

PRESENT: Kim Herber, Stacey Kryman, Bill Mahoney, Casey Losh, John Lahti, Nikki Lundin, Jason Cook, Barney Mansavage, Susan Minogue, Holly Smith, Karin Richard, Jay and Deirdre McCrary, Barbara Parker, Kevin O'Doherty, David Brewster
Guests: King County Assessor Lloyd Hara and Assistant, Phillip Sit

King County Assessor Lloyd Hara presented information about the goals and workings of his office, to which he was elected in 2009. He pointed out that there is a relationship between jobs and the real estate market, which has dropped from a high of \$370 billion in 2008 to \$330 billion today. King Co. has 700,000 parcels, 52,000 personal property accounts, 163 taxing districts, and 594 tax levy codes. Valuations are set on January 1 of each year. Barring a voter-approved bond or levy or new construction, local taxing districts are limited to 1% yearly growth. Fifty percent of our property tax is voter-approved. Each year his office inspects 1/6 of the 700,000 parcels. His department consists of the King Co. Treasury Office and the King Co. Tax Advisor. A Board of Equalization comprising seven citizens appointed by the King Co. executive, adjudicates appeals. Property owners have 30 days after receipt of their evaluation to file an appeal.

Washington's is a budget-based system. In a revenue-based system like California's, the property value goes down but the taxes don't go down.

Individuals can type in their home address on the website and get a pie chart showing where their own tax money goes. King County gets 18%; the port gets 2%; schools get 53%; local governments get 27%.

Assessor Hara's primary goal was to improve customer service. Call-backs now usually happen within 24 hours. There is a new website design and a better-trained staff. By renegotiating the union contract and going digital, he has achieved cost savings without lay-offs. New annual property evaluation cards for 39 cities in King Co. will drive homeowners to the website. A GIS application integrates data, merging census data to properties in the county. By 2012 every city in the county will be online.

The average value for 2010 is \$533,433; the 2011 rate per \$1,000 is \$9.66, up from \$9.04 last year. Schools drive much of the rate through levies. Seattle has just one taxing district, while some cities like Kent may have several so that neighbors might pay different rates.

In 2011 he expects to see a shift from commercial to residential, increased demand for rental property, and continued vacancy in retail/office space.

A question from Casey about privacy and security when detailed data about each house is easily available elicited the response that the assessor is interested in transparency, that the data is already available and he is just consolidating it, and that the information can be removed if requested. The availability of the data allows homeowners to compare their own house's characteristics with others like it across the system.

Washington is somewhere in the middle across the country in per-dollar value of property taxes.

To David Brewster's question about why there has been so much volatility in land and house values recently, the Assessor replied that the State requires him to value the land first at its highest and best use, and the remainder of the assessed value is the house. Tear-downs set the benchmark for the value of the land. The requirement puts a more realistic value on the land versus the improvement. The Growth-management Act prevents new construction in some places, preventing sprawl. If gas prices continue to rise, land will also continue to rise in value.

Stacey Kryman reported on Mayfair. It is coming together but she still needs volunteers for the event. Nikki described the need for face painters and people to hand out prizes. Cash donations are also needed. Nikki also needs about seven people for carnival games--no skill required. Shifts are 9:30 to 11; 11 to 12:30; plus 1/2-hour before and after for anyone willing to do set-up and clean-up. Molly Moon will be there and will be open in Madrona by then. The new flower shop on 34th might be a good spot for recruiting volunteers because of people looking for Mother's Day flowers there this weekend. Several nearby communities are holding events the same day as Mayfair, which might impact attendance. Ways to avoid long lines were discussed, but the best solution seems to be to have a parent do the standing-in-line. Tee-shirt sales have made \$75; encourage people to buy them. Stacey will be working with BOOM to figure out an overall fund-raising strategy so that businesses aren't hit over and over.

Kim Herber announced that she has begun working with a woman who is eager to take on the job of editor. Kim has opened a gmail mailbox to manage requests and submissions for the newsletter, madronanews@gmail.com.

By email Paige nominated Stacey Kryman to be vice president in charge of events. Bill seconded the nomination, and the vote was unanimous in favor. New treasurer Casey Losh reported that he has caught us up to date and will switch accounts from Steve to himself after Mayfair is reconciled. He will be involved in the renegotiation of the lease for the shelterhouse. The shelterhouse key will stay under Steve's doormat (assuming he agrees) because of proximity to the shelterhouse. Again no one expressed interest in the job of president. Bill suggested waiting on a decision until next fall when new board members might have a better idea of the job's requirements. Job description was reiterated: the go-to person for the city, sets the agenda for meetings, drives the direction of the council and so individually determines how ambitious the job is. Holly agreed to act as president until we find someone. The idea of "office-of-the-president" was floated, where people just fill in as needed.

The board will get together in June to prioritize and address issues. Holly will come up with some dates and send out an email to reserve a June date.

Kevin O'Doherty would like to work on the fund-raising. He estimates MCC requires about \$15,000/year to run. A goal for the newsletter is to break even. Marie Doyle

hammers on people until the bills for the flower baskets get paid, and the bulk of the funding comes from the merchants. Kevin will be contributing a percentage of his sales in Madrona to help get the council better funded, but he doesn't want that offer to be seen as a replacement for individual donors.

Kim reminded us that the newsletter was never intended as a money-maker. It almost pays for itself if there is a quorum of ads, but we currently do not get the number of ads we got two years ago. It used to come close to paying for itself. Perhaps we could structure the ads so that there are rewards for levels of commitment. The newsletter goes to everybody in Madrona and anybody who asks for it. About 2,500 copies are printed. Most businesses get extra copies for customers to grab. David Brewster cited his experience in going from print to online and wondered about moving the newsletter in that direction, maybe four print and four online editions each year. The advantage of online is that it is more current, can contain more articles, and is cheaper. *Madison Park Times* is a different, more commercial entity. The idea of delivering on foot with volunteers was floated, as is done in Squire Park, but discounted because of the difficulty of getting reliable, consistent volunteers.

Susan is working on getting the city's emergency-preparedness team, SNAP, to come for a workshop in Madrona. They require a minimum of 20 people. Susan will work on securing a date, a time, and a space. If Madrona K-8 is unavailable, she will pursue Madrona Presbyterian or Epiphany for a space. Barney will check on the school's availability. It was decided to keep the regular June MCC meeting on the calendar and choose a different date in June for the SNAP event. Susan requested that people respond when questions are sent out, even if the answer is *No*.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45

Submitted by Deirdre McCrary, Secretary