**Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee**

Mid-County Regional Center, 2424 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday October 14, 2014

**APPROVED**

**Members Present:** Devala Janardan (Chair), Tom Stanton (Vice Chair), Dan Thompson, Mirza Donegan, Rick Kessler, Derry Goberdhansingh, Carlos Perozo, Leah Haygood

**Members Absent:** William Moore

**Staff Present:** Ana Lopez van Balen, Director, Mid-County Regional Center

**Guests:** Councilmember Nancy Navarro, Adam Fogel, staff to Ms. Navarro, Mary Rollo, Andrew Rollo, Mike Smith

**Call to Order:** 6:31pm by Chair Devala Janardan. Brief welcoming remarks were followed by member and guest introductions. September Meeting Minutes were approved without changes.

**Community Concerns:** In the absence of community concerns, Devala noted the scheduled guest speaker, Alex Cartagena of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, was unable to attend, but that Councilmember Nancy Navarro was able to attend; he introduced her and commented on the walking tour, the retreat, the newly-formed subcommittees and the letter sent on October 10, 2014 regarding the Wheaton Urban District budget submissions.

**Councilmember Navarro:** Ms. Navarro gave an overview of the current legislative session, a presentation to the County’s bond rating agencies, a tax case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. She said that Wheaton and other eastern Montgomery County districts are poised to shift perceptions through “aggressive re-branding”, that in the next four years there are a number of projects to be shepherded to that end. She spoke about an arts center as part of Wheaton’s revitalization plan, that the Council is looking for partnerships in the community, for the community to speak up. She also mentioned the small business assistance program related to the Lot 13 project, and the need to push for funding in next year’s budget, given that construction is to begin in March 2016. She reported on a “very lively” public hearing on Expedited Bill 43-13, which concerns an exemption from certain parking lot taxes. She explained that some who had made investments in parking as part of their projects continued to be taxed, so they are seeking a refund and a reprieve from further taxes under this bill. She also explained that the Parking District is already in a deficit, so this bill would enlarge the deficit. Finally, she talked about the County budget in general terms being similar to last year’s, that it would grow by about 3% and that it would continue to place most emphasis on the school system. She explained that the concern is to address the academic/economic achievement gap. She then took questions from the members.

**Chair Report:** Devala Janardan explained the formation and functions of the A&E and Character Subcommittees, and then invited members to attend one or both meetings to be held on the 4th Monday each month at 6:00pm (Character) and 7:00pm (A&E).

**Director’s Report:** Ana Lopez van Balen discussed the Bus Rapid Transit corridor advisory committees and invited members and other interested citizens to nominate themselves, particularly for corridor 6 (Georgia Ave. from Connecticut to downtown Wheaton) and corridor 7 (Veirs Mill Road, also ending in downtown Wheaton). She reported that the General Design Agreement for the Lot 13 project has been signed, and the design of the interior space is underway and the focus will be on the interior for some time. She indicated a parking mitigation study is also underway. She reported that the A&E District report for FY14 was submitted and that Wheaton’s designation could be at risk. She also reported that the Department of Permitting Services will be conducting a “sign sweep” in Wheaton, which will result in non-compliant signage being removed. Next, she noted that the Nighttime Economy Task Force implementation report is being finalized, and this will include how to increase marketing efforts for the A&E Districts. Last but not least, she recognized Henriot St. Gerard for his service to the community on WUDAC.

**Old Business:**  Devala Janardan shared the signed copy of the October 10, 2014 letter to the County Executive regarding the WUD budget requests. The Character subcommittee was assigned the task of determining whether to prepare a follow-up letter. Mirza Donegan and Dan Thompson described the mixer to be held on November 19th or 20th that will include a presentation by Chamber and WUDAC on issues of mutual concern. The members voted unanimously to support this event.

**New Business:** Tom Stanton noted the A&E subcommittee will look at getting a “baseline” Wheaton’s A&E offerings, perhaps through a survey, in order to identify areas of enhancing the A&E District’s profile and retain its designation. Devala Janardan spoke about holding a clean-up day and/or encouraging individuals and groups to participate in the Adopt a Road program. The Character committee will consider this issue further.

**Adjourn:** 8:08pm