

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday January 11, 2022

Online Meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Jim Epstein, Chair; Ali Oliver-Krueger, William Moore, Chris Pyon, Bill Jelen, Stuart Amos

Staff Present: Pete Fosselman, Director, BCC RSC; Crystal Ruiz, Operations Mgr, WUD; Sidney Cooper, Marketing Mgr, WUD; Shawn Morris, Aide; Jake Adler, Community Projects Mgr

Guests: Rob Fox, MCCAB; Omar Lazo, Los Chorros; Max Socol, Meg Morrow, Delegate Al Carr, Andrew Rollo, Margaret Rifkin, Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Lt. Douglas Cobb, Cmdr. Nicholas Augustine, Chip Py, Krista Brick, Wheaton Gateway; Eden Durbin, aide to Delegate Solomon, Elizabeth Gallauresi, A&E consultant; Ramona Bell-Pearson, CUPF Director

Call to Order: 6:32pm by Chair Jim Epstein. He shared that this meeting is being recorded. All who are dialing in please identify yourself to the Secretary. He then addressed the meeting protocols and noted that the Agenda can be found in the chat.

Meeting Minutes Review: A draft of the December Meeting minutes was reviewed. A typo was discovered in Urban District Updates provided by Crystal Ruiz. The word “funding” was substituted for “finding”. A motion was made and passed to approve the Minutes with the changes noted.

Chair Epstein announced that a video recording of our December meeting could be found online on the Montgomery County website.

Reports/Updates: a. Legislative: Eden Durbin, Aide to Del. Solomon, noted that the General Assembly session starts tomorrow. Some issues for legislation to be championed by Del. Solomon will concentrate on pedestrian safety, the environment, sustainability and child care.

Chair Epstein shared that Councilmember Nancy Navarro sent a memo to the County Executive concerning funding earmarks in the CIP budget for a Cultural Arts Center in Wheaton.

b. W&K Chamber of Commerce: Ali Oliver-Krueger, on behalf of the Chamber, stated that the Chamber did not hold a meeting in December. She updated members on the completed Holiday on Duty meal program and Angels for Children toy drive. She also noted that the Community Guide will be out soon.

c. MCCAB: Rob Fox shared that their next meeting will concern Thrive 2050. He also updated WUDAC on a meeting MCCAB had that included topics on bikeways, climate action and crime.

d. Police Update: Commander Augustine introduced Lt. Douglas Cobb as the new Deputy Commander for the 4th District. He is transferring from the 3rd District. The District is currently at 22 officers, down from 30. Homicides, vehicle theft are up in 2021 over prior year. He shared that crime is down compared to 2019 since the police were redeployed. He mentioned a meeting held with Stuart Amos last week about crime at Westfield. WUDAC member William Moore shared that on a couple of recent crimes near his restaurant they encountered police indifference, that the police were there for other duties and couldn't help with this crime. Other members chimed in with similar stories. Cmdr. Augustine responded that it should be reported to 4th District headquarters when it happens.

e. Mid-County Update: Pete Fosselman, BCC Regional Director, in place of Luisa Cardona who is on leave, shared that he has been leaning on Crystal, Shawn, Jody and Sidney to help with issues in the

Wheaton Urban District. He speaks with Luisa once a week. They are wrapping up a Memorandum of Understanding for Community programs.

Presentations:

a. Marian Fryer Town Plaza: Ramona Bell-Pearson, Director of CUPF, updated WUDAC on the status of issues about the Town Plaza. She shared a brief background on CUPF including their responsibility for permitting and managing events in the Plaza. They will be hiring three staffers dedicated to the Plaza, one program manager and two event monitors. There is a Memorandum of Understanding being written now. The funding comes from the RSC. They want to see a grant program, Community Access Program, currently in Silver Spring, for Wheaton to help with permitting fees. There will be a need to go to the CE and Council for that. Sidney will be responsible for Plaza events until CUPF takes over. Jim Epstein inquired about promised upgrades to power, lighting and sound for the Plaza but was told by WUD Mgr. Crystal Ruiz that that will have to wait until Spring.

b. A&E District Update: Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing Manager, led a slide show presentation on promoting Wheaton. She recapped her ReDiscover Wheaton campaign, including the local attraction guide and Loyalty card. She also shared highlights of the Marian Fryer Town Plaza dedication. Other events covered included the TGIF Summer Concert Series and Wheaton Arts Parade. Some upcoming events may include IHeart Wheaton in February, Curated Conversation in April and Taste of Wheaton in June. They are also working on Light pole banners and window art installations.

Elizabeth Gallauresi, A&E consultant, led a slide presentation on the history and benefits of being an A&E District. It's helpful to make Wheaton a tourist destination. She outlined some benefits including tax benefits for property owners and artists.

It was mentioned that we need funding in CIP for a future A&E Center.

Old Business: We need a response from all members to our Doodle Poll for a retreat date. We may be able to have a Facilitator present at a February retreat.

FY23 Budget Letter: There was a member discussion about items to be included in a FY23 Budget letter. Some mentioned include funding for WAP, a Cultural Arts Center, and CUPF funding. Crystal shared that OMB asked for specific spending priorities. Suggestions included Clean and Safe Team funding, landscaping, Marian Fryer Town Plaza and Veteran's Plaza funding. Bill Jelen will work with Crystal to ascertain needs. Ali stated it would be helpful to know of past requests as we formulate our FY23 ask.

Community Concerns: Krista Brick introduced herself as the new community liaison for the Wheaton Gateway Project. They made a new submission at the end of December with the County and would like to discuss at a future WUDAC meeting.

Margaret Rifkin announced an Open Call for Artists until Jan.31 for a mural on Georgia Avenue. They have received two grants to fund the project.

Jim Epstein asked about sponsoring a candidate forum. We would need a date and a committee to work on it. Bill Jelen volunteered to help. He felt the Retreat would be a great time to talk about it.

Crystal Ruiz stated that signups to testify for the CIP have opened up. She will send a link.

Jim Epstein: County is giving away Covid Antigen tests at the Library.

Adjourn: 8:48pm

