



**Willow Glen Business Association
Board Meeting**

Minutes of Tuesday, June 23, 2015 • 8:00 am

Willow Glen Community and Senior Center-2175 Lincoln Avenue, SJ, 95125

Present: Tim Mulcahy, Lynne Rovai, Tom Trudell, Emilie Highley, Gregory Hom, Robert Hernandez, Linda Ruiz, Angela Simas, Chris Bertucelli, Steve Rubino, Julie Painchaud, Scarlet Myers, Henry Flynn, Arlene Zarou-Cooperman, Valerie Merklin (WGBA Executive Director), Scott Hunter (WGBA Business Development Manager)

Absent: Sharlene Pala, Greg Barr

Call to Order

1. **Approval of May Minutes: Emilie Highley, motion to approve. Lynn Rovai, seconded.**

Motion passed.

2. **Treasurer's Report:**

- **Approval of Financial Report: Lynn Rovai, made motion to approve the financial report, Henry Flynn seconded. Motion passed.**
- DOTA: Beverage ticket sales were up, final financial summary is pending
- WGBA is still running in the black for FY14-15

3. **Road Diet Presentation:** Jim Ortbal from the Department of Transportation has been working with the Road Diet Working Group to conduct a road diet trial on Lincoln Avenue to improve safety for pedestrians and drivers and incorporate bike lanes on Lincoln Avenue. The WGBA and WGNA were asked to give recommendations about the project and we are currently trying to work through the process.

- What has been done: The DOT did data collection and conducted a few community meetings. The DOT is looking for feedback from the WGBA and WGNA in order to conduct the final analysis of this process and, if the WGBA and WGNA are in favor of making it permanent, prepare to take it to the September council meeting. The final paving process will take place in October. The paving work will happen at night to lessen the impact of the traffic.
- What has been identified as a problem that needs to be fixed: Most significant concerns include the congestion at Lincoln, Willow and Minnesota and concern about traffic on the remaining side streets. DOT now has funding available from the new fiscal year budget for FY15-16 to make a change to the signal at Willow and Lincoln; however, this modification would improve traffic flow only if it remains as the current 2-lane configuration.

- Additional modifications will include adjustments at the parking garage at Willow and Lincoln to increase traffic flow. Also WG Elementary School has requested that DOT eliminate the two turn lanes from Lincoln to Minnesota to help with school drop off and pick up.

Question/Answer Session with Jim Ortbal, open to board:

Lynne Rovai: What about the traffic stop up at Coe and Lincoln?

Jim Ortbal: We may need to adjust the lane so that it merges north of that intersection.

Lynne Rovai: Is the neighborhood association still in the equation to make a recommendation?

Jim: They sent a letter that indicated that they may or may not take a position.

Gregory Hom: Is WGNA going to take a position?

Chris Roth: We have received some historic perspective and context regarding the by laws which may make a difference in how we precede.

Gregory Hom: Our understanding is that a yes vote means the council moves forward and a no vote means we go back to four lanes.

Jim Ortbal: That is not the specific understanding that I have. Our process is to evaluate the situation. If this situation has clear, strong opposition then we will not take this to the council.

Gregory Hom: Our perception is that if we vote no this goes no further. I just want to make this issue clear and make sure there are no loopholes.

Jim Ortbal: This board (WGBA) needs to take whatever action it will and let us know.

Lynne Rovai: Our understanding is that the DOT wanted the decision by June 30th originally.

Henry Flynn: We are moving ahead with any other unanswered questions.

Steve Rubino: Still have questions about the parking situation, the walkers, the cyclists.

Chris Bertucelli: When this first happened, as a business owner, I asked folks to give it a chance. But my business is down, as are other businesses and my responsibility is to represent the businesses.

Angela Simas: The businesses do come first and we want to support the downtown community.

Robert Hernandez: When the road diet was announced I liked the idea due to the school in the area. I did the website for the Road Diet and responded to the community.

Gregory Hom: I was very reluctant to support the RD because I live on Settle Avenue and thought the RD would affect the traffic on my street. It actually hasn't made a discernible difference however after reading the WGBA bylaws statement it is clear that we are responsible for the success and vitality of the business district. Also, safety is a factor and we have had more accidents.

Linda Ruiz: I have been on the avenue for 32 years (business owner) and heard lots of discussion about this RD. I asked people to go into this with an open mind.

Julie Painchaud: My business has been impacted, the banks and Bev Mo have told me that they are impacted. This is the first year that my business has not had an increase.

Emilie Highley: I live in WG and we spend lots of time here and feel that the road is safer however we do not want to compromise the business district.

Tom Trudell: We got the ball rolling because there is a safety issue. The traffic will not be less if we go back.

Lynne Rovai: I don't think we need to wait a month to make a decision while our business continues to be down. Business is down for the majority of businesses.

Scarlett Myers: I have worked in WG for 27 years, and seen a lot of changes. Delivery trucks are parking the middle lane but that is a SJPD issue which is not being handled.

Tim Mulcahy: We need to keep in mind that we are making a decision for the entire community. The DOT report was promising and so I had hoped we would make a decision to go further. 90 days is not enough time to make a comprehensive study. We should be looking to spend more time following up with the Dept. of Economic Development.

Only 37% of the WGBA responded to the survey but 50% of the businesses who responded said their business is down. Results are based upon a minority.

Henry Flynn: We should recognize Tom Trudell for the work he has done as the representative for the Road Diet Committee. This was a trial.

Linda Ruiz: Willow Street is going to be problematic no matter what.

Angela Simas: (In response to information about other Road Trials): We cannot compare our RD to others in other parts of the county, we are not those cities.

Gregory Hom: We have to support our anchor stores.

Lynne Rovai: Let's not go back to the 80s when downtown WG was a ghost town.

Tim Mulcahy: It has felt safer and the traffic has calmed.

Henry Flynn: Whatever decision is made we will be moving forward. Get involved with the WGBA and think about your fiduciary responsibility to our community.

Question/Answer/Comments during Community Time:

Leeta Rose Ballister, WG Resident newspaper: I just want to be clear that if this board votes no this process does not go further.

Jim Ortbal: We will make no recommendation if there is a lot of opposition.

Margaret Neighbors: I am disappointed that the council member has relinquished control of this process. If we undue this RD, what possibility do we have if we continue to have road safety issues?

Martha Lazarakis: The Board Chair needs to be impartial. The DOT report did not show economic effects, revenues are down, there is a bias being shown in the RD task force. The traffic figures are going to move. In WG we are landlocked.

Mike Gaines: Business owner.

Jim Dumas: Business owner. I have seen an accident in the bike lane. The bike lane is in the worst possible place that it could be. We should return to four lanes.

Pierluigi Oliverio, Councilman: If we reject this then we will no longer have recourse to fixing the traffic issues on Lincoln Avenue and the neighborhood streets.

(Pierluigi had to go to a closed session of a union negotiation with the PD.)

Ed Rath: I support the RD but worry about the future possible traffic issues.

Richard Zappelli: Question about safety at River Glen Elementary and whether or not the DOT will address this.

Jim Ortbal: I cannot address this issue at this time.

Chris Kouretas: Owner of John's XLNT Foods. We were rooting for the RD but after two weeks with the backlash by customers and an obvious drop in business, we are no longer in favor. Surprisingly the customers are not as loyal as you would think and if they are impacted they will find another place to go.

Janice Ribbins: Seen lots of changes and I have been frustrated because I can't travel in WG the way I have in the past. WG is a unique community and the RD does not work in this community.

Karen Stevens: The RD has affected the businesses all over the community, not just those on the avenue.

Jerry Ganz: There is an increase in pain and suffering traveling down Lincoln. More Police presence is needed for the safety and speeding issues.

Bernie Levine: I have been on Lincoln Avenue in business for 43 years. We did want to slow down traffic, loved the idea of the RD and would have liked to see the process spend more time working on the issues, ie: add more parking.

Michael Mulcahy: As a property and business owner, I think we could have leveraged these issues and should take more time to make a decision with input from the City of SJ Department of Economic Development.

Phyllis Rennie: Business owner of Sewbedazzled. One customer crossed the bike lane into the driveway a little too soon and got a ticket.

Gary Rovai: Percentages don't factor in; lots of folks have been voted into office with smaller percentages (than what responded to the WGBA survey).

Intern with Oliverio's office: Announcement of the event on July 19th at Willow Street Park, Opera in the Park with Opera San Jose.

Allen Rice: No comment.

Chris Roth: WGNA did a survey with 1100 respondents, slightly over 50% voted to keep, 49% to go back. Numbers are very close from the community for and against.

Robyn Levine: Pedestrian numbers were in conflict; businesses say the numbers are down but the DOT report said the numbers were up. It seems that the issues with bike lanes are being pushed from a special interest group.

Continue with Board Process:

Valerie Merklin: I am going to clarify the process for today. We never could have foreseen that so many businesses would report lower revenue and attribute it to the road diet. We still have the option of having the Director of Economic Development come in to speak with you about this issue. Unfortunately she was not available for this meeting but she could come in July.

Henry Flynn: MOTION: I would like to make a motion to postpone the vote from today to consider inviting the Dept. of Economic Development to consult with us in the next few weeks. Scarlet Myers seconded the motion.

Motion did not pass.

The board then conducted a vote by paper ballot to determine the WGBA's recommendation to the DOT regarding the Road Diet.

Robert Hernandez collected the votes for recommendation of the Road Diet.

Meeting adjourned: 10am.

Follow Up Information after the meeting was adjourned:

The executive committee of the board reviewed all fourteen ballots submitted.

Outcome of the vote: 10 votes to recommend that the DOT not move forward with the Road Diet, 4 votes to recommend that we move ahead with the Road Diet.

Final Recommendation to DOT: Do not move ahead with permanent Road Diet implementation.

Minutes Submitted by: Arlene Zarou-Cooperman