**GROVE PARK SUNSET MOUNTAIN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (GPSMNA)  
ANNUAL MEETING**

**February 26, 2025**

Boards members present:President Suzanne Escovitz,Secretary Leigh Anne Schwietz, Alan Escovitz, Todd Dunnuck, Stephen Harsnett, Rachel Prioleau, Michael Fisher, Ronnie Mill. The board and twenty neighbors met at Congregation Beth Israel. President Escovitz called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Introduction
2. President Escovitz introduced herself and explained the GPSMNA’s mission.
3. GPSMNA is a 503(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Dues and donations support the three city parks and 22 traffic islands in the Grove Park Sunset Mountain neighborhood.
4. GPSMNA sponsors events and raises funds for neighborhood green space restoration and maintenance.
5. GPSMNA represents our neighborhood when issues with the City of Asheville arise. For instance, GPSMNA intervention prevented installation of cell phone towers on Kimberly Ave and Charlotte St. In another instance, the support of GPSMNA helped to increase the pay for Asheville fire fighters.
6. GPSMNA has worked behind the scenes when commercial developments threatened our neighborhood.
7. Find neighborhood details, including National Register of Historic Places homes, at www.gp-smna.org or www. historicgrovepark.org. We are transitioning to the latter domain, which more accurately reflects the community.
8. A neighborhood map on the website shows six areas. Each area has a representative who serves on the board.
9. President Escovitz reviewed the treasurer’s report. Before COVID our financial position was strong with cash over $100,000. For the four years during and after the pandemic, the annual Tour of Homes, our biggest fund raiser, was on hold. The use of funds for the parks and islands during that period resulted in a 50% reduction in our financial resources. Without generous donors our financial situation would have been worse. The September 2024 Tour of Homes resulted in an increase in our balance to $97,000.
10. Funds are held in 3 different accounts: an operating account (the primary account), the Greening Project Fund (which is matched up to $3000 annually by the Grove Park Inn); and a reserve fund that covers 3 years of maintenance expenses if a major fund raiser is not held. Routine maintenance expenses average $18,000/year. This figure does not account for replacement planting due to vehicular or storm damage.
11. About 80 percent of total expenses go to the parks and islands. The other 20 percent supports a PO box, a Zoom subscription, website hosting, and mass mailings.
12. Other GPSMNA activities:
13. Representation at the Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods (CAN). CAN represents every neighborhood recognized by Asheville.
14. Periodic social events have included a neighborhood picnic, a chili cook-off, sidewalk chalk contest, Sunday in the Park, and a mid-summer community yard sale.
15. Tour of Homes Sept 2024
16. A successful Tour of Homes netted approximately $37,000. The tour takes place on the second weekend in Sept. Steve Harsnett, the tour chair, initiated welcome changes:
17. The tour lasted two days, with six houses on Saturday and a different six on Sunday.
18. 850 tickets were sold via Eventbrite. Eventbrite also generated a contact list with emails of those who purchased tickets.
19. Steve was aggressive in pursuing media outlets and publications to promote the tour. He also secured quality sponsors for the tour program.
20. A pre-tour launch party was hosted at the residence of a GPSMNA neighbor and was attended by 65 individuals.
21. Steve asked homeowners to volunteer their homes for the 2025 tour. Homeowners report that having their home on the tour is a rewarding experience.
22. New Initiatives for 2025
23. We did not launch any new green space projects in 2024 since there was no major fund raiser for 4 years. With the success of the Home Tour, two new projects are underway: a Tree Replenishment Program, and Griffing Rose Garden improvements.
24. Following the devasting loss of tree canopy due to Hurricane Helene, two members of our board, Steve Harsnett and Rachel Prioleau, initiated a plan for a neighborhood Tree Replenishment Program. Any GPSMNA member in good standing is eligible to participate.
25. Steve and Rachel met with the City’s arborist and urban forester, who specified 6 or 7 tree species ideal for new plantings. They negotiated 20% discounts on new trees with two reputable local nurseries.
26. The goal is to improve the tree canopy in right-of-way areas, along sidewalks and roads throughout the neighborhood. Neighbors should verify utility locations prior to planting. In the presence of utilities or other obstacles, planting may be relocated to within ten feet of the right-of-way.
27. The procedure begins when a homeowner goes to a preferred nursery to select a tree. The neighbor then arranges tree delivery, then plants the tree in a right-of-way or within ten feet of a right-of-way.
28. After planting the tree, GPSMNA will subsidize 50% of the total cost, up to a maximum of $150. If the homeowner chooses a $300 tree (an average cost for a 7-gallon tree), GPSMNA will pay half. GPSMNA will reimburse 50% of the cost if a less expensive tree is chosen. If a homeowner desires a larger tree, GPSMNA will fund $150 of the cost, with the homeowner making up the difference.
29. A second new initiative for 2025 involves improvements in the Griffing Rose Garden
30. Five trees in the Rose Garden require replacement. More roses are needed to fill the sparse garden beds. GPSMNA received a $5000 Neighborhood Matching Grant from the city to replace dead trees and plant more roses.
31. GPSMNA is required to match the $5000 from the city through a combination of expenditures and sweat equity. We plan to spend $2500 to expand the watering system and to add landscaping boulders. Sweat equity equivalent to $2500 of labor is necessary since the purpose of the grant is to promote community. Broken down into hours of work, 75-80 hours will satisfy the sweat equity requirement. Twenty people working 4 hours each would meet the sweat equity requirement.
32. GPSMNA would like to improve the lower portion of Sunset Park. President Escovitz will review a previous planting design by Sprinkle Creek. (OPEN)
33. Updates on new initiatives will be emailed and posted on the GPSMNA Facebook page.
34. Questions and comments from meeting attendees
    1. Lenore Medlock inquired whether the trees in the Tree Replenishment Program will adhere to the original tree canopy design (e.g., sycamores on Evelyn, evergreens on Kimberly). The response was negative. The arborist recommended new trees that are less likely to cause damage to sidewalks or during storms.
    2. There was a discussion about traffic issues on Kimberly and Charlotte streets. Narrowing

Charlotte St and Merrimon Ave to two lanes has increased traffic, and GPSMNA opposed these changes. The streets are not safer, nor has bicycle commuting increased. Linda Sarubbi inquired if we are sending a representative to city council meetings to address residential traffic problems; currently, we are not. (OPEN)

C. Tom Hinton spoke about the Treasured Tree program of Asheville and Buncombe County.

1. The program acknowledges the importance of trees. Homeowners may request a visit

to assist in identifying a tree’s species and estimating its age. Notable trees receive a

certificate and a tree marker designating a Treasured Tree.

2. The organization also serves as a tree protection task force. They are advocating for the

city to pass ordinances that protect large trees.

3.Following Hurricane Helene, homeowners have become afraid of trees, resulting in

unnecessary tree removal.

V. Election of New Board Members

A. President Escovitz asked for board position nominations. Members can nominate themselves.

Those in attendance made no nominations. Members were asked to vote for or against:

1. The Board Candidate Slate for New Officers: President Steve Harsnett; Vice-President Phil Page; Secretary OPEN (Lindsey Poli expressed interest); Treasurer OPEN (Interim: Suzanne Escovitz)
2. Representatives: Immediate Past President Suzanne Escovitz; District 1 Rachel Prioleau;

District 2 Michael Fisher; District 3 Todd Dunnuck; District 4 Ronnie Mill; District 5 OPEN; District 6 Jayne Hollerbaugh.

1. CAN representative Alan Escovitz (alternate Michael Fisher)
2. Home tour chair Steve Harsnett.

**Move to accept the board officers and representatives made by S. Harsnett, seconded by T. Dunnuck. Members present voted by a show of hands. Motion carried.**

1. Other business
2. Greenworks will be selling trees March through May.
3. On March 29 Greenworks will hold a workshop called “right tree right place” to guide homeowners what and where to plant.
4. There is a tree and grass sale at Irwin High School on Saturday. Trees and ornamental grass that are good for our area will be available for sale.
5. Steve Harsnett recognized Lindsey Poli, who took the initiative to design and sell ornamental flags for display in the neighborhood. She donates half of the proceeds to GPSMNA.
6. An Asheville Police Department representative was unable to attend tonight’s meeting.

**Move to adjourn made by President Escovitz, seconded R. Prioleau. Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm. Next meeting TBD.**