

TLNA Meeting Minutes

7pm, Jan. 8, 2026

Christ Presbyterian Church

944 E. Gorham St.

Present: Allie Vidales, Davie Froeschner, Hilary Stohs-Krause, Jacob Handel, Joe Lusson, Joey Hoey, Kevin Davies, Lauren Engelke, Mary Lang Sollinger, Michael Donnelly, Monica Kane, Pat Kelly, Patty Prime, Peter Beeson, Rachel Yves, Ryan McCormick, Sue Babcock, Bob Klebba

Not Present: Autumn Custis, Chris Hovel, Keith Wessel

Guests: Laura Riley, Devon Belew, Lt. Jennifer Hannah, Elliott Gilfillan, Dave Danforth, Amanda Riley and Aaron Culter

Called to order at 7p.m.

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Approval of previous month's minutes

Bob K. moved to approve, Joey H. seconded. Passed unanimously.

3. Madison Police Department

Lt. Jennifer Hannah: Not much to report. She mentioned that traffic was a big issue at the last TLNA meeting. She stressed that if she can't answer a question immediately, she's happy to find the answer.

Davie F. mentioned his neighbor told him there were police in his backyard while he was gone for the holidays, and he was curious how he would find out why they were there. Lt. Hannah asked for his address and the date and said she'd look into it.

Bob K. brought up Reynolds Park. "I do hear through the grapevine that there's a lot of pressure on Festival Foods, and that police are unwilling to deal with the shoplifting issues at Festival Foods."

He said he thinks many people would be upset if the store left its neighborhood location. He said 30% of their total corporate shrink - or theft - is at their Tenney-Lapham location.

Lt. Hannah said Madison has become “a small city with big issues.” She said they can respond to calls for in-progress shoplifting, but don’t have the resources for investigation afterwards. She said she recognizes the store is important to the community, and that they had recommended the store hire private security (which she said they have done recently). She said she doesn’t want to diminish the impact, but when comparing theft on the scale of a box of cereal to potentially fatal traffic accidents, “follow-up will be delayed” because of limited resources.

Bob K. said in his conversation with the manager at Festival Foods, the manager acknowledged that the theft rate was also on Festival for not adapting their store to a more urban location.

Lt. Hannah pointed to changes they’ve made, such as closing certain entrances and hiring a security guard. She said Festival management has been very responsive to police suggestions for how to help prevent theft. She said the unfortunate reality is that it’s located in an area with a high unhoused population and folks with mental health issues.

Peter B. brought up Reynolds Park and how unactivated spaces can play a role in issues like this. He said colder weather and a recent rise in homelessness are also factors.

Sue B. mentioned concerns about how crime can impact the neighborhood’s character.

Lt. Hannah said we’re unfortunately not the only neighborhood experiencing issues like this. She cited recent loss of space for unhoused folks, and how plans to add beds will still not meet existing need. She said the Beacon is over-capacity everyday because there just aren’t other places for folks to go. She said homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing Madison.

Joe L. said this is part of the reason the council is focusing on activating Reynolds Park. He said he initially hated the changes at Festival, but he’s realized

if that's what it takes to keep the store there, it's worth it. He says the alcohol entrance was a big target, and it's just a sad situation; he hopes detox facilities can be reopened.

Peter B. said he's going to connect with Lt. Hannah regarding traffic calming, especially speeding.

Lt. Hannah said she drives down Johnson on her way to work every day and often flicks on her police lights to get people to slow down: "And it works!"

Ryan M. said while the Festival situation has improved, he saw the same person shoplift liquor two different days in the same week. The cashier said that individual comes in a lot, but she didn't have authority to do anything.

Lt. Hannah said that sometimes corporate companies have policies that security folks can't touch customers, even for suspected shoplifting.

David F. said he was unsure why the council was spending so much time discussing Festival's security issues, because it's a private business that should be responsible for its own needs.

Ryan M. said he agreed to a point, but when people are stealing alcohol and taking it to Reynolds Park, then it becomes a neighborhood issue.

Rachel Y. pointed out that unhoused folks in our neighborhood are still our neighbors, and suggested hosting an event in Reynolds Park around mental health or community engagement. Kevin D. agreed.

Lt. Hannah said a lot of unhoused folks are reluctant to get help for what's going on in their lives. So offering mental health services, which have probably been offered before, might not be very meaningful. "It's a complex situation." Offering maybe a cookout or something at Reynolds Park might be more attractive.

Ryan M. suggested this be something that we discuss more in-depth at the TLNA retreat.

Lt. Hannah said she now has a desk number: 608-267-1194

4. Elliott Gilfillan: Floating Islands update

Elliott G. said it took some massive hoop-jumping with the city and DNR, but they now have a permit good for five years for the floating island at Tenney Park. (Clapping from the crowd.)

Elliott said the next steps are raising funds, building a network around awareness of the island, and collecting data that's going to be utilized as they expand to other waterways.

The baseline budget for purchasing the island, permit cost and accessories is about \$2,000. They're hosting a fundraiser at Bur Oak on Feb. 22nd. It will be a ticketed dinner and silent auction, and they'll also have music. Elliott said any additional funds raised over the estimated budget will be used to explore future spaces for floating islands, as the one at Tenney Park will be a pilot.

They're looking for a handful of sponsors to help with costs for the fundraising event, as well as any people who would like to get more involved with the event or the project. Elliott said they can be found on Facebook via "Madison Floating Islands."

Rachel Y. asked about signage at the park once the islands were live.

Elliott said definitely; they want to have information displayed along the path so that people can learn more.

Pat K. asked about ongoing maintenance once it's installed.

Elliott said there will be some; "We'll be the ones on the lease or whatnot to maintain it." But the more neighbors who are interested, the more people who can help keep an eye on it. "We're looking to incorporate with everyone on this."

Elliott said the islands have a timespan of at least 5 years.

Aaron said there are ones in up north Wisconsin that just keep growing and building on themselves. "We want people to let us know if something is hanging off, like if there's a windy night, and it needs to be tended to." He said they're going to take samples and have them analyzed in order to track impact.

“We don’t want it to be there causing an issue and no one is talking to us.”

Davie F. recommended posting the fundraising event on the neighborhood listserv. He said because they’re not a nonprofit, how can people be confident of donations? Amanda said their fiscal sponsor, the Northside Planning Council, is a 501(c)3 and the money is actually given to them, and then dispersed to the floating islands crew.

Rachel Y. asked if there were concerns about the islands breaching shore, but Aaron said they will be anchored to the lake bed.

Joey H. asked about giving the group a \$250 donation, but Monica K. said her update later regarding the budget committee will touch on this topic.

Sue B. asked if any of the group are researchers, and / or what kinds of connections they’ve made with researchers.

Aaron said they’ve connected with the UW Ecology department, and have worked with students who have faculty advisors.

Sue B. said UW and also UW Extension can be great resources, because the group will want any research to be structured. She also said getting data before the island is installed will be imperative to properly measure impact.

They asked her for any contacts, and she said she’d take a look.

5. Monica Kane, budget committee: Budget Committee Meeting Update

Monica K. said that overall, TLNA was in the green for 2025’s budget. The TLNA newsletter was in the red, but that’s a bigger conversation. One of the things the budget committee discussed is that the 2026 budget is already approved, so really, the council will be looking ahead to 2027.

Re: the newsletter, Monica said there are a few options. Allocate more funds? Try to cut costs? The bylaws require four issues per year, so changing that would require changing the bylaws and getting it approved at a full membership meeting.

Davie F. said he agreed with Ryan M. that any major changes to the newsletter should be something we warn the neighborhood we're considering so they can offer input, and Monica K. agreed. The decision was made to put it on the agenda for next month.

The events committee will have a kickoff meeting next week and will discuss events for the year, which is also a big part of the annual budget, Monica K. said. She added that there are different sponsorship approaches for events that the council could explore, such as specific sponsors for specific events (instead of annual sponsorships).

She said some exciting news is we'll have 50th anniversary commemorative merchandise. Rachel Y. and Audifax, the mural artist, will be working on ideas together.

Monica K. asked for ideas for new merchandise. People suggested human bandanas, pet bandanas, fitted cut shirts (vs. loose cut shirts), stickers, water bottles, mugs, koozies, beanies and magnets.

Davie F. said there used to be metal signs for the neighborhood, or signs indicating 100-year-plus houses, which were very popular.

Joey H. asked that we avoid plastic for any new merchandise wherever possible.

Hilary S.K. suggested emailing the neighborhood and asking people to vote on ideas. Rachel Y. said if we do that, to give people a short window to respond so that it doesn't hold up the design process. Patty P. said sometimes, people don't know what they want until they see it, so polling can be tricky.

Monica K. said the budget committee will continue to work on merch and design ideas.

She then raised the topic of 2025 and 2026 neighborhood grants. She said Operation Fresh Start applied for a grant for 2025. Operation Fresh Start is an organization that supports underserved young people with job training, including work in our neighborhood parks.

Davie F. motioned we grant their application request, and Joey H. seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Monica K. said we have \$1,000 left in the budget to award, according to the 2025 budget. The council could give the remaining two grants out now, or give out the two remaining 2025 and three 2026 grants all at once.

Davie F. pointed out that we can pick organizations; they don't need to apply.

Joey H. suggested we make decisions about other grants in February so people have time to think of other organizations.

Joe L. pointed out that the floating islands group didn't actually ask for money.

Lauren E. motioned that we grant another \$500 to Operation Fresh Start for 2026. Joey H. seconded.

Motion passed with one opposed.

Pat K. said we're already behind for 2025 grants, and asked that the committee bring suggestions for the February meeting. The council voiced agreement.

Patty P. said she likes asking people to apply through the grant process, because it helps people understand that it actually exists. Sue B. said she likes organizations that are somehow affiliated with the neighborhood and don't have a big umbrella, because smaller grants would go farther. She encouraged council members to ask friends for suggestions, as well.

Rachel Y. asked why we don't promote the grant process in the newsletter or listserv.

Davie F. said we did that in the past, and received a lot of applications for needs outside of the scope of the grant process, like for rental assistance. Peter B. said he thinks we could overcome that by requiring applicants be a nonprofit or have a fiscal sponsor.

Rachel Y. asked about switching to assist neighbors in need, but Pat K. said we're not equipped to evaluate that kind of need.

Davie F. said the Lapham Elementary parent teacher group is apparently doing well financially and does not require a neighborhood grant.

Monica K. said it sounds like we don't need to query the listserv at this point, and for folks to email her or the full council with any suggestions.

Joey H. motioned to donate \$250 to the floating island group. Joe L. seconded. There was discussion about whether we wanted them to apply, and Sue B. said the benefit is we have a historical record for future councils. The council agreed to ask them to fill out the application afterwards. The motion passed unanimously. There is \$1,750 left to award in February.

Pat K. said she wanted to ask the council to donate to the new mural's maintenance fund. "Whether it will be spent is unknown, but we need to have money available in case there's graffiti or bent panels" or other damage or wear-and-tear.

She motioned that the council donate \$500 to the mural maintenance fund, and Joey H. seconded it. Patty P. asked if the council could just earmark the funds and hold onto it. There was discussion about whether the city would need to hold the money, but Pat K. said it was not required.

Davie F. said because Mary L.S. signed the maintenance contract with the city, she should probably hold the funds, versus the council. But Mary L.S. and Pat K. said there's a related account they have access to where it could live.

Bob K. asked if the council could wait to vote in February, when it votes on the additional groups. Peter B. said he's not very comfortable with voting for the donation, because it's not for a non-profit organization.

The motion passed with 10 in favor, 4 opposed, and 3 abstaining.

6. Treasurer: Davie Froeschner

Davie F. informed everyone that the council received an anonymous \$10,000 donation right at the end of year. (There were audible gasps.) He said there was no information about the donor available.

7. Membership: Patty Prime

She brought some additional newsletters for folks.

8. Events: Lauren Engelke

The events committee is meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 13th at 7:30pm at Jackknife.

Lauren E. requested that, going forward, part of the front page of the newsletter be reserved for a teaser of upcoming events. Joey H. said he didn't think that was a great use of the front page. Lauren E. said she's already employing most other event promotion channels, and thinks events deserve better placement than the second-to-last page.

Joe L. said even if some of the events will have passed by publication, the others would still be promotable in the newsletter.

Allie V. asked what Joey H. thinks should be on the front page, generally. He said it should be items that draw people in and invite them to read more. "You only have 3 seconds to grab people's attention."

Lauren E. said she wants a quarter page or less to put coming events for the upcoming quarter in each newsletter, and she doesn't think it's a big ask. There was some argument about whether current front page content meets the "attraction" principle, but Joey H. said he does the best he can with what he's provided and has only so much control over quality of content.

Davie F. said he's talked to a lot of neighbors, and many people use the newsletter for different reasons.

Pat K. said that, as newsletter editor, Joey H. should have the final say, but asked him to consider that there's strong support for putting something about events on the front page.

9. Newsletter: Joey Hoey

Joey H. said he wanted to acknowledge the newsletter has been a point of contention over the years; part of the budget cost is color-printing finally catching

up to us. He said feedback has been that people love the color version (murmurs of assent from the council).

The next newsletter submission deadline is Jan. 28th.

10. Development: Bob Klebba

Following up on 302 N. Blount: Bob K. said it's an "interesting situation" because it's a development that the council worked on for two years, and the developer was very difficult to work with. In this situation, however, the Tenney-Lapham alder Davy Mayer didn't inform the council that there were major changes, and so the council wasn't able to provide input to the Urban Design Commission, which is the most influential commission in the process. Bob K. said Alder Mayer admitted he made a mistake in not keeping the council informed.

Regarding the screech owl nesting boxes, Bob K. said they're expected to be installed this week. He played the sound of a screech owl for the council.

Bob K. said Alder Mayer was also informed in November of planned playground updates (including at James Madison Park and Orton Park), but the council wasn't informed until Monday (for a meeting on Tuesday). It was a productive meeting, but Bob K. wishes more people could have attended. Patty P. asked if there would be future meetings, and Bob K. said he didn't know, but would work with Alder Mayer on that. He stressed that Alder Mayer needs to be much more communicative with the council when it comes to city issues that could impact the neighborhood.

Regarding the service drive behind Lincoln School that needs to be rebuilt: the original plan was to take down all the trees and build a massive earthworks. There was a lot of feedback regarding a 100+-year-old tree that would need to be cut down, and there have been changes made to preserve it. Bob K. said he was surprised that people didn't seem as concerned about the earthworks as they did about the trees.

Joe L. and Peter B. said they definitely cared about the earthworks, but Bob K. said they were among the only ones who provided feedback on the earthworks. Monica K. asked why people would care about the earthworks, and Bob K. said because it would take a flat part of the park and turn it into a steep hill.

11. Traffic Calming: Peter Beeson

Peter B. had reached out to Alder Mayer and district 2's alder, Will Ochowicz, regarding the detour signs on Johnson and Gorham for John Nolan detour traffic. He said Alder Ochowicz took charge and the signs were removed, but they're back up on Johnson Street. He said he'd like the TLNA council to send a letter to traffic engineering and the city council asking them to explore other options. He said the increased neighborhood traffic makes it hard for people to safely walk places, especially kids. He said he'd have a letter drafted for the council for the February meeting.

Joey H. asked if Peter B. had numbers re: usage. He said he's surprised by how dead East Washington often is, compared to pre-covid. Peter B. said he'd look into it.

Patty P. asked about crosswalk timing on East Washington; she said it feels much shorter now.

Mary L.S. said since the new bus system was instituted, traffic on East Washington seems like it's slowed down.

Michael D. looked it up, and said those streets have the following traffic usage:

East Washington: 52,650 cars per day
Johnson: 28,300 cars per day
Gorham: 24,050 cars per day

Bob K. said the kind of letter Peter B. wants to send, signed by the council, will carry weight.

Rachel Y. asked if this kind of letter would be worth including other neighborhoods in before moving forward. Peter B. said it was a great question. He said the challenge is that when he tried to have a broader committee regarding traffic calming, he often ended up with different people at each meeting, which made it really inefficient. He said he doesn't have the capacity to lead a group with that kind of make-up, but thinks when it can be successful, it's wonderful to have larger buy-in.

Joe L. asked Peter B. to send the email to the council ahead of the meeting so folks can read it in advance. Peter B. agreed, and said that was his plan. He said if anyone feels strongly, he'd love their input. He said his approach is geared toward more nature and re-engineering streets vs. requesting a greater police presence.

12. Web/Newsletter Layout: Keith Wessel

Absent

13. Parks: Chris Hovel

Chris H. sent an update via email:

"1) Parks has done a very nice job maintaining ice conditions at Tenney when weather cooperates.

2) I will submit paperwork to Paul Quinlan regarding screech owl boxes when locations are determined. Project is underway- Bob is in the loop on this."

14. Special Projects: Monica Kane

Nothing else to add.

15. Area Reps: Joe Lusson, Michael Donnelly, Sue Babcock, Mary Lang Sollinger, Autumn Custis, Kevin Davies, Jacob Handel, Allie Vidales, Rache Yves

Mary L.S.: She was able to distribute the newsletter to the Galaxy and Constellation apartment buildings.

Jacob H: He wanted to let the council know that he, Lauren E. and Hilary S.K. were looking to create a community garden at Reynolds Park, in case anyone was interested in helping.

16. Invited guests, *if present*: Davy Mayer, Heidi Wegleitner

Davy Mayer, alder

Not present

Heidi Wegleitner, Dane County supervisor

Not present

17. Pres / VP: Ryan McCormick / Pat Kelly

Pat K. said the bike race is happening again this year, scheduled for May 10th; a representative from Trek - Mike - will be attending the February meeting. Rachel Y. said she and the budget committee are working to have the new commemorative merch ready for that event.

Joe L. asked if there were complaints or confusion about the parking situation during the race last year, but Pat K. said people seemed prepared and tolerant. There was discussion of having a TLNA event at the Forward Club again during the race, but concerns that Breese Stevens might rather use the space themselves.

Speaking of: Pat K. said that Breese Stevens will be doing fireworks on May 23rd for the opening game of the new women's soccer league, from around 9pm to 9:15pm.

18. Action items recap

1. Sue B. send any UW or UW Extension contacts to the floating islands group.
2. Monica et al compile list of potential new merch items
3. Rachel Y. will have merch designs for the group to review
4. Monica and Davie present candidates who've applied for TLNA grants
5. Peter draft letter regarding Johnson and Gorham not being detour streets
6. Davie F. will write checks for Operation Fresh Start (\$1,000), mural maintenance fund (\$500), and floating islands group (\$250).

Adjournment

Michael D. motioned to adjourn, Rachel Y. seconded. It was passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.