

## Minutes for ECNA Sep. 17, 2024 Meeting at Counterpath

6:30pm start

Minutes transcribed by ECNA Secretary Matt Ross. No claims are made for absolute accuracy, as these minutes were transcribed with the possibility of human error. Unless direct quotations are used, the reader should assume that the statements herein are paraphrased.

Intro that was read aloud by ECNA President Tim Roberts:

Land Acknowledgments

We are on the traditional territories of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe peoples.

General Updates from Tim Roberts, ECNA President

- Discussion of the importance of the recording of minutes for purposes of record-keeping and fact-checking
- Sharing that we have more details about the land acknowledgement resources on our website
- Statement that we are still thinking about and processing the neighborhood plan
- There was a safety meeting on August 28th at Street Fraternity by the Mayor's Office.
- This meeting generated a list of environmental design and community resources that are meant to craft greater safety in East Colfax.
- Social Equity and Innovation has created an \$11 million funding for the creation of an arm of city government to assist in neighborhood safety via environmental design and "trust patrols."
- Guns were left off of this list, and the question begs: Can you talk about neighborhood safety without also addressing the gun issue?
- East Colfax and Aurora are being targeted by Trump talking heads, and we are getting to know some of the Venezuelan and other newcomer communities here at our Food Bank as folks access service.
- Big News: October 15th at 6:30PM, we will have our meeting up at the Zion Senior Center in Northeast Park Hill, which will be a collab between Central Park, Northeast Park Hill, and East Colfax Neighborhood Associations. We will have the new Director of Community Planning and Development there to discuss land use and hope to have NEST Director Seneca Holmes attend as well.
- The goal of that meeting: how can we prevent gentrification and displacement, and what is CPD's role in this?

- Councilwoman Lewis will also be in attendance to discuss the relationship of city council and these other city organizations.
- Food will be provided from 6-6:30 to promote inter-neighborhood rapport building, and carpooling will also be an option for folks who need (please contact ECNA directly).

#### Open comments

- Meghan Osborn: keep paying attention to the sidewalk conversation
- In 2022, there was a vote approved on sidewalks, and the language since has changed and been rewritten from “in 9 years, we will all have sidewalks” to “in 9 years, or whenever we can.”
- The fees will be higher than was promised, and the language around the ceasing of a price increase annually has been removed. There are annual increases in related fees expected.
- You can apply for a low-income discount, but the access to and knowledge of this low-income discount seems limited.
- DOTI still does not have a plan for implementation, but they are in a research / “study” phase.
- Prioritization will not be on East Colfax as the program starts, and so we will be paying in for much longer before we actually see the sidewalks enter.
- “Violent crime in East Colfax has doubled in the past month.”
- A sex worker was shot and killed on Colfax this month.
- DPD 2CAB meeting revealed the firing of two new hires who engaged in racist talk on a chatroom, and DPD is implementing new anti-racist training strategies
- Meghan Patrick from DPD recently sent around a 27-page list of all police interactions in East Colfax from early March through August.
- Tim can send out the electronic copy to anyone who is interested.

#### Vince from Councilwoman Lewis’s Office in District 8

- Budget process has officially started
- Mayor unveiled proposed 2025 budget: total being \$1.7 Billion.
- This reflects the slowest rate of growth in about 10 years
- No new employees are being added to the budget
- Mayor Johnson has decided to decrease his investment in housing services and immigration assistance.
- \$70 million reduction to housing services is reflected

- They claim this is because the 2024 year required much greater investment in the form of properties and creation of the program
- Encourage folks to sign up for District 8 newsletter to stay informed
- Describes District 8's process of soliciting information and perspective of the constituency rather than dictating policy
- Targeted enforcement happened for expired tags and registrations last month, and there was a 30% increase in registrations seen after this push.
- Colfax BRT is coming, and the Colfax BRT conversation has splintered
- A bill is up for vote at City Council promoting small grants for small businesses to preserve them during the disruption of the construction process.
- Question from Megan Osborn: is there a safety review for the BRT construction process?
- Answer is currently unknown.
- The students who were viciously attacked by a racist troll at a City Council meeting are getting lots of support and everything they asked for.
- Hiawatha Davis Luncheon is coming up in early December to honor the elders of our community, which promises to be a delight for all the community. Those under the age of 65 can volunteer to work this event.

#### Steven Erickson from Cities Rising

- Executive Director of Citizens Rising and founder of Cities Rising
- Non-profit dedicated to best democratic practices for city government.
- Studying how successful cities across the world are governed and encouraging Americans to review and learn from these practices.
- Stockholm, Sweden has a council of 101 members, and there are 9,700 city residents per council member.
- The council is represented by city residents and not politicians.
- The city of Denver has only 11 city council members, in comparison, and each is responsible for representing 65,000 city residents.
- The question arises: what can we learn from political structures of other cities across the world?
- Cities Rising is putting together a Denver-based group to discuss democratic practices that promote effective governance on a city-level
- Has an article coming out in the National Civic Review

- What are the most-salient examples of best practices that folks are looking at?
- If we had 101 city councilmembers in Denver, we'd have one for every 7,100 residents, which means that a person could win that election without much money.
- The thought being: smaller districts would remove the "corrupting influence of money" from local politics.
- There is also no big-money campaign for mayor in Stockholm, as the executive board is comprised of members selected from within and by the 101-member city council.
- The smaller the districts, the less money is involved.
- "The real problem in American democracy is that we are governed by career politicians who take money from the same special interests that they are tasked with governing."
- How have these global models developed? Was there ever a re-start?
- In the 19th Century, Americans had large city councils, but the Spoil System became very corrupt, and party corruption and voter fraud became rampant.
- The progressives at this time thought that they could remove corruption by shrinking the councils, which have now become largely locked in-place in terms of size. The result is that councilmembers are responsible for representing huge numbers of people in very large districts.
- The bigger goal is to get Americans thinking about their cities again and to start to think about the sources of political dysfunction.
- In local elections in the U.S., the average turn out is 15%. In Stockholm, it is 80%+ for local elections.
- The top-three most-livable cities in the world, as ranked by The Economist, have city councilmembers who are elected by districts of 30,000 constituents or less.
- Some people critique wondering that if the councils are this big, then wouldn't it be unwieldy?
- The truth is that if it is handled efficiently, many hands do make light work, and it allows the possibility for harnessing a wide array of diverse perspectives, talents, and specializations.
- The result is that the council is "of, by, and for the people," which in America, "It is not."

Keith Parker from Northern Aurora Health and Civic Engagement

- Behavioral Health and Civic Engagement Chair for Arapaho County
- Advises numerous state representatives and senators that represent Northern Aurora.
- Southeast Denver, Adams County area comprise Northern Aurora
- A study has been conducted on Northern Aurora, which indicates that to live here takes 10 years off of your life.
- This is due to violence and lack of resources.
- The result is that so much trauma is concentrated in one area that it actually has epigenetic effects on individuals.
- The study involved forensic evidence and data from the town halls and workshops that were done within the Northern Aurora community.
- The feedback was an overwhelming call for mental and behavioral health.
- We all, in this area, suffer from collective community trauma. There is not even one organization equipped to deal with the collective community trauma.
- 75% of Northern Aurorans have undiagnosed TBI's.
- TBI's can also occur from sound and sight, not just blows to the head.
- The call to action from the study is that the Colorado General Assembly now is placing a special emphasis on Civic Engagement, Behavioral Health, and psychological first aid.
- The 8 modalities outlined in the strategies for Civic Engagement address impacts that need to be addressed.
- Many folks in prison suffer from TBI's, and when they emerge from prison, this contributes to their difficulties reorienting to the community and increases recidivism.
- Call to the community: we need volunteers to help with the efforts of implementing the recommended changes identified by the study
- Southeast Denver is also considered to have very similar issues as Northern Aurora, and the Task Force will include Southeast Denver in a state bill which will seek significant grant funding to address these fundamental changes.
- Looking for community block grants to assist local nonprofits in their essential work in addressing this crisis.
- Volunteer tasks will be to get the word out and to flyer in preparation of the bill coming to vote.

## Jewish Family Service (JFS)

- “A nonprofit human services agency that serves everyone in need regardless of their circumstances or religious beliefs”
- All of their services are open to everyone
- Launching benefits counseling
- Available to anyone who receives SSI or SSDI due to a disability
- Benefits counseling helps all individuals understand what benefits they receive and why, how to return to work without losing their benefits, how earned income impacts cash benefits, and reporting requirements for each benefit and public assistance program
- Major goal is to help folks on SSI or SSDI work to save money and build assets, which can be a real challenge for folks on benefits
- This service is phenomenal for folks who know they need it and for folks who do not think they would need it.
- JFS offers a host of vocational programs, to help jobseekers gain essential skills that hiring bodies require for roles that pay living wages
- These vocational programs creates a pathway for career advancement
- Foundations of Digital Literacy is the most-popular program, which handles the basics of computer and internet skills, email systems, Windows & Mac OS, Microsoft Office Suite, and Google Drive
- Administrative and Customer service program helps folks gain the skills to become receptionists, office management, administrative assistants
- This program enables folks to earn the PACE certification
- AutoCAD training is a highly-specialized, digital design training for a software that is used in architecture, construction, interior design, and more.
- This is a very up-and-coming area that will enable folks to earn a living wage.
- Each course also includes career readiness classes and connection to one-on-one career coaches, resume assistance, and more
- These vocational programs do cost some money, with the most-expensive being the AutoCAD. There are creative funding processes that do exist for folks as well, so if finances are a barrier, don't give up.
- Job fairs are a regular part of JFS services.
- The next one is on Tuesday, 9/24/24 from 10AM-1PM with many employers who are looking to hire new candidates, to be hosted at Calvary Baptist Church

- The goal is to create a meaningful track for folks to learn a skill that they can use to access well-paying jobs

#### Elisabeth Epps on organizing for gun abolition

- State Representative Elisabeth Epps
- Crash-course on abolition and guns
- A warm thank-you to the East Colfax residents
- Firearms are a “uniquely American and entirely preventable” problem
- As an abolitionist, she aims to eliminate elements that keep us from being “healthy, safe, and free” and to bring about more elements that make people “healthy, safe, and free”
- The bill to ban assault weapons that failed to pass regulated the behavior of vendors, manufacturers, shippers, and importers, not of the everyday citizen.
- This matters because gun control that is predicated on violence or enforced through violence can only perpetuate more violence
- When the perpetrators of mass shootings are police officers, they are not called mass shootings.
- There are some ballot measures coming up that are going to put way too many resources into the worst hands in trying to address this issue
- Discussion of the recent mass shooter in Georgia whose parent gave them the weapon
- Engagement with audience on whether or not it is appropriate to give a 12-or-14 year old what is effectively a machine gun
- States that nobody is saved when you prosecute the parent in this case
- What happens when a new law around criminalization is passed? Enforcement is required, locking people up over it, and prosecuting over it.
- When you are prosecuting a parent who has let a child have a gun, a person has already been shot.
- The abolitionist lens would commit us to “investing in that which keeps us safe.”
- Thinking about the young boy in Georgia who texted his mother, “I’m so sorry” before his actions: what are some of the interventions that could have prevented this?
- Limiting his access to a rifle is a simple way of doing this.
- Believer in that which is evidence-based.

- Acknowledgement of the fact that she largely spoke on the council floor when she was opposed to something
- SB003 discussed, as it was one of the first bills to be voted on and one of the top governor's priority
- This would put \$1.6 million to CBI to investigate gun offenses. This money was necessary because there were sheriffs all across the state who had declined to follow state law when it comes to enforcement of gun controls.
- These sheriffs refused to remove firearms from those who should not have them.
- This is a simple shuffling of money around with a zero decrease in the net number of weapons.
- She asked the Department of Safety to explain how this keeps us safer, and nobody could answer the question.
- Some laws do keep us safer, but other laws necessitate the investment of greater resources into enforcement systems
- Odd alliances have been forged between Black public defenders and the NRA, as this is detailed in scholarship coming out of a young Black professor up at CU.
- The users of the guns are penalized rather than the importers, defense contractors, and sales organizations
- I do support an assault weapon's ban that criminalizes possession.
- "You all who are engaged electorally need to demand much more of us."
- An assault weapons ban needs to not criminalize possession.
- When a terrible shooting has happened, and folks want to add a charge for a gun, the question is: what does it matter when the deaths are already in the double-digits?
- The ban has to be on production, manufacture, import, sale, transfer, vending, and then we can become brave enough to engage in the work of buy-backs, etc.
- Question from audience: Do you know who might carry the bill next session?
- Not sure who is going to carry it next year.
- The Senate is likely to flip Progressive this year.
- Being your representative has been the honor of a lifetime
- There was not just one person who was against the banning of assault weapons, there were many.
- Organizing is complicated and messy. It is Black and brown and working families and children who are disproportionately impacted by gun violence.



- Constituents need to ask more of their representatives.
- At a time that the overwhelming majority of Americans wants to be free from the threat of gun violence, we need to ask more.
- “We need a more Progressive Senate.”
- To be slightly better than the Right is not enough.
- Getting the assault weapons ban through the House was a massive achievement, and big changes like this simply do not happen on the first go-around.
- If a shooting happens in the “right neighborhood” at the “right time” with the “right number of people,” then it can pass.
- I want this to pass because you demand it of us.
- A baby boy should not have access to a weapon that can end his life and his classmate’s life.
- Discussion of the 2nd Amendment and whether or not it still holds water.
- Many cops support the banning of guns because that would actually make them much safer
- Many wealthy democracies do not allow their police officers to carry guns, and the results are much less deadly.
- If this state is going to be a place that stays safe for bodily autonomy, to raise queer children, and to expect a governor not to veto a bill that would prevent wage theft, then we also need to make it safe from guns.
- Analysis of protective factors in well-resourced neighborhoods that do not experience gun violence
- Because these are problems of policy-creation, policy can also solve them.
- We need to ban assault weapons before another school becomes famous for a shooting.
- In favor of a living interpretation of the Constitution
- Invocation of Audre Lorde’s statement that “the master’s tools cannot dismantle the master’s house.”
- Matt Ross stated that the 2nd Amendment was created to maintain the slave system.
- We can know our history and use it towards our liberation in a certain way. We get to choose what’s next for us.
- Runs the Colorado Freedom Fund as well.

- Question from Tim Roberts: what can we do on a local level to really do something about guns?
- Going door to door in this area, what do we say?
- Rep. Epps: I'm much more interested in asking people questions to hear from them what drives them and to see where we align.
- Engaging in dialogue to establish common goals and values is a core way of getting to a common ground that we can agree upon.
- Statement that prison is human trafficking and a form of state-sanctioned violence
- When someone is out talking about arrests and crime prevention, what they really need is for the violence to stop and for the harm to stop.
- Now, we only have the solution of an armed gunman (cop) coming in to address it.
- We have to do things to make sure that there aren't more victims.
- We want the guns out of people's hands, we want the person who hurt us to not come back, and we want them to not harm anyone else.
- Violence interrupter programs are the only programs that work. In this type of program, folks enter in the aftermath of a shooting to try to prevent retaliation via engagement with the victims' and perpetrators' families.
- It's amazing that we can get anything done in these legislative bodies that are so steeped in pre-determined agendas.
- Discussion of the Just Cause Eviction bill
- When it comes to guns, the Democrats are way too similar to Republicans. We are two wings of the same bird, perpetuating the same issue.
- Discussion off Supposed Ghost Gun bills, which ultimately does not prevent the 3D printing of any and all guns and merely demands putting a number onto guns.
- Ask the question: "How does this bill keep us safe?"