

GIFFORD PARK ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Thursday, March 16, 2023

DATES TO NOTE

Sun., Mar. 26, 5 p.m: House Tour Steering Committee at EHM
Thurs., April 20, 7 p.m: GPA special program at Nancy Kimball House (details in minutes)
Sat., April 22, 10:30 a.m: Annual spring cleanup for EHD (details in minutes)
Sat., April 29, 1-4 p.m: Open Elgin

IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Bednar, Barbara Evans, Tyler Grace, Janine Hnatusko, Sarah Hunt, Sam & Ramona Jones, Trish LaFleur, Dan & Pat Miller, Scott Poole, Andrew Stein

CALL TO ORDER

President Paul Bednar called the meeting to order then asked that we all introduce ourselves for the benefit of new attendees Sam and Ramona Jones, who bought the D.C. Cook Mansion on the corner of Gifford and Division Streets.

R.O.P.E. REPORT (Officer Payne not in attendance)

SECRETARY'S MINUTES and TREASURER'S REPORT

The motion to approve the minutes of the February 16th general membership meeting passed unanimously. So, too, did the treasurer's report that GPA currently has a total of \$157,944.28, of which \$87,721.75 is in four CDs and the rest in our checking account.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Elgin Historic District [EHD] (Pat Miller, Chair)

Those willing to help with annual spring cleanup day for the EDH on Saturday, April 22nd, should meet at 10:30 a.m. at the north parking lot of St. Mary's Church (corner of Gifford and DuPage Streets). Though the City provides garbage bags and gloves, those attending may wish to bring their own heavier work gloves. Routes for trash collection will be assigned, and people will also be asked to make note of maintenance issues that the City should address. If enough show up to help, the lunch for workers scheduled for 11:30 will conclude this work day; otherwise, it's back to work afterwards. The City will pick up the bags of trash collected.

The work day for the pocket park (at corner of E. Chicago and Geneva Streets) is Saturday, May 6 and will involve weeding and cutting out deadwood. Tentatively scheduled to begin at 10 a.m., more details will be in the minutes of the April meeting.

Trish LaFleur is working with Pat on a flyer to publicize the restoration grants available to historic district residents. And to encourage property owners in the EHD to take advantage of these grants, Kristen Sundquist, the City's Historic Preservation Planner, has agreed to do, gratis, computer renderings of how specific buildings in the EHD would look were their exteriors to be restored. The five she anticipates being able to do each year will be kept by GPA in order to build a portfolio to encourage future owners to apply for grants.

Pat then stressed the need to re-educate the City Manager, Mayor and Council on the importance of deconversion grants to historic neighborhoods, for this year they were not funded at all and the previous two years only funded minimally.

She also noted that because code enforcers tend to limit inspections to 311 complaints, GPA would like to provide them with a prioritized list of violations—such as improper storage of trash cans and household items on porches—that if proactively addressed, could be quickly fixed. Sam and Ramona Jones then noted that they were getting called "weekly" about code violations even though they "have permission to park their riding lawn mower in their front yard."

2. Elgin Historic House Tour (no report)

3. Membership (Tyler Grace & Janine Hnatsuko)

Two single family homes in the EHD were sold recently.

Work continues on updating the membership application to include requests for information about skills and interests.

And GPA is again appealing for someone to chair this committee, for Tyler and Janine need to concentrate on their other GPA obligations.

4. Program (Janine Hnatsuko)

GPA's general membership meeting on Thurs., April 20, will be held at 7 p.m. at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House at 302 West Chicago St. After a brief business meeting, members of the Wild Ones will speak about plants native to this area, and Paul Bednar, a landscape architect/now realtor will present possibilities for suitable plantings/landscaping for historic homes.

5. Publicity (Trish LaFleur)

Whether to pay the \$30 per month fee for website troubleshooting has not yet been decided. Scott Poole said that based on his experience, it is money well spent. But he cautioned Trish and Andrew Stein to be sure it covers more than just basic maintenance.

OLD BUSINESS

1. The Parks & Recs' public meeting on March 15th was well attended, and the audience was overwhelmingly in favor of reopening Lords Park Pool. Dan Miller brought hard copies of the online survey and urged those who hadn't yet taken it to do so, albeit, he said, the survey did not ask about alternatives that would make reopening the pool possible.

2. Pat Miller urged those who had not yet seen the strategic plan for Elgin passed at the last council meeting to do so, for it is really just a vague outline. Those who had read it, concurred.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Grand Manor Porch Aprons (Dan Miller)

As Dan explained, in the late 1990s when five homes—176 through 192—were constructed along South Channing Street on the property that once housed Grand View Estate, the developer put up non-compliant T-111 siding as porch aprons. Furthermore, the aprons are not flush with the water table boards, nor do they cover the cement piers of the houses. Though Jerry Deering of the City promised to require that proper ones

were installed before occupancy permits were given, he did not. Consequently, when those homes were sold, the new owners were in violation of the building codes and a code complaint was filed against them. Because grants are not given to properties with code violations, the new owners could get no financial help to make them code compliant.

While these are not historic buildings, Dan pointed out what many of us see every day: that with their uncovered expanses of cement below the porches, four of the five homes are an eye sore in the EHD. (The fifth does not need an apron.) Thus he recommended that GPA consider making the owners eligible for a GPA grant to make them code compliant. Whether this would be done by making that are now the Grand Manor homes' porch aprons a special project or by amending our new Architectural Restoration Grants' program to include that "any project requiring an exception to the guidelines needs board approval" was discussed but no decision made, in part because the cost of adding historically correct aprons to these homes that attempted to incorporate historic elements is not known.

In addition to getting estimates from contractors to present at our next meeting, Dan will also meet with the president of Grand Manor's HOA to discuss doing such a project.

2. Book Vending Machine to Ron O'Neal Elementary School (Sarah Hunt)

Sarah asked GPA to consider purchasing a vending machine that would allow each student to choose and own a book each year. The cost, however, was thought by all in attendance to be prohibitive—\$6,600 in total for the initial start up alone—especially as both elementary schools that serve students in the EHD have school libraries from which children can check out books as well as the fact that Elgin has an excellent library within walking distance for them. And though GPA has provided materials to Channing and Ron O'Neal elementary schools in the past, they have been for books about Elgin's history and architecture and activities to promote the area. Furthermore, the dollars spent have been minimal.

Sarah said she understood our reluctance to fund a book vending machine and would consult with the school's principal for other things GPA could fund. Barbara Evans then suggested that we establish a dollar limit on the amount we were willing to spend on each school in a year in order to keep the "asks" within what we would consider. Subsequently, Dan Miller proposed that we limit money spent on each school annually to \$350. Seconded by Tyler Grace, the motion passed unanimously.

The motion to adjourn was seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Evans, secretary