

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes Tuesday February 14, 2017

Members Present: Leah Haygood, Chair; Ali Oliver-Krueger, Vice Chair; Devala Janardan, Tami Axelrod, Mirza Donegan, Ron Frank, Dan Thompson, Megan Remo, Omar Lazo

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Director, Mid- County Regional Center

Guests: Chris Gillis, aide to Councilmember Leventhal; Marcelo Cortez, MCDOT; Commander Lanham, MCPD-District 4

Call to Order: 6:34 pm by Chair Leah Haygood. A motion was made and passed to approve the December Meeting Minutes without changes.

County Council Update:

Chris Gillis, aide to Councilmember Leventhal, briefed WUDAC on several actions of the Council. The County Executive vetoed the new minimum wage bill, listing four conditions needed to earn his support: 1) further study of economic impact; 2) delay phase-in to 2022; 3) exempt small businesses; and 4) exempt youth workers. On March 20, there will be a hearing on the Wheaton redevelopment financing plan; details will be forthcoming. Delegate Al Carr introduced legislation to stagger terms.

Wheaton Redevelopment/MCDOT:

Marcelo Cortez will be in attendance at WUDAC's monthly meetings to update us on Wheaton Redevelopment and hear community concerns. Mr. Cortez discussed plans for the construction of a 14 story building, with space for several agencies and 12,000 square feet of retail space. There will be two 2nd floor meeting spaces similar to those we have now. If things stay on track, it is expected to have everyone moved in by the beginning of 2020. They are in final contract negotiations with the company, with construction slated to start at the end of March. The design is complete for the base structure; the interior of the building is still being designed. Two of the six tie-back agreements needed are in place. If the tieback agreements aren't all in place, there is a second option to be pursued; this second option will cause more delay and incur more costs. Mr. Cortez was asked about criteria for who will get to be in the building; detailed information is currently not available. Mr. Cortez shared his email for inquiries: R.Marcelo.Cortez@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Commander Lanham/MCPD-District 4:

Commander Lanham attended the meeting to brief WUDAC members in the wake of the murders at Westfield Wheaton. Downtown Wheaton has received a lot of attention regarding the murders, and Commander Lanham fielded several media inquiries on crime statistics in Wheaton. Commander Lanham was able to share with those making inquiries that the end-of-year crime statistics were actually down, and was able to demonstrate that the events at Westfield Wheaton are not part of a larger pattern of increased violent crime in the area. MCPD is conducting outreach with mall management, including a successful "Coffee With a Cop" event at the mall. It was brought to Commander Lanham's attention that at the previous WUDAC meeting, a community member made a comment that there didn't seem to be a lot of visible police presence at Westfield or in North Wheaton. Commander Lanham

responded that assignments are fluid, based on predictive patterns for effective crime prevention. Commander Lanham was also asked about ICE activity in Wheaton, and affirmed that MCPD policy is that they do not inquire into immigration status, get involved in immigration issues/enforcement, or work with ICE.

Community Concerns:

Community Concerns was delayed in the agenda, as our guests needed to leave early. Dan Thompson, WUDAC member, updated the committee on the progress with the Wheaton Arts Parade. A route has been mapped out, and outreach is being made to the Latin American Arts League. Westfield Wheaton is also looking for ways to support the parade.

Chamber of Commerce Update:

Mirza Donegan, WUDAC Member and Chamber representative, William Moore, Chamber President and WUDAC member, reported that the Chamber held a successful Business Networking Expo on January 25, with 34 businesses and nonprofits attending. The Annual Awards dinner is scheduled on April 26. Discussion ensued about ways to improve the nomination and selection process for the WUDAC awards presented at the event.

Business and Action Items Update:

Devala Janardan handed out a draft letter to the County Council concerning BRT. Discussion followed. WUDAC voted to send the letter with edits.

Director's Report:

Luisa Montero-Diaz reported that a free tax service will be in the building every Friday until tax day. Free legal services provided by members of the Montgomery County Bar Association is in the building every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month from 5 – 9 p.m.

The FY2018 funding budget for the Wheaton Urban District is level.

Bike Share will be installed at the end of February, with a ribbon cutting date to be determined.

Candidate filing opens on February 28.

Business and Action Item Updates:

Wheaton As a Destination: Tami Axelrod presented a draft plan for comment and discussion. The stated goals of the plan include using research and previous placemaking initiatives in Wheaton, reaching out to other boards/organizations for guidance to establish list of strategies, establishing a framework for possible ways that WUDAC can assist in placemaking and the revitalization of the downtown area, and developing an outline addressing areas that WUDAC could further advocate in future years. Member discussion followed. Members agreed for sub-committee to commence research and provided suggestions on people the sub-committee should reach out to.

Voice for Redevelopment: Devala Janardan shared an updated version draft letter regarding member concerns with redevelopment. WUDAC members made suggestions for minor revision. It was moved, seconded, and approved by unanimous consent to approve sending of the revised letter.

Arts and Entertainment District: Ali Oliver-Krueger presented the A&E District subcommittee's proposed draft plan, outlining the subcommittee's progress so far on their goals to develop a clear understanding of the arts and entertainment landscape and identify the actions that WUDAC can take to support implementation of the Strategic Plan for the A&E District.

Adjourn: 8:33 pm.