



Downtown Area Neighborhood Alliance
Riverside, California

Downtown Area Neighborhood Alliance Meeting Minutes

Izaak Walton Club, Fairmount Park
Monday, March 17, 2008
7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

Attendees (per sign-in sheet):

Pat Stewart, Arlen Appleford, Molly Dougherty, Phil Neglia, Damon Castillo, Nancy Sturmer, Mike Gardner, Lynn Anderson, Bonnie Reynolds, Janet Gilmore, Jane Block, Tom Donahue, Joan Donahue, Darren Olsen, Keith Alex, Chani Beeman, Heather Troxel, Jack Larsen, Janice Penner, Patty Dean, Jennifer Gamble, Kim Hodges, Nicki Sands, Tina Lang, Frances Fernandes, Dorette Petersen, Lisa Diggs, Jean Wong.

1. Meeting called to order by DANA Chair Chani Beeman at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2008.

- ✓ Motion to approve minutes
M/S/V: Alex/J. Larsen/Carried

3. Councilman's Report—Mike Gardner

Councilman Gardner reported on some issues that he's currently working on:

- Fairmount Park: the walkway around the park is nearing completion, restriping of the lanes is on the agenda, and the dredging continues.
- Downtown parking: The survey is finished, and the data analysis is ongoing. Mike will report the findings to the Parking Committee. Some of the questions asked in the survey – should there be paid parking downtown, and if so, in what areas and using which type of meters?
- Museum/library expansion: A blue ribbon committee, chaired by Judge Fields, is being formed to study the museum/library expansion, and Mike would like the group to finish its work in 90 days. Damon Castillo and Tom

There were several questions for Mike on the following issues:

- Post Office parking problems: Mike says that post office parking has been affected by ongoing construction projects, and that post office customers are being squeezed out by non-customers infringing on the spaces.
- Appearance/maintenance of Pine Center: Mike promised to contact the owner regarding the weeds, broken glass, and overall appearance of the center.
- Fox Theatre: The theatre restoration is on schedule, with opening planned for the third quarter of 2009. Possibility of getting a new pipe organ, and the fish fountain needs to be renovated.
- “Dog Park”/Rubidoux Bridge area: Carlson Park will reopen in June, though not all work will be completed at that time. The Raincross balustrade wall is scheduled for repair, as well as the neon “Riverside” sign.
- Mt. Rubidoux: Boulders that have been damaged by graffiti will be sandblasted, though there’s some concern that the sandblasting could itself be harmful to the boulders. Several benches have been acquired for installation, but the Friends of Mt. Rubidoux aren’t sure that all are necessarily needed.
- Tequesquite Park: The task force (with a new round of public meetings) will be reconstituted to look at the architect’s plans; if TF approves, plans go to city council for final approval. The park could possibly be ready in 2009.
- Downtown Mall: Mike feels this project should go slow to make sure everything goes well, given some of the infrastructure/plumbing problems most likely lurking under the concrete. Working on 10th Street/University this year, 5th/University next year.
- Festival of Lights: Not all vendors were available during the weeknights, even though there were LOTS of people on the mall enjoying the Mission Inn displays. Janice Penner said vendors pay large fees – several thousand dollars each – to participate and can’t justify the cost of setting up/staffing booths each night. Mike said there’s a need to “tweak” the type of vendors to better match customer needs – too many high-end gift items, not enough hot chocolate and horse carriages.

4. **Friends of Fairmount/Bubbling Wells Community Walk—Chani Beeman**

A few members of the Friends of Fairmount were in attendance, and expressed some concern about the planned DANA neighborhood walk, wondering about the intent and purpose of the walk. Chani explained that the walks are done for community engagement and for problem solving; representatives from RPD, code enforcement, public works, etc. usually accompany DANA members, and in the past have been helpful in identifying public safety or other issues in a neighborhood. Given the residents’ concerns, however, it was agreed to postpone the Bubbling Wells walk and reschedule for a later date, with input from residents.

Keith Alex stated that the purpose of the walks was to meet neighbors, inform people about DANA meetings, and show support for downtown residents.

Pat Stewart took particular exception to the comments made about Friends of Fairmount in the February meeting minutes, which described a meeting of the group in what she felt were inaccurate, overly negative terms. Pat was offended by the

comments and asked that they be struck from the record; Secretary Molly Dougherty explained that the minutes are a record of the events/comments that transpire at a meeting, and since those comments had been made by two DANA members who had attended a Friends of Fairmount meeting and were an accurate record of their statements and impressions, that they could not be struck or changed, though the March minutes would reflect Pat's objection to them.

Chani explained that the history of DANA included an early period in which meetings were dominated by anger, negativity, and a focus on the homeless issue. Pat stated that F.O.F. is not to be considered a sub-group of DANA.

It was decided that this month's neighborhood walk would take place in the White Park/Chestnut area.

5. Riverside Police Department—Sgt. Phil Neglia

Sgt. Neglia reported on several news/issues encountered by the police in the last month:

- Crime statistics in the area are down.
- Church feedings of the homeless in Fairmount Park have started again, with the expected jump in the presence of homeless in the park. Phil said the PD can assist the health department if they need to cite the groups for lack of safety in food preparation, etc.
- Overnight campers have not been found in the park, contrary to reports, but PD will stay on the lookout for encampments.
- Dogs at the park must be under physical human control, not tied to a bike or a barbecue.
- PD has been increasing its presence at the downtown library, with more homeless people hanging out during the day and then laying out their bedrolls at night.
- An arrest was made in connection with a rash of vehicle burglaries at the base of Mt. Rubidoux.
- There's been an increase in tagging on signs, sidewalk corners, etc.

6. Treasurer's Report—Heather Troxel

Heather reported on the great success of the rose garden planting – two full weekends with lots of volunteers, including a group of high school students, planting more than 700 rose bushes.

The Rose Society and other groups have contacted Heather and Park & Rec, wanting to be involved in the rose garden again – maintenance, tutorials, rose pruning clinics, etc. Heather said Ralph Nunez has nominated DANA for a special state Park & Rec award, and there will be a write-up about it in the Park & Rec bimonthly newsletter.

Jack Larsen acknowledged Heather's huge dedication to the project, and that none of it would have happened without her. Big round of applause for Heather!

7. News/Issues Roundtable—Chani Beeman

- Possible Grant School closure: Chani circulated letters from local residents opposing the possible closure of Grant School. The school district is

- Pat Stewart was asked if she'd like to make a comment about or on behalf of Friends of Fairmount, but she declined, saying that instead she would like the DANA members who attended the F.O.F. meeting to comment. Keith restated his feelings that the first F.O.F. meeting that he attended was contentious and negative; Pat disagreed strongly and expressed her anger and frustration at the way the group was being characterized.
- Jane Block reported that the Riverside Land Conservancy purchased wetlands acreage with a grant from the Wildlife Conservancy; this parcel would be joined with that purchased by the city to conserve the land as a wetlands area. Four parcels are remaining.
- Jack Larsen asked if the money given to Pete Kallinger for a wildflower seed fund could be returned to the DANA account for other uses; Heather will contact Pete about the funds.

Adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Molly Dougherty, DANA Secretary**