

TLNA Meeting Minutes

7pm, Sept. 10, 2026

MYArts

1055 E. Mifflin St. Madison, WI 53703

Present: Chris Hovel, Hilary Stohs-Krause, Jacob Handel, Joe Lusson, Joey Hoey, Kevin Davies, Lauren Engelke, Michael Donnelly, Patty Prime, Peter Beeson, Ryan McCormick

Not Present: Allie Vidales, Autumn Custis, Bob Klebba, Davie Froeschner, Keith Wessel, Mary Lang Sollinger, Monica Kane, Pat Kelly, Rachel Yves, Sue Babcock

Guests:

Neighbors

Evie and Marc on North Brearly, David on Mifflin Street, Lia Villardita on Dayton Street, Matt Krueger on Dayton Street, Christine on Mifflin Street, Marley Owens, Sharon on Sidney Street

Organization representatives

Tristan Straub and Conor Caloia from Big Top / Breese Stevens Field

Government representatives

Katie Crawley (Deputy Mayor, Public Works and Communication at City of Madison), CJ Ryan (Assistant Parks Superintendent at City of Madison), Eric Knepp (Parks Superintendent at City of Madison)

Called to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Approval of previous month's minutes

Michael D. moved to approve, Joey H. seconded. Passed unanimously.

3. Madison Police Department, *if present*

Lt. Jennifer Hannah wanted to thank folks for letting her know about issues; she confirmed with the group that no one has seen the campers in a while on Mifflin / Dayton / Marston. She said she went and spoke with them and provided them

with a variety of resources. She noted that the unhoused population appears to be growing in the downtown area, in part due to the closing of the drop-in shelter. She said they are continuing to work with the city on this issue.

She said they had pulled some officers over to Willy Street to help address the ongoing situation there, but have now moved those officers back to patrolling the area, including McPike Park and the Blair Street BRT station. She said Metro is working on a plan to help with BRT stations, but it does not involve the Madison police anymore.

She said for now, they're strategizing how to handle these situations independent of Metro. She said it seems that Reynolds Park has definitely improved, and that she was surprised how much simply removing the picnic tables has helped.

Neighbor Lia V. said she lives right by the park, and that folks are still using the tennis courts for different behavior, but acknowledged it has gotten better. Joe L. agreed.

Lt. Hannah said she has never been a fan of those tennis courts: "It's just too out of sight, and too many things can happen there."

She said the Beacon has been pretty good, and she's noticed less overcrowding. The old shelter used to bus people down to the Beacon everyday, but with the new shelter open, it's been better.

Patty P. asked about the incident with the Maple Bluff Police chasing motorcycles at high speeds down Sherman Ave: "It was not good."

Lt. Hannah said that is not something Madison PD would ever do, but unfortunately, the Maple Bluff PD has a different policy regarding high speed chases within city limits. "I'm sorry you all are dealing with this."

She said the department is still prioritizing traffic control, though this is the part of the year where they have staffing challenges. She said she can provide details about current initiatives to the council regarding how successful they have or haven't been.

Neighbor David asked why Maple Bluff PD were patrolling Sherman Ave. in the first place, and Lt. Hannah said part of Sherman is technically within Maple Bluff geography.

Lt. Hannah: "I think they should just focus on (Maple Bluff) ..."

Joe L. said while the tennis courts at Reynolds can be a place for unwanted behavior, he does use them with his daughter. "They're a great resource, and they're clean."

He said the staircase can be problematic, but the rooftop court is often clean.

CJ R. with city parks said they are looking to install cameras at the Reynolds Park tennis court in 2027: "At least then we'll have some visuals up there, to hopefully make it safer."

Joey H. asked what they hope to accomplish with cameras, and she said even just having cameras can be enough to deter folks from engaging in illicit behavior. She said they would cost \$5,000-\$7,000.

Lt. Hannah said the police find cameras to be an excellent resource, not only for deterrence, but also for crime-solving. She said they've solved homicides by using footage from city cameras. She also stressed that they do not and legally can not use the footage for anything other than specific purposes.

She said she read that homelessness is currently at levels not seen since 2009, noting that much of the country is facing increased levels of homelessness.

She thanked everyone for working to keep her informed and sending her communication when they need things or have questions.

4. Conor Caloia and Tristan Straub: Breese Stevens development, concerts

Construction of permanent stage, female locker room, art space and increase to potential 15 concerts in 2027

"This is the starting point of the public process", said Eric K. from the Parks Division. "This is not a finalized plan. ... We have a historic landmark and a

beautiful facility that was a burden on taxpayers, very much in decline, and very much underutilized.”

He said over the last decade, they’ve seen massive increases in usage, investment, and upkeep. “For you neighbors, we understand that a massive increase in usage can come with its own challenges.”

He said they want to listen and respond to all concerns that come forth, and said the Breese folks have been very active in doing this as a partner in the property.

“From a city perspective, I want to be clear that without a private partnership there, we would struggle immensely to not have the situation in 2012 come back,” he said, referring to the underutilization and decay. “We also recognize that this kind of facility in a neighborhood has impacts, and we want to do our best to understand and mitigate those.”

Conor C. from Big Top said this year, they’ll have about 200 events and more than 160,000 people come through. “I know that comes with challenges. Our goal, as always, is to limit the disruptions.”

He cited the soccer teams, music concerts, and community events as primary uses they want to continue to focus on going forward.

Regarding music shows, without a permanent stage, they need to continually set up stage, sound, video and back-of-house. He said they also don’t have any amenities for the artists - “They have to eat in tents, and it feels more like a festival vibe instead of a professional concert venue.” He said this is part of the reason they only had four concerts in 2026: “Artists don’t want to come here without the amenities.”

He noted that Barenaked Ladies came with 8 trucks of gear and equipment, but only had room on the stage for four trucks’ worth.

They are therefore proposing to add:

- Permanent stage
- Artist green room with proper amenities

- Back-of-house building, with locker rooms, concessions and catering space
- Paved surface for trucks and buses
- Storm water retention

He said all those improvements would be privately funded, at about \$8 million. "We've put about \$4 million into the property so far."

As for their agreement with the city, Big Top is proposing a 21-year agreement, similar rent scale with incentives for additional capital investment, and a \$1-per-ticket fee that would go into a capital improvement fund for Breese Stevens that the city would control.

They would add increased show fees for any shows after 12 in each season; this fee would increase again for any shows over 16. They also want to ramp up the number of total concerts they'd be allowed to hold over time.

Additional updates include no more than 5 shows on school nights; blacking out the dates for Fete de Marquette; and they would be responsible for maintenance of projects under \$10,000. They would keep the show curfew of 10pm (the last two shows ended before 9:30pm). The decibel limit would stay at 100 decibels. He said noise level is something they could focus on when implementing the new stage and infrastructure.

For bus parking, he said they would all be able to fit inside the venue and have access to electricity, and not need to idle on the streets. There would also be permanent video walls that could be used for sports events, as well; and on game days, the stage could provide additional seating for spectators. As well, it could be used for additional community events, such as symphony, local theater, etc. - "Many of them probably for free."

Peter B. said he and his family love the amenities Breese Stevens have. "To be fair, we live on Gorham, not next door ... but we go to far more things because we can walk to them. In general, I'm a big fan of all the work you are doing."

He said as someone who does traffic calming for the neighborhood, the reality that comes up a lot is the issue of spillage. If you put a diverter in one place, it just pushes that same traffic over a block. "What we really need for the

neighborhood is to narrow the streets and have protected bike lanes,” which he said is directed more at the city than the Breese folks, specifically. He cited similar setups in Chicago, Milwaukee, and even Indianapolis.

“The problem here is that the roads are good, and they’re really wide, and you feel like you should be able to go 40 or 50 miles. And the concerts bring more traffic.”

Neighbor Lia V. said she wanted to echo what Peter B. said. “I grew up here - I remember when Breese was empty.” She wanted to know why the focus was on concerts, when the venue was not originally intended for that. She said they enjoy the music, but there are people racing dangerously down the street trying to find parking. “We’re literally next to a school, and you’re bringing so many people into this neighborhood, and there aren’t enough measures to keep people safe.”

She pointed to current projects that will also be increasing density in the neighborhood. She also said it’s unacceptable to only get a month to respond to this proposal before it goes for a vote. She noted that Breese has yet to even host a full 12 concerts, so she does not have confidence that they can actually handle that many.

Joe L.: “This chumminess with the city, I don’t agree with ... it’s offensive.” He noted that he enjoys the concerts, but he thinks 20 concerts per year is absurd. “I would love to see there be 6-8 concerts per summer, but not 20.”

Joe L. encouraged Big Top to focus more on community events and sports vs. music concerts.

Conor C. said they’ve reached out to traffic engineering to discuss and study how to improve neighborhood parking and traffic. “Just to bluntly address, ‘Why more concerts?’, it’s to improve the viability of the venue. ... The soccer team isn’t profitable, and won’t be for maybe 20 years. It balances out our business to host the concerts. In order to do this type of investment, we need to do this type of programming in order to keep it going.”

Joe L. asked why they can’t keep it at 10 shows, and Tristan S. said the issue is they can’t get to 10 because they don’t have running water. They need these improvements to get shows booked, period. He said apart from Alabama Shakes, he thinks every other band that played this year has played at Breese before, so

they know what they're getting into. "They know that the crowd is magic," even if the amenities are severely lacking.

Neighbor Lia V. asked why they don't build a new venue that's more modern, and they said starting from scratch somewhere isn't financially viable.

Ryan M. noted that he would be cutting off conversation at some point.

Conor C. offered to stay late after the council tackled the rest of the agenda; he also said there's a public meeting next week that folks can attend to continue the conversation.

Chris H. said he's worked with Eric and CJ from the Parks in his role as Parks Chair. He agreed there hasn't been a lot of notice. He noted that he doesn't think they actually are required to come and present to the neighborhood, and that he also encouraged people to get involved via existing public input processes. He said in his experience, the city is always willing to listen.

Chris H. said the main changes he noted included that liquor could be sold at all events, not just private. Conor C. said that change was approved last year. He also asked for clarification on costs. Eric K. from the city said if the Breese folks make capital improvements, the city owns the results of those improvements, and Big Top can gain credits to their base rent based on those improvements.

Chris H. also asked about the fee increases that began in 2026. "Was that part of this?"

CJ R. from parks said that was negotiated separately last year.

Chris H. also pointed out that while this proposal would be privately funded, there are still city costs associated with it; "How do you choose to invest here vs. lifeguards (at city beaches)? That's a basic, basic amenity that's been cut. And that's just an example."

He continued: "This is a big investment and a big expense."

Joey H. said he's lived in the neighborhood almost 30 years. "When I moved here, there was NOTHING. Abandoned car dealerships. A dairy store that was nonoperational. Abandoned houses where no one lived for years at a time."

He turned to the Big Top folks: "Thank you. Thank you for moving into this neighborhood and revitalizing it. I know I speak for a lot of people who aren't here tonight, but I would love 40 concerts! I live downtown in a major city. I'm all here for it."

Neighbors Marc and Evie said they're concerned about the danger of parking, especially with 20 concerts. "We have 11-year-old twins who play at the park, and they can't play there when there are concerts."

Evie said that she's good with 6-10 concerts, but 20 is too much. She also said she'd like to see Breese do more to help mitigate parking, noting that she and her family don't actually have a driveway.

Neighbor David said he lives right by where the new changes would be constructed, and he liked the idea of off-street parking for buses and other trucks. He did note, like others, that it didn't seem like a lot of notice, and he said he'd want to see more details, including specific timelines and what the improvements would actually look like on the ground, as well as how far they are in the current timeline.

Conor C. said they're currently in the full design process, and if all goes according to plan, it would be voted on by the Common Council on Dec. 9th. It would go to Parks Commission first, then Planning Commission, then Landmark Commission, then back to Parks, then to the Common Council.

The city said the updated usage agreement draft would be completed after the designs are finalized, so it doesn't actually exist yet.

Neighbor Matt Krueger said 16 shows at the average of 7,500 people is 120,000 people total for concerts. "There's a lot here. We should slow this down. I think it's great to consider the Fete, but what about Atwood Fest, Orton, Willy Street Fair?"

He clarified that he does enjoy the concerts, but not at the level that's being proposed.

He asked, "What is the benefit to the city? ... We disproportionately bear the impact. Are we getting money for Lapham (Elementary)? Funds put to improving parking?"

Neighbor Sharon said regarding the speed at which this is happening, she only heard about it today when she saw it on the listserv. She suggested additional measures like shuttle buses to parking lots, and signs in the neighborhood limiting parking. "The whole city and the whole region benefit from having concerts, but neighbors have a disproportionate weight to bear the cost. The neighborhood should get some sort of benefit worked out with the venue for bearing the costs ... to offset the added pressures that are put on neighbors."

Conor C. "No surprise, but I'm hearing a lot about traffic. We probably need to sit down with the city. Everything needs to be addressed, but especially this."

Some neighbors interrupted to say, "Not probably - you absolutely need to."

Conor C. said they met with the city a few weeks ago to get the ball rolling on that. Tristan S. said they can certainly do more and push more messaging, and, he said every email they send warns about parking, pushes BRT, tells them to watch out for neighbors.

Conor C. said they've offered to help defray costs of BRT and continue to work with Metro on that.

Patty P. said every year the Breese folks come and work with the council. Each year, they say they want "X" number of concerts, and the Parks Commission agrees. She asked if the number of concerts going forward would be built into the contract, so that it wasn't a flashpoint of conversation each year. They said yes.

Patty P. said it might be worth arranging a meeting specifically with the neighborhood about the new proposal.

CJ R. with Parks said there's a virtual public meeting at 6pm on Wednesday, Sept. 16th, sponsored by Alder Davy Mayer. Breese folks said they posted about the meeting on the listserv, but neighbor Lia V. pointed out that many folks are not on the listserv, and suggested they send out postcards or something to the neighborhood instead.

Chris H. said if the neighborhood wants a specific meeting just for us, that's something the council should talk to Alder Mayer about.

Neighbor Christine confirmed if this plan would change the food and drink part of the venue, and Breese said it was only for the east end.

Lauren E. said she attends a lot of the community events: "I'm a huge fan."

She said Reynolds Park is an underutilized space, and she would love to see if part of their community outreach could be to host some events at Reynolds instead of within the stadium, such as the bodega event that was hosted tonight. She said that could be a way to pay back the community.

Neighbor Matt K. asked if soccer not being profitable was known at the beginning, or knowledge that emerged over time.

Conor C. said they had concerts for four years before they started soccer, and that they'd like to focus on the viability of the space and not necessarily specific business paths. "This is more about, do we want there to continue to be concerts at Breese, or not? ... If we don't do anything, I expect our concert number next year to only be 2 or 3."

Matt K. said it was never clear to him, as a neighbor, that being so concert-focused is where the venue was headed.

Chris H. clarified that Parks has a lot of information on their website regarding next week's public meeting. He said the Board of Parks Commissioners meeting is on Oct. 14th, and that one is in-person at 3:30pm. "You can just show up."

He said that Tristan S. is always willing to work with him on noise and make adjustments when there are complaints. "Maybe part of this could be investing in

better equipment, or a better way so there's more consistent monitoring of noise. Because those are the bulk of the emails I typically get (as Parks Chair)."

Joe L. said there have been some good ideas regarding helping with traffic, but they're just nibbling at the edges. "It's human nature - people naturally drive around looking for parking." He said he'd like 6-10, and would be sad if it were 2-3, but 20 would just exacerbate the existing situation. "And next time, for gods sake, can you please work with us sooner."

Peter B. said making it so the trucks don't have to idle anymore would be fabulous. Conor C. said they'd be able to park up to 8 buses inside the venue, and "significantly reduce the number of vehicles on the street."

Peter B.: "That's great."

Conor C. said Breese folks are willing and happy to meet with folks one-on-one, and said to just reach out to them if interested in a meeting.

Patty P.: "I'm always about process, so if after next week's meeting, people still feel they haven't had ample time to provide input, we can always schedule a neighborhood meeting on this topic."

Neighbor David: "You (Big Top) said you have 8 years left on your lease. Let's say for the sake of argument, this isn't approved. Would you be able to continue to operate at Breese without these improvements? And for the city, how would you manage the property going forward if Big Top isn't able to stay?"

Conor C.: "It's a great place for what we do, but in order to stay there, something significant would have to change in the next 8 years. But I hope Forward Madison and Rally Madison outlive all of us. ... Those teams should be downtown. All teams in those leagues want to be downtown, and we're fortunate in our city to be able to do so."

Eric K. from Parks said preservation through purpose is a much better strategy for historic sites than preservation through neglect. "And unfortunately, we have a long history on that side of the equation." He said they've made great strides in the last few years, including Garver Feed Mill, which involved a ton of city investment.

But Breese is the most expensive; he said the wall doesn't even have footings.

"It's beautiful work, and held for a 100 years without footing, but it won't hold for 200 years."

He said it's "scary" to think about that venue not being activated: "Negative things happen when parks aren't being used. ... I'm not trying to tell you this is the only way forward, but I'm telling you, we are all here as early as we responsibly can be. I don't know what we could have come and asked for input on before we came to general agreement on terms."

He said Breese was the most expensive facility in their system, based on utilities, and had an even larger deferred maintenance amount, compared with now.

Eric K. also called out Chris H. for his dedication to the neighborhood parks. He said this proposal would actually save the city costs and marginally improve income, so doing this proposal is not taking money from other projects (like lifeguards at beaches).

Neighbor Lia V. asked what benchmarks the city is using to determine success, other than just straight profits. She also wanted to know if they have contingency plans for if Big Top has to pull out of Breese.

Eric from Parks asked for clarification.

She said if this goes through and they build the improvements and then Big Top pulls out, what happens? Or what if they do the improvements and then Breese still can't book more shows?

Eric said if Big Top stopped partnering on Breese, they don't have a specific backup plan, but the standard would be to open a request-for-proposals to find a new partner, because it's not the kind of facility that the city would be successful at managing.

Conor C. said the improvements belong to the city as soon as they're completed. Eric K. agreed, saying that the city has zero debt liability for these improvements.

Chris H. said there's \$500,000 allocated by the city for Breese, and Parks folks said that's for historic preservation and general maintenance of the facilities. Chris H. also thanked the Parks folks for attending and being willing to have dialogue with the neighborhood.

Katie C., the deputy mayor, said they'll also get someone from city traffic to come and talk about the issues we're having.

Eric K.: "It is helpful for us to put together an agenda based on specific issues people have raised. So if you have a passion and want to share your thoughts, please do email. We read every email." He said they can use parks@cityofmadison.com, EKnepp@cityofmadison.com, and CRyan@cityofmadison.com.

Ryan M. said the Breese folks reached out to him and Pat K. on Aug. 29th to meet, and he said it's hard when there isn't much flexibility, and they also only reached out to the two of them.

Conor C. said we're all busy and have day jobs, and they want to connect with the neighborhood. He said they would be happy to meet whenever.

Ryan M. also said it would also be great if someone from the city could come every month, because it would be helpful to have someone representing the city on a more regular basis.

5. Nominating Committee results

Joe L. said the committee met on Saturday. Peter B. is considering being treasurer, in which case we'd need to find a replacement for traffic calming (although this is not a required position to have on the council). "Obviously, as we've heard, traffic calming is super important, so if anyone is interested."

Joey H. pointed out that current treasurer Davie F. said the position is too large. Peter B. said they're looking to convert it into three different positions. Patty P. said she found someone to help with merch, and Patty P. would take on the business liaison aspect as part of her role as membership chair. In that case, Peter B. would take on the key finance aspects of treasurer.

Statutorily, the council has to have a president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary.

Patty P. pointed out that we need to publish candidates a week before the fall membership meeting.

Jacob H. said he's interested in helping out more, whether that's treasurer, or VP, or a different role.

6. Treasurer: Davie Froeschner

Not present. Budget was emailed earlier.

7. Membership: Patty Prime

Nothing to share.

8. Events: Lauren Engelke

Fall Fest is coming up on Sept. 27th at 4:30pm! "There will be a giant slide. There will be beer. There will be a bake-off. There will be food trucks. It's going to be a great time."

She also confirmed there will be amplified sound this year. Lauren E. said Allie V. will be putting together a script so that the formal part of the event can be quick and efficient.

People praised the final popsicles on the porch at Reynolds Park.

9. Newsletter: Joey Hoey

He said there will be a request emailed shortly for signing up to deliver the current newsletter.

Kevin D. said he noticed his delivery area needs more newsletters, and so Joey H. said to let him know how many he needs.

Someone asked about total circulation, and Joey H. said he gets 2,000 printed.

10. Development: Bob Klebba

Bob K. sent an email:

"702 E Wash is tall enough that it is throwing shade.

The 8-unit apartment building at Blount and Dayton has a foundation

There are survey markers for the proposed development at Baldwin and Mifflin

The 4 contiguous properties on 800 E Dayton have been broken up. They are being sold individually now."

11. Traffic Calming: Peter Beeson

Peter B. is working on a letter to the city.

12. Web/Newsletter Layout: Keith Wessel

Not present.

13. Parks: Chris Hovel

Volunteer recognition

The vine garden on Mifflin Street was started by Bob Shaw in 1998, and has been maintained by him ever since, but he said this will be his last year. Chris H. said we could try to get the city to take it over, but he'd rather it stay volunteer-run. Some people threw out Jacob H. and Pat K.'s names as potential volunteers.

Jacob H. said Pat K. has been working to transfer responsibility for the Reynolds Food Garden over to him, and noted that he, Pat K., Hilary SK and Lauren E. have been working together on trying to get community gardens going at Reynolds. He said they can just roll that into the Reynolds garden work.

Chris H. said there are a lot of volunteers that help keep the parks going, and he wanted to recognize them. Ryan M. suggested giving folks a shout-out at Fall Fest.

Clarification on sound limits and associated requirements at Breese Stevens

Curfew is 10pm; decibel limit is 100 decibels. Chris H. said there was some misinformation shared on the listserv about these limits.

Erik K. said for tracking that, the parks rangers monitor randomized shows to ensure compliance. He said they used to monitor every show, but that the Breese folks have largely figured it out now.

Ryan M. said Tristan S. and the Breese folks routinely go out with decibel monitors during events to track the level.

14. Secretary: Hilary Stohs-Krause

Nothing to share.

15. Special Projects: Monica Kane

Not present.

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

Sue B. emailed that we had space reserved at MYArts for meetings through the end of the year.

Kevin D. said he had guests from out of town, and that they found Popsicles in the Park very welcoming.

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

Davy Mayer, alder

Not present.

Heidi Wegleitner, Dane County supervisor

Not present.

18. Pres/VP: Ryan McCormick/Pat Kelly

Nothing to share.

19. Action items recap

1. Nominating Committee will meet one more time and finalize the slate of candidates.

20. Adjournment

Michael D. motioned, Patty P. seconded. It was passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.