

## ODWNA Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, January 20, 2016

**Place:** Winchell Elementary Library

### **Board Members:**

**Present:** Peter Kushner, President; Chris Shook, Vice President; Katherine Shook Sandy Bolstad, Secretary; Diana Morton-Thompson, Treasurer; Tom Keyser, Barb Ross, Paul Scott.

**In Attendance:** Approximately 45 people (includes Board members)



- I. **Call to Order:** Peter Kushner, 7:00 pm
  - Sandy was late due to work, missed most announcements
  - Christian Disciples Church Garden Project Meeting - Sun. Jan. 24 and 3 pm and Wed. Jan. 27 at 7 pm
  - Switching February and March speakers, so Norm Carver will be speaking next month about Winchell Neigh. History.
- II. **Treasurer's Report**
  - We have enough to cover the budget for the year.
- III. **Secretary's Report**
  - No report
- IV. **Neighborhood Business (Old and New):**
  - Stadium Lighting Ordinance – City Commission voted “no” on enacting the proposed ordinance. K College, due to a previous agreement with the City, will get 20 lighted nights/year on their football field. Lights can stay on no later than 8:30pm. City will readdress the ordinance at a later date.
- V. **Public Comments:**
  - None

### Notes from our Speakers:

**Guest Speakers:** Peter Copeland, Former Drug Patent Attorney at Upjohn, Pharmacia and Pfizer, left and went to work for a company that sells lemonade, lives in Parkwyn Village and is one of our neighborhood experts on the Frank Lloyd Wright homes.

**Topic:** Frank Lloyd Wright Houses in Kalamazoo

- 1946 Parkwyn Village Association was Incorporated.
- Eric Brown contacted Frank Lloyd Wright and he replies. He and others went to visit Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin East in Spring Green, Wisconsin.
- Peter showed 2 videos and several slides.
- The concept for Parkwyn was a playground area in the middle, with many open spaces. They talked to several architects who were somewhat interested. Home prices in 1946 were planned to range from \$5,000 – 20,000.
- Frank Lloyd Wright corresponded that this sounded like something he would be interested in because it fit with the “Broadacres City” concept, which was a kind of suburban urban sprawl. Only 3 of Frank Lloyd Wright’s communities achieved success with this concept, this one, Galesburg and one other.
- Frank Lloyd Wright (FLLW) was especially interested in the design of interstitial lots with native plantings.
- FLLW was 78 years old when he took on this project.
- FLLW laid out the 47 acre plat for \$1500, and offered discounts to anyone who contracted him to build their house. Houses he designed would include furniture, and he would have veto power on the home designs of other architects for homes built next to those he designed.
- 6 families bought the land for \$18,000, but Dr. Margolis put up all the money up front.
- Kalamazoo Gazette published an article in June 26, 1947 about the project, stating that FLLW was known for his genius and rebelliousness.
- FLLW’s vision for the neighborhood was that it would be a self-governing neighborhood, with true democracy in action, and people working together to achieve individual freedom.
- In 1948, the site plan was complete, lot selection was complete and the roads had been built. The 6 families had to pay for the roads to be built.
- There was to be no discrimination of race or religion. The neighborhood members would review/screen the applicants however.
  - The thought was that community members would have an equal voice in community decisions.
- “The Acres” in Galesburg group and Parkwyn cooperated at first, but they had many challenges, including:
  - Getting plans from FLLW
  - Getting utilities installed underground. The phone company wouldn’t do it until they had 21 paying customers. This turned into a much bigger battle that we would expect today. At Taliesin West in Scottsdale, they lost the battle regarding underground utilities.
  - Selling lots.
  - Threatened highway relocation.
  - Threatened power lines to be installed in the area of the lake.
  - FHA position on round lots. The Detroit, Grand Rapids and Washington DC offices were all involved. They did not want to insure mortgages on round lots.

- By 1950, 26 lots were sold and 14 homes were build. By 1956 all lots were sold.
- The lots ended up being squared off at some point, but the neighbors left the “wild space” between as it had always been.
- There are 4 official FLLW homes and one “not quite Wright” home:
  - Levin Home built in 1948. Lake side has 2 story windows and a deck.
  - Brown Home (Peter is well acquainted with) built in 1951, has a high mahogany ceiling, and a fireplace that can hold (convert to) a fish tank.
  - Winn Home built in 1950. Peter knows little about this home, but it was purchased a few years ago by 2 teachers from Cincinnati, who are restoring it. It has a basement.
  - McCartney Home built in 1949. John lives in, designed with triangle and diamond patters and was built in 3 phases. McCartney was a dentist.
  - Strong Home built in 1950. It was designed by FLLW, but disowned along the way due to design changes that were made. Someone was killed in the basement utility room during the building of it, and this person was a family member. The family sold the home.
- These houses had carports, not garages, and only 2 had basements. Most “Usonian” homes used either Cypress or Mahogany. The kitchens were often long, narrow galleys. You often had a choice of either windows or upper cupboards in the kitchen, but not both.
- All had radiant floor heating.
- Some had mitered corner windows, beveled with a 90 degree angle in the window itself, and no wood on the corner.
- The walls are double-thick concrete block, with an air pocket between.
- The windows are single pane. (This can contribute to utility bills that are a bit high, gas and electric on a 2600 square foot range between 300 and 450 a month in the winter).
- “Usonian” was a concept/term that mean the United States of North America
- This was Wright’s last design phase, his earlier notable design phase was the Prairie School House Stage, which is what you see in Oak Park and River Forest.
- FLLW actually visited Parkwyn Village 3 or 4 times, which was unusual. He visited in February and June of 1947 and 1951. He stayed with the Browns and the Margolis.
- Maintenance issues today tend to center around the heating system and the windows.
- Peter is contributing to a 2 volume work called “Michigan Modern” to be published out of Lansing soon. His contributions will probably be in volume 2.

VI. **Adjournment:** 8:50 pm

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sandy Bolstad, ODWNA Secretary