

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

2400 Arcola Ave, 2nd floor, Wheaton MD 20902

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday March 12, 2019

Members Present: Bill Jelen, Chair; Chelsea Johnson, Vice Chair; Mariela Garcia-Colberg, Omar Lazo, William Moore, Mirza Donegan, Jim Epstein, Leah Haygood, Stuart Amos

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, RSC Director; Kevin Jackson, Aide

Guests: Justin Stone, SBAP, MOCO Dept, of Finance, Michael Paylor, MCDOT Chief of Traffic Engineering, Karen Cordray, Kensington Hgts Civic Assoc., Sean Corbett, Wheaton Hills Civic Assoc., Neil Greenberger, MOCO PIO, Michael Darling, MCDOT, Laura-Leigh Palmer, resident

Call to Order: 6:37pm by Chair Jelen

Review Minutes: The February meeting Minutes draft was reviewed. A motion was made and passed to approve the minutes without changes.

Community Concerns: Laura-Leigh Palmer asked whether the grass at the new Rec Center would be artificial. No answer at this time.

Jim Epstein noted that the Wheaton Arts parade has a new Poster. There will be an Award Presentation this Friday at 4pm at IHOP. The parade is September 22.

Reports:

a. County Council: No report

b. Chamber of Commerce: William Moore, on behalf of the Wheaton/Kensington CC, updated WUDAC on their monthly meeting which was held earlier today. Some topics discussed included vacant stores and AVA parking. Omar Lazo offered additional comments to WUDAC about the AVA situation. William noted a mixer held by the Chamber during Black History month. There was a good turnout to hear a talk on "Thurgood Marshall's Montgomery County Milestone" by Ralph Buglass of the Montgomery County Historical Society. Upcoming events include a breakfast mixer, co-sponsored with the Greater Silver Spring Civitan Club on the benefits of employing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, on Wed. March 27 at Panera Bread 8-9:30am, the Community Awards Dinner at Hollywood East Café on Wednesday April 24, 6-9pm, Kensington Day of the Book festival on Sunday April 28, 11-4pm, and a proposed mixer in May at the Knowles Station Wine & Co.

c. Mid-County RCS/WUD: In order to save more time for the Traffic Flow discussion, RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz delivered a handout summary of happenings in the area. She did mention though an upcoming 5th annual Montgomery County Greenfest from 11am-4pm April 28th at Brookside Gardens. It is the first time at this location and if a success it will remain here.

She introduced Michael Darling from MCDOT, who then updated WUDAC on the revitalization project. They are finishing the 6th floor. Excavation for the Town Square is almost complete. All power lines are buried and waiting on the rest of the poles to be removed. The live camera for the website has been moved to the top of The Exchange.

Luisa announced that the Montgomery County Finance Dept. is taking the lead on completing the application for renewal of Wheaton's status as an Enterprise Zone. The 10 year designation expires this year.

Luisa asked Justin Stone to update WUDAC on the SBAP. He stated that there have been 34 disbursements to 17 recipients, with a total disbursement of \$546,680 so far, \$282,000 in FY2019. There is \$141,000 left in the budget for assistance this year.

Luisa quickly noted the County Council's work on the Veirs Mill Road Master Plan with work sessions and a public meeting at Holiday Park.

Work has begun to organize around the 2020 Census. There will be a real push to count target population such as Youth.

Luisa mentioned the work of Emergency Management in light of the 18 flash flood warnings compared to 4 last year. County wants to map areas where there is nuisance flooding. Many County agencies like MCDOT, DPS, etc. are teaming up to work on this

Lastly she mentioned that we need nominations for the two awards, Business Leader of the Year, Best Property Improvement, that WUDAC will present at this year's Community Awards Dinner.

Wheaton Revitalization Project-Traffic Flow: Michael Paylor, MCDOT, led a discussion of proposed MCDOT changes to the roadways around the new Park and Planning building and Town Square. He passed around engineering blueprints to illustrate the changes. Comments were made that it would be easier for us to visualize if he could provide artist's renderings. Questions included pedestrian access to the mall, the new no-through of Reddie to the Mall, weekend Reddie closure, and the traffic backup on the turn from Blueridge to Georgia. Mr. Paylor stated that the County Executive is open to changes and it's not too late to comment.

Business & Action Item Updates:

a. Redevelopment Committee update: Mariela Garcia-Colberg gave a brief review, stating that it has been a busy month of meetings and emails. They are meeting tomorrow to do a walk around with select stakeholders as a follow up to the forum. Jared Solomon and Kristy Daphnis are among those scheduled to participate.

Chelsea Johnson reported on a February 22nd meeting where they discussed ways to reach the CE before budget set. More money is needed for A&E staff and programming for Town Square. On March 7th they had a conference call to approve a letter to the CE. The committee feels there is a need for two full time employees. Bill Jelen added that they need to get a 2nd letter to the Council soon and then organize to get ahead of next year's budget.

b. Pop-Up Park Group: Bill Jelen updated WUDAC members on a meeting with Sidney Cooper. They are proposing a Spring Pop-Up Playground in Veterans Park. They reached out to Casey Anderson's assistant for stuff we can use. May 17-18 are tentative dates. There is a meeting next week to follow up.

New Business: Chair Jelen led a discussion of the store vacancy problem. He restated the problem and then solutions other cities have done, including fines and inspections and pop-up retail. One member suggested simplified leasing forms and another member reminded them that real estate is heavily regulated by attorneys and brokers. It was noted that CE Elrich is scheduled to meet with a major property owner. Luisa and Omar will follow up on that meeting

Adjourn: 8:31pm

