have since been adopted. Over the last couple weeks since our first article, the Gifford Park neighborhood was fortunate to have two neighborhood residents donate money for two of the 13 lights. Eva Swanson and Mike Caban, two longtime neighborhood residents read the first article and wanted to help. Their donations will help to keep two of the lights on for another year. A BIG THANK YOU goes out to them for their generosity and love for our neighborhood.

Also, just hours before the newsletter editor pressed print, the GPNA Board heard from the Omaha Parks Department and they are planning to take over the responsibility of the six lights that were added in the park. Another BIG THANK YOU goes out to the Omaha Parks Department, Brook Bench, and Pat Slaven

All 13 of these lights are on public property such as the park or down alleys. They've helped to keep mischief down, a dark corner lighted, and based on our feedback from the Northeast Precinct Captain, our police calls went down along with other crimes right after the lights went up 3 years ago. If you're fortunate to have one of these lights near your home

please consider adopting a light for a year, the cost is \$18.00 month. However, at the same time, let the GPNA Board know or better yet let the police know if things (mischief) change when one of these lights near your home or around the neighborhood gets turned off. With or without lights, we should all be good citizens and

continue to look after our neighbors and keep Gifford Park safe for everyone.



A SPOOKY TIME IN GIFFORD PARK

Even with cool temperatures in the 40's an enthusiastic crowd of neighborhood children and families enjoyed this year's 18th Annual 3100 Chicago Street Halloween Haunted House. The event, held Friday October 26th, started at 6 pm for 10 years old and under, then got scarier starting at 6:30 pm for any ages who dared enter. Those who made it through got treats in the Coach House at the end. The 3100 Chicago Street residents and the Creighton Delta Zeta Sorority organized a Fantastic, Fun, Freaky, Frightful, Festive, Fall, Food-Filled event for the neighborhood. With all the volunteers, including some from GPNA, we had over 100 (different) kids go through the house with some going through more than once! Again this year the Delta Zetas did face-painting outside as kids waited in line, and the sorority did a ton of baking donating lots of Halloween cookies and cupcakes. They also guided kids through the house to keep everyone in line! Many thanks to the 3100 Chicago Street residents, and Nicole Huynh leading the Delta Zeta Sorority volunteer effort. We also had great help from GPNA members who either volunteered and/or donated items and treats: Jan Franks, Brittany Rubek, Zach Rubek, Betty Slayden, Tyffaney Slayden, Bob Hutton, Tyler White, Quannie Nance, Chris & Sallie Foster, Mike Caban, Jim Wilwerding, Diane Kaye. Thanks again for everyone's help!



Community Garden Fall Cleanup

by Chris Foster

Fine fall weather provided great working conditions for our fall cleanup day Saturday October 20 in the community garden. Volunteers cleared plants from their family plots and youth garden plots, weeded, organized plant cages/fencing, and completed other tasks in preparation for “putting the garden to bed.” We provided coffee, orange juice, donuts, cinnamon rolls, bagels, and pumpkins (one per family) for volunteers. WOWT Channel 6 News did a very nice story on our garden cleanup. Thanks to our cleanup volunteers: Mike Caban, Carlson family (Rose, Elena, Luci, Maria), Cynthia Shuck, Ricky Green, Evan Johnson, Matt Cronin (Big Muddy Urban Farm), Jonathon & Colleen Keller, Stanley family (Dawn, Crystal, Justine, Witney, Rachel, Junior), Jackie Foster, Chris & Sallie Foster, Manzo family (Francisco & Blanca, Ari, Emily, Jasmin), Purcell family (Eric, Brendon), Alonzo Parker, Jayden Story, Luis Mejorado Sanchez, St. Baptiste family (Orlane, Dave, Nia), Liberty family (Mary, David, Tyler), and Rebecca Cashman (and her 13-day old son Abram).

Again this year thanks to Bob Hutton for “winterizing” our water supplies and backflow preventer in the community garden - this ensures water lines are free of water and pipes won't break. Contact Mike Caban ([402-341-4722](tel:402-341-4722), caban3321@cox.net) for garden plot information, and Chris Foster ([402-290-8187](tel:402-290-8187), foster3413@cox.net) for any other community garden questions.

Community garden and Youth Garden volunteer Betsy Goodman is available to share her expertise with gardeners on “the art of seed saving”, disease control, cleaning seeds, and how to properly label seeds. Please call Betsy at [402-321-1806](tel:402-321-1806) or email at betsy4589@gmail.com for more information.

Our Gifford Park Community Garden had a display booth at the Food Day Omaha event Sunday, October 21, at Aksarben Village. Our booth featured picture boards of community garden and youth garden activities and other Gifford Park neighborhood information. Thanks Ricky Green for helping!





Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
PO Box 31462
Omaha, NE 68131

Place
Stamp
Here

Bicycle Sculpture and Park Plantings

Many thanks to Mayor's Grant for funding and Heartland Outdoor Services for installing the new bicycle sculpture created by Jamie Brumiester and concrete pad located at the northeast corner of Gifford Park. Also thanks to volunteers for planting and mulching lots of shrubs, roses and perennials around the sculpture and between the tennis courts and baseball diamond area – these will look beautiful next spring and summer. Volunteers included Diane Kaye, Max Kaye, Jeffrey Foster, Darryl Hutton, Bob Hutton, Stanley family (Dawn, Crystal, Justine, Witney, Rachel, Junior), Ricky Green, Roger & Sandy Freeman, Chris Foster, and Luis Mejorado Sanchez, Random Goines, Juan Salazar, Alonzo Parker, St. Baptiste family (Orlane, David, Nia) other neighborhood youth volunteers.



With new ownership at Creighton University Medical Center, we're waiting to hear if they will continue to host our annual members-only Holiday Banquet. Stay tuned for details in the next edition of the newsletter!

