

May 5, 2004 Minutes
RAVINIA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION
SPRING GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

President Dave Hanus called the meeting to order at 7:35 by welcoming everyone. He thanked Noble Roman's Pizza for their donation of pizza and soft drinks.

He mentioned that the city has cleaned up a triangular parcel of land at the northeast corner of Green Bay and Lake Cook, and thanked city staff, Larry King and Mary Anderson, for their assistance. Future plans for this site include a cleared circle in the middle, with wood chips covering the ground and a bench.

He presented a framed certificate of thanks to Mary Ritzlin, who is relocating her business elsewhere. As owner of Antique Maps and Prints, she has been a long-time member of the Ravinia business community as well as active in the Ravinia Neighbors Association. Don Miller then presented her with a potted hydrangea. Thanks were extended to the Custom Framer for donating the frame.

Gary Rietz then briefly introduced the survey distributed to all the members earlier this year, and said we would use survey results to prioritize our activities. He encouraged members present to fill out the survey and leave it with a board member.

Next, Lorry Werhane, President of the Board of Park Commissioners for the Park District of Highland Park, opened a presentation of Jens Jensen Park improvements by stating how strongly his board supported these efforts. It was helpful that Jens Jensen's original plans were available; and that he and other Park District representatives had been in Washington, D.C. recently to lobby for financial support and have applied for \$150,000 in funding. Paul Silverman then gave a power point presentation showing why his group, with our support, feels it is important to bring Jens Jensen Park back to its former glory. He thanked Nick and Amy Patera, Highland Park residents who live in the Sunset Woods neighborhood, for donating their landscape architecture expertise in helping develop long-term redevelopment plans for the site. The Park District will contribute \$10,000 a year for an unspecified number of years to improve the park. He encouraged residents to match their donation of \$500 and the RNA's donation of \$1,000. Alison Brett invited audience members to attend their first fund-raiser, set for June 23 at Ravinia Bistro. Price is \$75 a plate for a fixed price menu including wine.

Peg Laemle gave a report on the storm drain stencil project, which has thus far stenciled 183 storm drains all over town, but primarily in the Ravinia neighborhood. Residents spray a message encouraging people not to put anything toxic into the storm drains. She also said that, beginning with the next project, she would encourage stencilers to put the message on the curb and gutter, as opposed to on the street pavement. Traffic has removed much of the message of those already in place. She also said volunteers will spray a clear coating over the words to further protect the message. Both paints are water-based and environmentally appropriate for this task. She welcomed anyone who would wish to volunteer their time for a stencil project on their street.

President Dave Hanus then asked the slate of nominated board members to stand as their names were mentioned. He called for a voice vote. The slate was approved. The new board members, who take office July 1, 2004, will be:

President	Don Miller
Vice-President	Dave Hanus
Publicity	Doug Purington
Recording Secretary	Jeff Stern
Treasurer	Paul Wehner
Board Member at Large	Alison Brett
Board Member at Large	Michael Harding
Board Member at Large	Nan Harris
Board Member at Large	Paul Rubenstein

Dave introduced our first guest speaker, Mayor Michael Belsky. Belsky praised our organization for its role in working with the city for the betterment of our community. He said he wished every neighborhood had a similarly active organization, as this did help the city do its work better. He said the city was initiating a beautification awards program. He mentioned the new rec center and health clinic which have recently been approved as welcome additions to our community. He said that the health clinic, in particular, honored the history of our city, as many of its residents had come here from Europe and been immigrants themselves. Now it was our turn to help others in this endeavor, which is located in the heart of downtown and offers its heart to those in need. He then stated the city was in the process of accelerating improvements in our streetscape by examining funding possibilities. The first to be examined will be through TIF, where the area in question is considered blighted and therefore eligible for funding. He said that our downtown district had, in the 80's, received TIF monies for its redevelopment.

Our next speaker was Nick Pullia, Director of Public Relations for the Ravinia Festival. To the first person who knew the answer to what date Ravinia opened (July 4, 1904), he gave a Ravinia Festival blanket. Then he told us why the Festival had chosen the Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu opera for the opening weekend (it is the first opera for South Africa, which is celebrating its 10 year anniversary while Ravinia celebrates its 100th). He said July 4th would be Highland Park Appreciation Day. Partnering with the Highland Park Public Library, the festival will offer free admission to HP residents showing their HP library card. It will be a day filled with many featured attractions. Another 100th anniversary celebration includes a 25 cents admission day (Sunday, August 15th). The season ends September 12th with a "Carousel of the Animals" in memory of the carousel that was said to be a part of Ravinia when it opened as an amusement park. To the person who knew the new music director (James Conlon), he presented a children's book published by the Women's Board.

Rebecca Grill, Natural Areas Coordinator for the Park District, was the next speaker. She brought with her a phlox and an oak tree to be planted in a natural area behind the high school. She is improving that location with Indian Trail 4th graders and high school students in the environmental science class. She mentioned the three most invasive species in Highland Park, which are buckthorn, garlic mustard, and honey suckle. She said these invasive species have taken over what used to be an extremely diverse ecosystem. She mentioned that Jens Jensen and May Watts were valuable members of our community, and said May Watts had written her favorite environmental book, which she encouraged us to check out at the library or through her. She then said that in our community, trees are protected, but not shrubs or wildflowers. She encouraged us to plant native prairie flowers, which do better in our landscapes than the lawns imported from abroad. She conducts conservation activities twice a month (the second and fourth Fridays) at Heller Nature Center, and has workdays the 3rd Saturday of every month. The next one will be at May Watts Park on May 22nd, where residents can help pulling out garlic mustard. She thanked two Ravinia teachers who have been invaluable with her environmental mission (Dennis Brosseau and Paul Grant). In response to a question from the audience about whether or not the city is helping to save gardens from developers, she said that when she was a member of the environmental commission, they would be notified of a landscape being demolished. They always asked permission to remove plants; were given permission; then they replanted these at the Community House and in Sunset Woods. Asked who maintains the Green Bay Trail, she said the City's Public Works department.

The next speaker was Judy Tepfer, editor of Highland Park's own arts magazine, *East on Central*. It features artists of all kinds who live, work or take arts classes here. It receives funding from the city, the Park District and the Illinois Arts Council. It was founded with the belief that art inspires new art, making a "creative encounter." This year's issue, the third, honors Ravinia's 100th anniversary. *East on Central* is available for purchase at Deerfield's Barnes and Noble, Hi-Land Art, Sunset Foods, Caribou Coffee and various Ravinia neighborhood shops.

Mari Barnes wanted us to know that the Ravinia neighborhood is the site of the next public art sculpture, which will be located either outside of the Ravinia train station, or near the start of the Green Bay Trail at the end of the parking lot.

Before taking questions, Dave reminded the audience that there was a committee sign-up flyer on their seats, and they were welcome to participate on any level within our organization.

Everyone was encouraged to participate in the RNA's Fourth of July parade. We need around 7 individuals to make it a fun time. We plan to walk carrying symbols of Ravinia 100 years ago - landscape gardening; music; and literature.

Q&A

Q: What is the status of the very dilapidated house at 801 St. Johns?

A: Jim Kirsch answered this, saying the city is trying to condemn the house using the proper legal means of due process. They need to serve the owner, who they cannot locate. Expect the house to be torn down by the end of summer.

Q: What is happening on the northeast corner of Green Bay and Roger Williams?

A: This property being developed into condos by Bob Burack, who plans to put up a 3 story, 9 unit building with parking in the basement.

Jeff Stern told the audience our plans to have framed and mounted on the walls of the train station five pictures from Ravinia's past, including a 1911 Ravinia Festival schedule; and photos of the business district, the train station, Ravinia School and Jens Jensen Park. Our train station is the oldest commuter station in the Chicago area that is still in operation. Built in 1889 and restored by 1989, it is a treasure. He showed the pictures we have and encouraged the audience to submit any pictures, if they had them.

Q: What is the city's policy towards the type of litter that is near some HP businesses?

A: Mari Barnes answered that the city adds an extra pick-up (making two) per week during the summer in the downtown area. All businesses are responsible for their own property. The city has 2 staff members that respond to resident complaints but they rely on residents to make them aware of problem areas. She encouraged us to notify the city whenever we see debris lying around so a police officer can cite the business. There is a hearing officer who holds court twice monthly during the summer in Highland Park (instead of holding court in Waukegan).

As this is an election year, Jim Kirsch reminded us that political signs posted on public property are illegal. The campaign responsible for this is fined, due to a two-year-old campaign sign law.

Steve Meyer of the Park District mentioned that there would be a North Branch of the Chicago River clean up this Saturday from 8 to noon, starting at the parking lot of the Highland Park Country Club. All are welcome. Lunch will be served.

An audience member asked to be involved with beach clean up, which is a concern of hers.

The meeting was adjourned at 9.