

Victory Heights Community Council
Meeting Minutes
September 18, 2018

Meeting called to order by President Ann Forrest at 7:00 PM. Twenty people attending.

George Scarola, the city's Strategic Advisor for homelessness, updated us on the situation at the Kingfisher green belt of Thornton Creek south of 17th Avenue NE. A sizable homeless encampment that had sprung up in the woods there in recent weeks was finally cleared out on September 14th by a massive presence by the city that hauled away tons of trash and debris. George had just revisited it and of this evening nobody had returned. He also visited underneath the 15th Avenue NE bridge and discovered an encampment there, "a disaster," he called it. It's now on the city's list to deal with. It was pointed out that clearing people out is only a temporary fix, they often return. He had two strategies we as neighbors could do: 1) Have neighbors walk regularly through the area and report any signs of encampments to the city via the Find It, Fix It app or website. 2) Photograph suspicious vehicles and report them to 911. While it's okay to photo vehicles and inanimate objects (tents, debris), do NOT attempt to photograph live humans, he warned. If we find needles or other sharps, the forest stewards who work on the plants have containers and equipment for their safe removal. George said, "It's an excruciating legal challenge to move people." Simply put, it's not constitutional to pass a law forbidding sleeping outside. Instead, the city has instigated a Navigation Team to interface with encampments to try to get them to some sort of housing. He said it takes six contacts on average to persuade someone to accept temporary housing. At a certain point though, encampments are given three days notice that a clean-up will occur with further offers to move someplace else and then the clean-up happens, as it did last week in Kingfisher. The city has moved 675 people this year, but there are 400 encampments around the city and the team can't be everywhere at once. A second, smaller team is tasked if anyone returns to a cleaned-out site and are told they have to leave immediately, there is no 3-day grace period. Essentially, he said, a secluded wooden place where they won't be disturbed is attractive to many homeless. So if the public (i.e. us) "activate a space," that is, using an area, the less attractive it becomes for the homeless (the post office in Lake City being an obvious exception). The community council has set up a sign-up sheet here: <http://signup.com/go/RXPppDv> for residents to choose times to patrol Kingfisher and try to prevent it from taking root again with a regular presence.

We heard the highlights from the North Precinct Advisory Council meeting this month.

On September 15th, the community council held a drill at the emergency communications HUB in the park. Turnout was a bit low but they learned a lot.

On Sunday, September 30th, the council will host an Urban Survival Skills Fair on NE 106th Street on the west side of Victory Heights Park between 10 AM and 2 PM. Booth will be set up on the (closed) street to teach useful skills to have during an emergency event. You could be there for three hours and still catch the kickoff of the Seahawks game that afternoon, so stop on by.

The Parks Department is going to evaluate the renovation of Victory Heights Park next week and determine if the fence around the new lawn can be taken down.

Work is proceeding on refurbishing the bulletin board on the north side of the park. The hard wood panel is being replaced with cork for easier posting, and a new acrylic cover will be installed. The council is sponsoring this work.

We're still trying to arrange to replace the wooden railing along the east side of the park along 19th Avenue NE. We hope to keep it wood, similar to what is there now. If the city had its way, they would just put in a standard highway metal guard rail.

The Your Voice, Your Choice voting did not choose our preferred project on NE 104th Way above Lake City Way, but the car dealer has moved with no known replacement announced as of yet.

The council took official possession of the victoryheights.org URL (previously owned and hosted by the folks at Pinehurst Seattle) and moved the blog over to a commercial web host where it now loads much faster and more reliably. Thanks to Pinehurst Seattle for the many years they hosted our site.

Several large branches have fallen off trees in the park, including a potential widowmaker over the path. Someone volunteered to Find It, Fix It so the city could deal with it before anyone gets hurt.

There was concern that people are entering the green belt via a path off NE 100th Street across from AirMark (opposite the Les Schwab side of the creek). Supposedly it is very steep there but someone said they would check it out.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Submitted by Ryan Johnson,
Secretary, Victory Heights Community Council