

**Next SSCO Safety Committee meeting:
Thursday, February 26, at 6:00 p.m.
Loring Nicollet Center, 1925 Nicollet Ave
For more information, visit www.sscoweb.org or call (612) 874-2840.**

**SSCO SAFETY COMMITTEE
Notes from the meeting of January 22, 2009, at 1925 Nicollet Ave.**

PRESENT Michele McGaughey and Ken Strobel, co-chairs; Jean Schwalen, Hennepin County Community Probation; Czaw Vah and Kou Vang, Minneapolis Police 5th Precinct; Lisa Godon, City Attorney's office; Taryn Runck, Restorative Justice Community Action; Molly McCarthy, Stevens Supportive Housing; Ronald Staff, Stevens House; Rob Helmerichs, Rand Management; John Martin, UPi Property Management; John Ryser, Charles Rosensteel, Bonnie Bona, Howard Penas, Jennifer Bader, Judy Austin, Laura Jean, Sue Crockett, David Crockett, Jerry Paulson, Don Davis, Melinda Langer, Arlene Storandt, Robert Fischer, Eddie Chambers, and SSCO safety coordinator Dave Delvoye

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Council Member Lilligren and Crime Prevention Specialist Adams were unable to attend the meeting.
- Fancy Pants Ball, a fundraiser for SSCO, February 21, 7 to 11 p.m. Tickets are available - \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door – and volunteers are needed; call 874-2840.
- Donations of “good stuff” are wanted for the 6th annual rummage sale, a fundraiser for SSCO, set for April 18 & 19 at the Van Dusen Event Center, 1900 LaSalle Ave. All donations are tax deductible; call 874-2840.

MINNEAPOLIS POLICE REPORT – Officers Czaw Vah and Kou Vang

Strobel welcomed our new Stevens Square-Whittier night beat officers to the neighborhood. Czaw (pronounced “Zach”) Vah and Kou Vang introduced themselves. Vah said that they had just started patrolling the beat this month and that Sgt Downing and Officer Killebrew had worked it last year. In response to a question, he said that they haven't encountered many frequent offenders because the weather's been cold. Vang said that he has worked in the 5th Precinct for five of his 16 years on the police force, including some time with the Nicollet Ave beat. He said that Officer Vah had come from the 2nd Precinct. Vang said that he was very aware of the issues which concern the neighborhood and of the repeat offenders who cause problems here. He said that their goal was to clean up the area by focusing, for example, on locations such as Starbucks Coffee, the nearby bus stop, and the drinkers who loiter in the area. Vang said that they also patrol the neighborhood streets and alleys. McGaughey asked if they could park their squad at 19th & 3rd when they are making reports or doing paperwork, in order to deter the drug activity which sometimes returns to that area. The officers agreed. In response to a question, Vang said that he already knows most of the business owners and managers in the area and plans to stay in contact with them. He said that the beat covers the area from 18th St to 22nd St, LaSalle Ave/Blaisdell Ave to 4th Ave. Vah said that Starbucks has reported a number of problems, and that some of the other businesses in the areas have expressed some concerns; drugs, prostitution, and drinking are priorities for enforcement. Bader asked if their beat included the high rise at 1707 3rd Ave, and spoke about drug traffic in the nearby alley between 3rd Ave and Clinton Ave. Vang said that they will ask Inspector Arneson if it's okay to include this area in their beat. He said that they plan to patrol the neighborhood in plainclothes when possible in warmer weather. In response to a question, Vang said that the night beat is usually on duty from Tuesday through Saturday, 4:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. (except for 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Friday). He said that the Franklin Ave day beat officers, Deb Hubert and Steve Jensen, work in separate squads Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. He said that the night beat squad will soon also be designated the “Franklin beat”. McGaughey asked if anyone had been arrested for the recent laundry room break-ins. Vah said that a sergeant with the 3rd Precinct property crimes unit was working on that problem, and asked community members to let him (Vah) know if they had any information. Godon said that it's become a constant problem and that police have been working on it. Vang asked if they could get keys for apartments buildings in the neighborhood, especially for 2020 Nicollet Ave, so that they could do periodic walk-throughs. Vah said that way they might be able to catch the laundry room burglars. The coordinator said that he would send them the contact information for apartment building owners or managers. Vang encouraged community members to send information about problems or concerns to the coordinator, which he can then forward to the beat officers. Strobel and McGaughey thanked the officers for attending the meeting

and encouraged them to talk with any Block Patrol teams they encounter in the neighborhood. Vah said that they were already doing that, and complimented the group for its bright yellow vests.

Although she was unable to attend the meeting, Crime Prevention Specialist Chelsea Adams provided information about crime in the neighborhood. In December, there were:

- No robberies of person
- 3 aggravated assaults, all domestic.
- 3 apartment burglaries, at 1816 Stevens Ave on December 5, 1820 Stevens Ave on December 7 (no loss), and 20 Groveland Ave on December 19.
- 1 laundry room burglary, at 1912 Stevens Ave on December 3.
- 1 business burglary, at 1801 Nicollet Ave on December 24.

Adams provided a month-by-month spreadsheet comparing Part 1 crimes reported in the neighborhood during 2007 and 2008. Here are the year-end numbers.

Offense	2007	2008	% change
homicide	0	0	-
rape	3	8	+ 167%
robbery	41	17	- 59%
aggravated assault	22	30	+ 36%
burglary	57	52	- 9%
theft	135	128	- 5%
auto theft	49	29	- 41%
arson	0	0	-
total	307	264	- 14%

The coordinator said that the number of robberies is a key indicator of crime trends in the neighborhood, and that the 59% reduction is the biggest – and most significant – year-to-year change he’s ever seen.

The coordinator made available copies of Google maps and lists of arrests for livability crimes in an area encompassing Stevens Square-Loring Heights and the section of Whittier from Franklin Ave to 24th St. For the period from December 15 to January 19, there were 9 alcohol-related arrests (15 last year), 6 narcotics-related arrests (9 last year), and 2 prostitution-related arrests (12 last year).

The coordinator provided information on total alcohol-, narcotics-, and prostitution-related arrests for this area for the past four years.

offense	2005	2006	2007	2008	total
alcohol-related arrests/citations	263	372	391	356	1,382
narcotics-related arrests/citations	333	367	228	161	1,089
prostitution-related arrests/citations	105	35	35	27	202
total	701	774	654	544	2,673

- Alcohol-related offenses = consuming alcohol in public, open bottle, possession of liquor in a park.
- Narcotics-related offenses = narcotics violation, loitering with intent to buy or sell narcotics, possession of drug paraphernalia.
- Prostitution-related offenses = prostitution, loitering with intent to commit prostitution.

The coordinator said that the continued decline in arrests for these livability crimes in the area – especially for narcotics-related offenses – appears to demonstrate the huge positive impact of aggressive police enforcement in the neighborhood and to highlight the ongoing challenge of addressing alcohol-related problems.

The coordinator made available copies of Google maps and summaries of police reports of incidents and arrests in specific areas. For the period from December 15 to January 19, 19 reports were generated in the Clinton sector (3rd Ave to 4th Ave, I-94 to Franklin Ave) and 50 in the Nicollet corridor (LaSalle Ave/Blaisdell Ave to 1st

Ave, I-94 to 24th St). Altogether, there were 237 police reports in the Clinton sector and 583 in the Nicollet corridor during 2008.

The coordinator presented a new monthly chronic offender update, which features the outcome of court cases resulting from arrests in the area, along with the names of the sentencing judges. This month's report included cases involving Pamela Beaulieu (September 24 possession of liquor in a park at 2200 3rd Ave), Boris Boyd (September 26 trespassing and criminal contempt of court at Groveland & Nicollet), Suzan Grubbs (October 8 open bottle and criminal contempt of court at 1820 4th Ave and December 13 possession of drug paraphernalia at Franklin & 4th), Lynn Love (October 21 possession of drug paraphernalia at Franklin & Clinton), and Jessica Matt (December 10 loitering with intent to commit prostitution at Franklin & Nicollet). Contact SSCO to receive a printed or e-mailed copy of this report.

The coordinator made available copies of a report regarding chronic offenders arrested in the area from Lyndale Ave to 4th Ave, I-94 to 24th St, in 2007 and 2008. The term "chronic offender" includes anyone who has been arrested five or more times in this area within two years. During 2007, 92 chronic offenders were arrested or cited here 320 times; 25 of these offenders were arrested or cited five or more times within the year, accounting for 164 (51%) of the arrests. During 2008, 71 chronic offenders were arrested or cited here 194 times; 13 of these offenders were arrested or cited five or more times within the year, accounting for 72 (37%) of the arrests. (Four of the 13 were new to the chronic offender list.) The coordinator passed around information regarding Ronald King, who was the top offender in the area in 2008 with eight arrests, compared to six in 2007. King will be released from the workhouse on April 11.

There was a discussion about chronic offenders. Penas asked how the community can get judges to act differently. Godon said that judges abide by the law, but sometimes opt to provide offenders with what Schwalen characterized as an "opportunity" through a stay of adjudication, which allows judges to impose a sentence even though the defendant has not been found guilty or admitted to guilt. Godon said that this occurs less than 5% or 10% of the time, but that prosecutors have the right to appeal such a decision. She said that judges use this and other techniques to facilitate the negotiation of plea agreements in an attempt to move their caseload along; this can result in good charges against chronic offenders being dropped, which in a way doesn't make sense. Rosensteel said that judges are assigned too many cases per day, and that one solution would be to hire more judges. Strobel said that might also require that more prisons be built and staffed.

The coordinator passed around information regarding chronic offender and Level 3 sex offender Damon Moore, who will be released from prison on January 26; Moore will be on parole until August 26.

<http://info.doc.state.mn.us/publicviewer/Inmate.asp?OID=163940>

He said that SSCO will post notices about Moore if he returns to the neighborhood, and asked that anyone who sees Moore in the area please contact SSCO. Schwalen said that she would contact Moore's parole agent. Strobel asked if Moore's release would trigger a community notification meeting. Godon said that normally it would, but that Moore has in the recent past declared that he is homeless, and if he does so again there would be no meeting since there would be no specific community to notify.

COMMUNITY PROSECUTOR REPORT – Assistant City Attorney Lisa Godon

Godon said that it's been a quiet month, with not many crimes reported or arrests made in Stevens Square. She distributed copies of the CLEAN sheet, a list with mugshots of the 5th Precinct's top 30 offenders which is updated weekly with court conditions, appearance dates, and warrant and custody information. The CLEAN sheet is available at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/police/about/docs/Pct5CLEAN.pdf> Godon said that it's time to review the membership of the list; at least one offender, Denell Jackson, will be removed because he'll be in prison until October, and four or five others may also be removed. Godon said that CLEAN offender Pamela Beaulieu will be released from the workhouse on February 7.

COMMUNITY PROBATION REPORT – Probation Officer Jean Schwalen

Schwalen reported that her office has been very busy, noting that the holidays often don't bring out the best in their clients. She said that the governor appointed two new Hennepin County District Court judges today. Schwalen said that Inspector Arneson has said in recent meetings that crime is down in the whole precinct. Penas said that he saw a report on TV which stated that neighborhood probation offices, including the one on the

north side, were going to be eliminated due to County budget cuts. Schwalen said that that was not the case, especially in regard to the north side office. Godon said that the City Attorney has been asked by the City Council to present a proposal showing budget cuts to the department of 10%, 20%, and 30%, in anticipation of a severe decrease in local government aid from the State. Schwalen said that the County faces similar problems. Godon said that, depending on the level of budget cuts, it could mean that the community prosecutors in the precincts might have to go back downtown to fill vacant positions there. Ron Staff asked about the impact of federal economic stimulus funds on the situations faced by the City and County. Godon said that she had heard that most of those dollars would be invested in infrastructure projects, although some may be allocated for police and fire service.

PRIORITY CONCERNS / HOT SPOTS / CHRONIC OFFENDERS

- 1900 1st Ave – There are complaints about suspicious traffic to an apartment in this building. The manager and police are working to resolve the problems.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COMMUNITY ACTION REPORT – Community Coordinator Taryn Runck

Runck reported that the program was expanding and being offered to more neighborhoods in northeast, all of the 4th Precinct, and Lyndale and Kingfield neighborhoods in the 5th Precinct. She said that cases from the latter two neighborhoods would be conferenced with those from Stevens Square-Loring Heights and Whittier. Runck said that the first cases from Kingfield – regarding off-leash dog violations – will be conferenced soon, and invited community members to participate even if the offenses did not occur in their neighborhood. Runck can be reached at 746-0784.

BLOCK PATROL REPORT – Judy Austin

Austin reported that, from December 19 to January 21, 11 Block Patrol volunteers participated in 10 shifts, contributing a total of 41 hours. At least four shifts were cancelled. Three new volunteers joined Block Patrol. Austin said that it was another quiet month, and that Block Patrol had not made a 911 call to report criminal or suspicious activity since November 11. She presented the Block Patrol statistics for 2008: 37 volunteers contributed 1,101 hours. Eight new volunteers joined Block Patrol, and eight moved out of the neighborhood. Fourteen volunteers each contributed more than 24 hours. Austin shared some stories from the Block Patrol log. The coordinator thanked the Block Patrol leaders who kept the group operating year-round and contributed a huge amount of time and work to the project: Judy Austin, Ken Strobel, and Arlene Storandt. The committee gave them a round of applause.

SAFETY COORDINATOR REPORT – Dave Delvoye

The coordinator made available a report on the the results of the the 2008 graffiti removal grant project. The City agreed to reimburse SSCO for half of the expenses (\$3,273) for the project. The goals of the project were to have less graffiti and a cleaner neighborhood, and to educate citizens on the proper response to graffiti. Volunteers removed graffiti and stickers from public property, and sometimes from commercial dumpsters. The idea was to clean up graffiti throughout the neighborhood, educate residents and business owners about how to report graffiti, and then organize rapid response team(s) to take graffiti down as quickly as possible. The initial clean-ups occurred in two phases over the spring and summer, and a rapid response team was formed in August and operated through December. Volunteers and staff mapped and tracked the locations from which graffiti was removed. In total, 30 volunteers contributed 236 hours and removed graffiti and stickers from 490 locations. The project included 50 hours of staff support time. The coordinator thanked the volunteers who participated, including Mel Langer, Laura Blue Bird, Frank Anderson, Ken Strobel, Helen Grams, Dee Tvedt, Jerry Paulson, RJCA clients, and students from North Central University. At the start of the project, from April 3 to June 25, graffiti was removed from 204 locations. Between August 7 and September 10, graffiti was removed from 118 locations. From August 7 to December 19, the rapid response team removed graffiti from 168 locations. At the end of the project, on December 19, graffiti was documented at 46 locations; there was less graffiti and the neighborhood was cleaner. In conclusion, there was a reduction of graffiti in the neighborhood as a result of the project and an increase in the community's capacity to report (tracked through data from 311) and remove graffiti. SSCO considers the project a success, although more needs to be done to identify, apprehend, and prosecute those involved in graffiti damage to property.

A number of observations were made by volunteers and staff during the project, including:

- Although graffiti appears throughout the neighborhood, it is concentrated along several corridors including Nicollet Ave and Franklin Ave, and to a lesser degree 1st Ave and 3rd Ave. Focusing on removing graffiti in those areas goes a long way toward reducing its visibility in the neighborhood.
- Graffiti sometimes travels along specific pathways through the neighborhood, with tags pointing the way to particular areas or buildings.
- The vast majority of graffiti documented and removed is not gang-related.
- Stickers, many featuring graffiti tags, are becoming almost as prevalent as traditional graffiti on public property.
- Removing graffiti may discourage the same taggers from coming back, but does nothing to prevent new taggers from vandalizing the area. Popular locations for graffiti were repeatedly tagged by any number of different vandals despite the ongoing clean-up efforts.
- No one was arrested or cited for graffiti damage to property in the neighborhood. Tagging appears to be a very low-risk activity for criminals, and this may in part account for its continuing proliferation in the city.

The coordinator particularly thanked Mel Langer, who with Laura Blue Bird formed a rapid response team to report and remove graffiti in the neighborhood. Langer passed around two binders which contained maps, photos, notices, descriptions, and other documentation of her and Blue Bird's work on the project. Langer said that she spent at least 200 hours on the project since August. She said that the faster one cleans up graffiti, the more the taggers will move away from the area. Langer said that graffiti left untouched on a single building – she used the vacant property at 110 East 18th St as an example – can affect an entire block, because it brings the vandals back to the area. She said that, to solve the problem, there has to be a consistent effort made throughout the community to remove graffiti and keep the area clean. Langer encouraged everyone to watch for and report graffiti: call 911 if the incident is in progress or 311 after the fact. She said that she posted notices at popular locations for graffiti in the neighborhood, and that this, in combination with the graffiti being removed, seemed to reduce subsequent incidents of graffiti there. Langer said that, except for some commercial dumpsters, she did not remove graffiti from private property. She said that she sometimes used appropriately colored paint to cover up graffiti.

Davis, who said that he has been investigating graffiti for ten years, thanked Langer for her great work. He cautioned that we shouldn't be too tough on property owners who are victims of graffiti vandalism; the City goes after them as if they were the perpetrators, giving them a short amount of time to remove graffiti or face fines or other penalties. Davis spoke about City and other funding for arts organizations which promote graffiti, and said that money should go for cameras to help identify and apprehend those committing damage to property. Langer made it clear that she does not blame or hold private property owners responsible for the graffiti which damages their buildings, but rather tries to work with them, educate them about where to get removal supplies, and encourage them to remove graffiti quickly. Davis emphasized the importance of documenting graffiti with photos. Godon said that damage to property is charged based on the amount of damage incurred: up to \$500 is a misdemeanor, from \$501 to \$1,000 a gross misdemeanor, and over \$1,000 a felony. Schwalen said that the felony level was just raised to \$2,500 and over. Sue Crockett asked how the City was promoting graffiti. Davis said that it happens via brochures and other methods publicizing certain organizations which promote graffiti. Fischer said that some people look at graffiti as artwork. Davis said that doesn't matter, because vandalism is a crime. He said that part of the attraction among graffiti taggers is the thrill of not getting caught. Runck said that the Lyndale neighborhood graffiti task force is pushing for making graffiti damage to property a petty misdemeanor. Godon said that, in her opinion, this is a misguided idea and a very bad proposal. She said that a petty misdemeanor carries a maximum fine of \$300, with no jail time, compared to a misdemeanor which carries a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Davis said that studies have shown that a restorative justice approach to graffiti crime does not work, except for offenders age 12 and under. He said that offenders who are caught simply change their tags and continue to offend. Davis advocated for a tough initial response to scare graffiti offenders; otherwise they become more deeply involved in the culture. Runck said that RJCA now addresses graffiti offenses through post adjudication and probation conditions. Davis said that many graffiti taggers are addicted to the chemicals in the spray paint and markers. He said that sentencing taggers to sentence-to-serve crews removing graffiti does not work, because they have no problem taking down the graffiti put up by rival taggers or crews. Davis encouraged community members to visit <http://nograffiti.com/> for further information.

There was a discussion of how community members have an impact on reducing crime, and how SSCO should document and publicize that impact in order to show how neighborhood safety has improved. McGaughey said that the committee is already documenting crime in the neighborhood and what's being done to reduce it. Chambers and Langer said that various consequences can deter people from committing crimes or reoffending.

Sue Crockett mentioned the connection between the liquor store and nuisance crime in the area, and asked what the community could do to have a public impact on that problem; she suggested picketing or a petition. Fischer asked how that could be organized. McGaughey said that the committee already has an Alcohol task force designed to deal with these problems. Sue Crockett said that it was her impression, talking with staff and community members, that the liquor store cooperates up to the point of complying with the law, but that there must be some way to demonstrate the impact on the community of the problems associated with the store. The coordinator said that the Alcohol task force has not met because there have been no new issues or projects to consider; the latest initiative was the police safety/security camera system for Nicollet Ave. The feasibility study for the camera system is on hold pending decisions by the City regarding a new camera vendor and a policy to establish a central location to monitor all the police cameras in the city.

Godon suggested convening the Alcohol task force to consider these new ideas. Bader said that the liquor store has changed in a positive way, the space has been remodeled, and the staff is friendly and helpful. Sue Crockett said that getting rid of the lower-end product at the store might solve the problems, and wondered what percentage of sales those products accounted for. Godon said that the task force pushed the store to get rid of certain single-serving containers of alcohol, and that they cooperated. The coordinator said that the store manager predicted that those who consumed that product would merely shift their purchases to something similar, and that appeared to be what had happened. In response to a question about the store checking i.d. before purchase, Godon said that the law requires that no liquor be served to minors, but does not make it mandatory for sellers to check i.d. Davis asked if the nuisance laws could be enforced against the business. Godon said that those laws govern conduct on the premises, and that does not appear to be a problem in this case. The coordinator said that the task force did not want him to provide the liquor store with a book of mugshots of chronic offenders who are often arrested for alcohol-related offenses in the neighborhood, since there would be too much information for store staff to comprehend and use; the CLEAN sheet was suggested as an alternative. The coordinator said that he would ask the store manager if a mugshot book would be useful now; the response had been positive in the past.

Sue Crockett asked how much money the store was making on the sale of cheap liquor. Strobel said that there was a sort of unofficial boycott of the store among many residents of the area. David Crockett agreed that part of the community was boycotting the store, and that perhaps the store did not realize this. He said that the store should recognize that it would benefit economically if it removed the lower-end product. Chambers said that if the store understands and acts upon that information, its business will improve. David Crockett suggested developing a petition to be signed by community members who don't patronize the liquor store, explaining their concerns and making clear that they would purchase liquor there if the right changes were made. The coordinator said that SSCO has approached the liquor store manager with information about the Good Neighbor award, and that the manager had been asked to donate or discount product for the Fancy Pants Ball, an SSCO fundraiser. McGaughey said that this might be a bad idea, since the store is being described as a source of problems in the community, and used the example of a bar in a neighborhood where she used to live. Sue Crockett said that the Good Neighbor pledge was not an award which would be given in response to some donation. The coordinator said that the pledge, in addition to requesting a monetary donation, asks a business or property owner to make specific commitments to help beautify the neighborhood and keep it safe. He said that, in some instances, the pledge can be used as leverage to persuade uncooperative owners to work with SSCO on neighborhood concerns, such as trash and crime. McGaughey said that there may still be problems with how a store might use such an award to deflect complaints, and with how SSCO would enforce the commitments made by those signing a pledge. Davis said that, although he can see the arguments on both sides, this could be a slippery slope which could have unintended consequences. Sue Crockett asked if the Alcohol task force should be reconvened to consider these ideas. The committee agreed.