

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC)
Tuesday | February 13, 2024 | 7:00 pm-8:30 pm
Hybrid Meeting

In Attendance:

WUDAC: Jim Epstein, Ali Oliver-Krueger, Philip Daley, Tanya Baskin, Kit Wood, David Jarrett, Nina Koltnow

Other County Officials: Mid-County Director Luisa Cardona, WUD Marketing and Events Manager Sidney Cooper, WUD Operations Manager Crystal Ruiz, Community Projects Manager for Mid-County Regional Services Stephanie Bello

Guests: Kathia Chévez (office of Council Member Fani-Gonzalez), Wendy Howard (One Montgomery Green Executive Director)

Public:, Margaret Rifkin (Art and Walkability Project), Frantz Pinthiere, Jason Weakley, Tom Stanton

- I. 7:00 pm Call to Order - Jim Epstein, Chair
- II. 7:02 pm Review and Approve January Minutes - Approved
- III. 7:05 pm Community Concerns
Dave Jarrett (Large Business) has seen positive change in fentanyl usage in kids. He is seeing many fewer. Police presence is greater, especially on weekends, which is very helpful.
- IV. 7:15 pm Reports and Updates
 1. Elected representatives in attendance
Kathia Chévez from the office of Council Member Fani-Gonzalez:
CM Fani-Gonzalez made strides in the following areas:
 - Youth Fentanyl Crisis: Secured over \$3M from the State Opioid Abatement Fund to use a Harm Reduction model to assist youth in need of treatment. In-patient and out-patient treatment will be provided to youth with mental health conditions and addiction problems by a dedicated case-management team.
 - Youth Town Hall was robustly attended. Student concerns include lack of mental health support, drug use, unreliable transportation, unsafe roads, and lack of

affordable recreational and enriching activities. They would like to see more recreational activities and community engagements for youth in the Wheaton/Glenmont area including the realization of the proposed Wheaton Adventure Sports Park. To write to council members in support of funding for the latter, follow [this link](#).

- Budget: Planned improvements to Wheaton Regional Park are in danger of being delayed due to a County Executive recommended cut (relative to the Planning Board's request) of \$24 million to Park's budget. This cut would also hit natural and hard surface trails and vision zero projects. To write to council members in support of funding improvements to Wheaton Regional Park, follow [this link](#).

2. Wheaton & Kensington Chamber of Commerce

Ali Oliver-Krueger

- The WK Chamber had a Happy Hour & Networking Mixer on Wed, Jan 31 (5:30 - 7:30 pm) at the newly renovated VFW Post 2562.

Upcoming:

- Wed, Feb 21 (9 - 11 am) – The Chamber is co-sponsoring a discussion on how the Wheaton Urban District can support and help promote area businesses through events and initiatives. At the Mid-County Regional Services Office, 2425 Reddie Drive, 2nd Floor, Wheaton.

- Wed, Mar 27 (5:30 - 8 pm) – 6th Annual Biz Expo at the Kensington Town Hall. The sign-up for business tables will be up this week.

Via the Chamber, WUD gets lots of complaints about extended parking hours and short meter times. Patrons, particularly to restaurants or multiple businesses, cannot find adequate parking at a reasonable rate.

From other WUD officials: The WUD funding model might need to be reassessed. Parking income helps support the lot maintenance and the WUD, but the parking ticket revenue goes to the general fund not to the WUD. Long term, how do we restructure funding for Urban Districts? Something needs to change; the current model is not sustainable. This issue is historic. Businesses need turnover in nearby lots and spaces. Business owners are frustrated that there are not enough open spots and have reported a loss in revenue since the new paid parking hours (until 10PM rather than 6PM) went into effect. The Council and PLD are reviewing the funding model. Some developers in other jurisdictions allow meters with buttons that grant 1 - 2 hours of free parking, but those are not county owned. Maybe we could look at this model for WUD.

3. Committee Reports

- Economic Development: Ali, Kit, Pedro; this committee just lost its leadership in Karen Cordry and is regrouping.
- Public Safety (Youth Crisis): Kit, Dave, Nina; no new issues; Council Member Fani-Gonzalez and other public officials have taken up the catalyzing issue of fentanyl and mental health.
- Arts & Entertainment: Ali, Jim, Riana; The A&E Board has decided to form a 501c3 to support the A&E district moving forward.
- Transportation And Pedestrian Safety: Nina, Rob; WUDAC is partnering with Westfield Wheaton and members of CM Fani-Gonzalez's team to look at safety issues around the mall.
- Outreach And Communications (Social Media Presence): Tanya, Riana Pedro, Dave, Rob, Jim; see Presentation report.

4. Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB)

Rob Fox, MCCAB Member (not present - this report from Luisa Cardona)

MCCAB has many vacancies. February 15 meeting will be on the community health assessment and how results are being used by the MD Department of Health and Human Services.

Fentanyl Report: Youth intervention meetings are being continued. The number of users is steady, but it may appear less in a particular area due to users moving. Kudos to CM Fani-Gonzalez for convening youth and hiring Identity to create a program for Wheaton-Glenmont/Aspen Hill youth, starting March 4. They will have an outreach team in these areas regularly to provide resources for youth and families, connect them to services. They will also work with schools and businesses to identify students needing support. The goal is for youth to accept services. There are new beds available, even for uninsured and undocumented people, and now Identity will endeavor to get youth to accept them. It is a bilingual enterprise; using opioid settlement funds.

5. Mid-County Regional Services Center

Luisa Cardona, Director

The County has initiated a Health Service pilot contract with Identity to provide harm reduction services to youth in Wheaton, Glenmont, and Aspen Hill.

The Montgomery County Government launched a Community Access Program that offers in-kind assistance to community groups seeking to host events at Wheaton facilities managed by Montgomery County's Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF). There have been a few requests for space reservations. None for

the Plaza, more for planning room for Expos, etc. (It is still cold out.) Haven't started real push yet. For more information, [click here](#).

V. Presentations - 7:40 PM

1. Wheaton Urban District: Marketing and Events Feedback

Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing and Events Manager

Tanya Baskin, WUDAC Member

Arts District: window art project starting on retail space windows of county building; the current exhibit is produced by 5 black women artists, including Wheaton resident Dinah Myers-Schroeder, who is also the curator of the project.

Valentines Day campaign on WheatonMD social media (ends 2/14) - encouraged followers to tag places/people they love in Wheaton. Tomorrow (2/14) WUD team will hand out goodies at Metro for Valentine's Day.

This year WUD is decreasing the number of minor in-person events in favor of a social media campaign to build up to Taste of Wheaton. They will plan to do virtual campaigns (TBD) leading up to and building excitement for the Taste. Example theme: St. Patrick's Day find the "pot of gold" or Easter egg-like scavenger hunt. They are working to make Taste a very big event and want it to include all of what "tastes great" in Wheaton, not only restaurants. The Taste always includes live music and dance, beer/wine garden, kids' rides, business and agency exhibitors along with the restaurants. This year FAs Marketplace owner Fata Togba-Mensah will curate an artisans mart to participate as well. The team will publicize it earlier and more in order to engage greater numbers of people.

There will be a survey on Taste of Wheaton and what the community wants: [Here is the link](#).

TGIF will again include DJs, Hispanic Heritage Month, hope to partner with Chuck Levin's again.

Our new employee (Martha) is promoting "Book a Venue." [Click here](#) to learn how, along with financial help.

The team is constantly evaluating social media traffic; they will report out on that data about every 6 months. Social media traffic is seasonal. Social media posts are evaluated with regard to each event and campaign.

WUDAC needs to keep in mind that its charge is to support businesses in Wheaton, not to create events for events' sake. Engaging and cooperating with businesses is paramount. "Help us help you." The Marketing and Events team is encouraging businesses to participate in promoting themselves through social media and events.

WUD recognizes that they need to do outreach to small businesses about what support they need. Many businesses don't understand WUD's mission. Maybe we need to knock on doors, engage them in training for this type of promotion. "What can we give you that will make our promotion work for you?" How can they use our tools to increase business? The committee needs more feedback from the businesses. Currently materials are in Spanish, French, and Korean.

WUDAC's Economic Development Committee can help publicize Small Business meetings. It is hard to get small business owners out of their business to get to a meeting. They don't have the time. WUD team is getting to know who the owners are.

Most effective relationships are ones where we can deliver something, not ones where we show up with an ask. They need to know that the relationship is beneficial.

Personal relationships are essential.

To have input into any of the issues above, submit written, audio or video testimony: [here](#).

2. Streeterly Updates

Wendy Howard, One Montgomery Green Executive Director

WUDAC should make a Streeterly budget request of the County Council next year. DOT ceded all decisions and budget regarding Streeterly to WUD. Therefore, the Streeterly is a permanent responsibility of WUD. We need to adjust our expectations. Can't just wrap it into our operating budget. Wheaton's Streeterly does not have the resources that Bethesda Streeterly does. Ours is on public property, whereas Bethesda's is owned by the developer.

OMG has the potential to bring in money to augment the Streeterly, and has applied for grants for a design based on best green practices. They are putting together a budget along with a proposal to make Wheaton's Streeterly a flagship of green Streeterly design and practice. (See slide presentation included in this document.) ABS needs to be included in the conversation. They have money for community education around use.

Planners must communicate with the specific businesses in that area to be sure that they all have access to roads, parking, deliveries. Those businesses made investments in tents and other structures used in our current Streeterly. Down the road, what happens to that investment? OMG is committed to enhancing and increasing traffic to those businesses, not causing additional expenses.

Streeterly must be open to pedestrians and bikes. It may need to be opened up more. It shall be public space, not proprietary to the businesses adjacent.

Green Team has to clean snow; important to have walkway in between businesses. Businesses may have to do more of their own snow removal in cooperation with WUD.

There won't be a lot of change for the coming season. What DO we need by then? At least a temporary snow removal plan and agreement with the businesses.

There could be a Streetery meeting regarding best practices: Bethesda, Silver Spring, Rockville, Wheaton.

A "No Thru Street" sign is needed at University and Elkin. Crystal is meeting with DOT about this.

VI Old Business 8:15 pm

There is currently a vacancy on WUDAC. See below.

Montgomery County Board Vacancies
Apply Online at Links Below

County Executive Marc Elrich is committed to representation on all of the County's boards, committees, and commissions that is reflective of, and responsive to, our County's residents. Public participation contributes to the work of County government and provides an important service to the community when a variety of issues, concerns, and viewpoints are presented. You may access information regarding boards, committees, and commissions, including [application instructions here](#). Please carefully read **application instructions** on that page. Then select **View and Apply for Vacancies** for all currently posted notices.

Currently, there is a valuable opportunity to serve on the following:

- [Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee](#)

VII Adjourn 8:30 pm
NEXT WUDAC MEETING: March 12, 2024