

MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

April 13, 2020

The April meeting consisted of Mayor talking with neighborhood presidents on COVID-19 community impacts.

Mayor Gaylor Baird opened the meeting, held via Zoom, on Monday, April 13th at 5:30 p.m.

Attendance

Fourteen residents and two City staff attended:

Tracy Corr – 40 th & A NA	Richard Piersol – Country Club NA
Paul Johnson – East Campus CO	Greg Baker – Everett NA
Paula Baker – Everett NA	Andy Gueck – Indian Village NA
Geri Cotter – Irvingdale NA	Pat Bracken – Irvingdale NA
Dennis Hecht – Meadowlane Area RA	Keith Roland – University Place CO
Bill Vocasek – West A NA	Fred Freytag – Witherbee NA
Russell Miller – Witherbee NA	Randy Smith – Woods Park NA
Jon Carlson – Mayor's Office	Wynn Hjermsstad – Urban Development Dept
Mayor Gaylor Baird	

Welcome & Introductions

Attendees were welcomed and introductions made. Paul Johnson volunteered to take notes.

Mayor Gaylor Baird Comments

The focus of this Roundtable meeting is to see how neighborhoods are coping with the corona virus. What are you seeing in your neighborhood? How are how families, businesses, and students navigating this challenging situation? How are people using public spaces like libraries? This is an incredibly challenging time. How can we, the City, support and connect with you? City resources are collected and summarized [online \[or click on the red Covid 19 banner on the City's home page at \[www.lincoln.ne.gov\]\(http://www.lincoln.ne.gov\)\]](#). Businesses need help, too. How can we better help one another?

The Mayor is working most closely with the Health Department. She is also meeting weekly with the Governor and communicating with Lincoln's congressional delegation and other mayors – from Omaha and throughout the country. The Mayor wants to fully understand how the pandemic is impacting people. The next two to three weeks will be critical during the probable local surge and peak of the virus. Please continue doing what you've been doing: physical distancing, staying home, shopping differently, and helping neighbors. City government is working hard to connect with you and get the word out about resources that are available from the City and the State. Is this working – how are we doing? Please let us know what you are seeing and hearing in your neighborhood.

How is your neighborhood association handling the restrictions? Are you meeting virtually as groups? How are neighborhood events being affected?

- Andy (Indian Village): A neighbor started an Easter egg hunt on windows. It was a good activity for the kids. She needs to be recognized. She's now doing a window otter hunt.
- Bill (West A): A lot of residents are taking walks. He has noticed several youth out decorating sidewalks with chalk. These are positive things that are good to see. The neighborhood association is keeping their Facebook page up-to-date and highlighting the positive things neighbors are doing to let them know we appreciate them and we are there for them.
- Greg (Everett): Due to the pandemic, the neighborhood association couldn't kick-off their Adopt-a-Block neighborhood cleanup or promote the restaurants that were sponsoring the cleanup. Greg and Paula have been picking up trash and recycling, which provides some positive impact. There's a lot more

sidewalk chalk art in Everett, too. According to his son, who works at a bike shop, people are biking more. Consequently, bike shops are staying busy. People are digging out bikes they haven't used in years. All the small restaurants are closed, so that is a hardship for restaurant workers, owners, and customers.

- Keith (University Place): Keith asked if there was an update on Lincoln's testing capacity. The Mayor responded that it is limited, but Bryan Health, CHI Health, and private companies are helping expand testing capacity and turnaround time is getting shorter. Testing is being offered during expanded hours, but an appointment and a medical provider order are still needed to be tested. The supply chain on certain components is still difficult. The City of Lincoln and the State of Nebraska are competing with the entire country.
- Geri (Irvingdale): Initially, the neighborhood association tried to meet via email, but that didn't work. They will be trying to meet via Zoom this week. Many of the neighborhood residents are uncomfortable with technology and a few don't even have a computer. The neighborhood association is going to try its first online newsletter in May. Many neighbors are using the Next Door app to help each other. Some are sewing masks. Some have donated masks to the Lincoln Food Bank and the City Mission. Some have purchased masks for donation. Still others are volunteering to get groceries for at-risk neighbors. The newsletter will be posted on the website, with a link from Facebook and Next Door. It will also be distributed via email, using Mail Chimp.
- Fred (Witherbee): Fred thanked the Mayor for the updates and keeping Lincoln calm. While he continues work with his lawn care business, he sees quiet streets and lots of neighbors out walking – occasionally in groups that don't maintain social distancing. Mostly, neighbors are being sensible and staying safe. Kudos to everyone in Lincoln and Nebraska. The Witherbee neighborhood association held their April board meeting via Zoom and it went well. The newsletter will be distributed this week. Residents are being advised to stay home and stay safe by using other forms of communication: Facebook, the website, and email. Like every group, some events are delayed and some are cancelled. With the City-sponsored clean-ups delayed, he hopes funding for cleanups will remain in the City budget. It is great to see so many neighbors helping neighbors. It shows resilience and community strength in time of need. Sometimes we need to remember to focus on all the good things people are doing. Later in the meeting, Fred shared part of a message from a friend who works in a nursing home. Most of the residents are confined to their rooms, but staff has been setting up Zoom meetings so residents can connect with their families.
- Dennis (Meadowlane): Dennis also thanked the Mayor for the great job she is doing, communicating with Lincoln residents. He also thanked Pat Lopez, interim director of the Health Department for also doing a fine job. Lincoln will survive this – we'll be back!

The Mayor is very proud of incredible job being done by the Health Department. Pat Lopez set aside her plans for retirement to serve as interim director and she is being an amazing leader under less than ideal circumstances.

- Randy (Woods Park): The neighborhood association is essentially on hold. There had been a meeting scheduled for tomorrow, but it has been cancelled. The association isn't set up to use Zoom yet. Many residents are working from home, many walk more to get out of their houses. He works for Env Energy, which had staff coming in on alternating weeks, but now everyone has been told to stay home for two weeks. Musicians he heads up (for Woods Park), most people are donating their tickets.
- Richard (Country Club): His neighborhood is like others: lots more people are out walking than usual, meetings have been canceled, and future meetings will probably be via Zoom. He has been impressed by the regular updates from the Mayor and interim Director Lopez. Perhaps it would be helpful if more details could be reported. This would not include names, of course, but perhaps the circumstances of how

it was transmitted and how long a person was contagious before being isolated. HIPA restrictions would certainly need to be followed, but more details might even save lives.

The Mayor has been getting this question from others as well. According to Director Lopez, if health investigators discover that a patient participated in a large group activity while they were contagious, that kind of detail would certainly be made public. So far, none of the investigations have details that needed to be publicized. Travelers are being asked to self-quarantine. The Health Department has been releasing age and gender information. No one is currently hospitalized. Lopez will follow up to see if any additional information can be released. Some of the current cases involve individuals from the same household. If there is a community link that involves a larger group, they will absolutely get the word out.

Richard also asked if Cook's Ham is still open. Meatpacking in other cities have become hot spots, so he was wondering about Cook's. Director Lopez responded that Lincoln hasn't yet had COVID-19 cases that connect to any meat packing or food processing. The Health Department is focused on educating staff and leadership at congregate living facilities as those are the highest risk locations.

- Greg (Everett): Greg is worried about his parents who are living in a facility in Omaha and they are experiencing emotional stress because of the isolation. Greg has also noticed neighbors with mental health concerns are having an especially difficult time. Isolation tends to intensify mental health struggles. The Mayor agreed and acknowledged that the strain of isolation is intensely difficult for many; parents and health care workers, for example. There are services and resources available. She will follow up to spread that information further, so people will know how to access mental well-being resources.
- Russell (Witherbee): Russell agreed with what Fred had said. He noted that Witherbee will hand deliver their newsletter by sticking it in doors. He noted a concern about the City's CIP budget. It was published on the City website last week (lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: CIP). He recalled that there'd been a promise last year that the current CIP Budget would be more transparent concerning transportation. He has looked at the CIP material on the website and it does not seem transparent to him. Perhaps he missed some aspect of the website. What have others experienced?

The Mayor explained that developing the budget is a process that will need to be worked through. This budget will be challenging because much of the City's budget comes from sales tax. Consumer spending – and sales tax revenues – have declined significantly. The City will do its best to maintain services and quality of life, but there will be hardships unless the federal government steps in to help cities and states. Congressional delegations are speaking up, but it is an evolving situation. Everyone is hoping for more clarity in the coming months.

- Paul (East Campus): The neighborhood newsletter was ready for distribution by the end of March, but the association decided to not distribute door-to-door this time. There are a few hundred newsletter recipients on the e-mail list, but there are 2,000 households in the neighborhood. Several activities are on hold -- parking permit demonstration project and the neighborhood cleanup – and some are canceled (Annual Easter egg hunt). Neighborhood residents are staying close to home. Lots of people are taking walks. UNL East Campus is closed. The City app to keep people informed of up-to-date facts has been a helpful reference tool. Paul is on the KLLCB board and he assured Roundtable attendees that neighborhood cleanup funding should still be available this fall.

The Mayor was glad that residents have been finding the resources on city website to be useful. She asked if word about the City's web resources had been spread well. Paul Johnson said residents would have to have been living under a rock to not know about it. The City and the State of Nebraska have done a great job of getting the word out.

The Mayor shared a safe way of reaching out to neighbors who live alone. Write a message saying who you are, and sharing your phone number and/or email address. Put message in a plastic bag and tape to the neighbor's door. The neighbor then can contact you if they'd like. (An example of the message was shared with the Roundtable email list.)

Tracy Corr mentioned that Jon Carlson thinks May's meeting may need to be via Zoom again.

The Mayor expressed her appreciation of neighborhood leadership. She lives in an old house with a history – past residents lived through the 1918 pandemic. We'll get through this, too! We have so many more ways to stay connected, thanks to computers and smart phones.

There was a suggestion made, that – if the Roundtable meets via Zoom next month – that information or documents to be shared could be submitted to UDD staff and emailed out in advance of the meeting.

The Mayor wants the Roundtable to continue discussing the *Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan* and the *Comprehensive Plan* update, among other things. The discussion about short-term rentals is on hold for now.

Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

Next Meeting/Agenda

Next meeting will be May 11th at 5:30 pm. The topic TBD. If it is via Zoom, an invitation will be sent.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Paul Johnson