

Minutes
Ravinia Neighbors Association
General Meeting
Wednesday, September 28, 2005
Ravinia Metra Train Station

Don Miller called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. and introduced RNA Board Members to the audience.

Miller thanked Pasta Fresca owner Amelia Funari for providing treats for all who were attending the meeting.

Mark Romo called attention to a wine and cheese tasting party aimed at attracting interest in the RNA to be held at the fitness center above Alberto's Cycle shop at First and Laurel from 5 until 7:30 p.m. on Friday, October 14.

Treasurer Dwayne Douglas presented a check for \$500 to the Highland Park Community Foundation for Katrina hurricane victims on behalf of RNA. Paul Rubenstein accepted the check for the HPCF, and noted that donations from various Highland Park sources had now reached \$4,200.

In Paul Silverman's absence, Miller reported on funding for the restoration of Jens Jensen Park. He said \$176,000 in matching funds and maintenance would be available for the project from the U.S. Department of the Interior and \$40,000 was already committed from other sources. He asked for contributions to meet the goal of raising an additional \$80,000. The project is set to begin next spring.

In his Treasurer's Report, Dwayne Douglas said the RNA had a cash balance of \$15,231.26, of which about \$8,000 was currently available. Regarding the Business District, he noted the ongoing construction at Roger Williams and Green Bay of a three-story, Tudor-style condominium building with nine units. He said the same developer plans to replace the medical building at 625 Roger Williams with a three-story structure with shops on the first floor and offices above. Douglas also announced the approval of plans for a TIF district for a new streetscape on Roger Williams and said local school districts had approved this plan which was estimated to cost about \$2 million. Douglas said that while the business district was improving, there were still some vacancies along the street.

Presenting the membership report in the absence of Doug Purington, Miller said there were 262 active households, or about 11 per cent of the households in the area, which covers roughly half a mile in each direction from the Ravinia School.

Highland Park's Chief Forester Larry King, the first of two featured speakers, talked about the cleaning up and replanting of Gateway Park, at the south end of H.P. on Green Bay Road, which RNA members helped bring about. Observing

the rail station photo of the fire station dedication in 1929, he said there were virtually no trees in Ravinia in 1929, and credited the city with planting new ones. He said trees were hurting this year due to lack of rainfall, and that smaller trees need about one inch of water every week to 10 days.

King said this year's drought inhibited the growth of fungus on trees but encouraged the proliferation of bees and other insects. He predicted big problems for trees if there is inadequate moisture this fall and winter. While not concerned about the spread of gypsy moths, King was worried that emerald ash bores might enter the area, threatening the destruction of ash trees. He said his management plan has always been diversity, and that there were 265 different species of trees in Highland Park. He also noted that a new hybrid elm was being developed to replace the American Elm. King said that for people who want to plant trees in their parkway, the city offers a 50-50 split on the cost.

Peter Koukos, the Assessor-elect of Moraine Township, spoke about the process of property assessments in the township. He handed out copies of a document he called the Assessment Administration, which includes a listing of officials involved in the process and outlines the relationship between the Assessor, the County Clerk, the Chief County Assessment Officer, the Department of Revenue, the Board of Review and the Treasurer. It also explains the budget cycle and the process the taxing bodies go through to get taxpayer money.

Koukos pointed out that he does not take office until January 1, and said 2006 will be a quadrennial reassessment year. He discussed the multiplier differential between Highland Park and other nearby communities, and how this affects homeowners. He said the Township Assessor's office estimates the market value of all taxable property at one third of its market value. Koukos indicated it is the assessor's responsibility to determine what each homeowner's share of the tax burden should be based upon the assessed value placed on each home with the objective of making sure all property is assessed in a fair and equitable manner. He said that was not done in 2001, when some tax bills were increased by 50 percent or more.

Koukos said the definition of neighborhood is the most important aspect of determining the proper, fair and equitable assessment of a home, and that the neighborhood need not be a geographical area. He said property should be assessed for what it is and not for what it could be; that tearing down a house and replacing it with a larger one should not affect the value of the house next door, which should be compared with a similar house that may be on a different street; and that there is a difference between improvement and maintenance. Koukos also discussed tax inequities between different townships in the county.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.