

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting February 8, 2022

Online via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 6:37pm

Present: Jim Epstein, Mariela Garcia-Colberg, Chelsea Andrews, William Jelen, Omar Lazo, James Mensah, Robert Fox, Chris Pyon, Ali Oliver-Krueger

Staff: Crystal Ruiz, Kevin Simpson, Pete Fosselman, Shawn Morris, Della Stolsworth

Community members: Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Chris Pyon, Pedro Matamoros, Meg Morrow, Andrew Rollo

Chair Epstein opened the meeting and opened the committee meeting with the rules and regulations of the meeting. Motion made to accept meeting minutes Ali Oliver-Krueger, Mariela Garcia-Colberg, second; all in favor, one abstention (Chelsea Andrews).

Wheaton & Kensington Chamber of Commerce – Ali Oliver-Krueger

Join Chamber Meeting will take place Friday, Feb. 11th w/ Senator Ben Cardin re: multiple community issues Vicki wkchamber@wkchamber.org

MCCAB Report – Robert Fox

- Thrive 2050 was the topic at their last meeting where the county was soliciting feedback on the plan and priorities

Mid County Report - Pete Fosselman

Joint meetings will start meeting with Chairs of other County Advisory Groups with the goal of collaborating. Status updates:

- Marion Fryer Plaza - working with DOT to address pending issues
- Assistance for Afghan refugees – including story time for the children, exercise for adults, translation (DO NOT POST)
- MOU being reviewed by County Atty w/ CUPF Related to events management

Shawn Morris reminded everyone that the **I Love Wheaton** event will be held this Sunday at 12pm - 4p.m.

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Update - Crystal Ruiz

- Procuring Tables and Chairs for Plaza; Veterans Park activities; Pump track location TBD; Working on lighting conditions around the Urban District – Ennals and Triangle

Wheaton Downtown Study Progress update - Montgomery Planning (Luis Estrada & Jessica McVary)

Presentation slides were provided

- Purpose of study is to identify opportunities to create a cohesive downtown that integrates larger development with Wheaton's' small-scale charter while meeting the needs of small businesses, property owners and resident to further Wheaton as a complete community.
- Ongoing engagement:
 - o Key: Streetscape Standards Update started in November 2021 and will have a Stakeholders meeting
 - o Consultant will be retained to focus on Market Analysis for small property owners
 - o Outreach process began Dec. 2021
 - o Spring 2022 Planning Board Briefing
 - o Reached out to various county officials, county gov'n't, local organizations, property owners and small businesses support
 - o Exploring façade matching program – encourage county and property owner improvements
 - o Having challenges reaching out with small businesses owners and seeking support
 - o Stakeholders Mtg in Spring to create a document that can help identify projects that are feasible and the county can support; recommendations for gov'n't CIP projects; better connections with Core and surrounding neighborhoods; Streetscape standards update; Assessing parking options throughout Wheaton
 - o Next Steps: Community Questionnaire, Market Analysis; Streetscape Standards Update; Outreach
 - o Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis
- Q&A
 - o William Jelen – Shared Hot Spots for pedestrian issues in Wheaton; Recommends going to events, such as the upcoming I Heart Wheaton to get more feedback from community members
 - o Rob Fox – When will the community survey be ready? Pending and working on it and will circle back
 - o James Mensah – Will the survey be in different languages? Currently English and Spanish, open to other; Targeting different populations? Open to meeting with folks
 - o Jim E. - Margaret Rifkin felt like small businesses need more than 50% funding for streetscape
 - o Natali Fani-Gonzalez – Planning Board hired people to canvas and we should do that here... Shouldn't do just online forms; Should also
 - Jessica – Looks at analog vs. digital
- Next Steps: Return to July '22 WUDAC Meeting

Letter of Support being requested for Mission First Housing Group

- Pete Fosselman: Will obtain more information for our review
- W. Jelen + other community members: Want more information, concerned about dead-end and no connection between the neighborhood

William Jelen (Budget letter) – Subcommittee: Jim, Ali, Rob and Crystal met to discuss budget letter. Priorities were discussed and it was agreed that the Urban District would provide specific budget need.

Proposed Priorities (in no particular order):

- WUDAC supports the continued funding and prioritization of the Planning and Construction of a Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center.
- Fully fund commitments to the Marion Fryer Town Plaza
 - Stage repair and safety concerns, signage – digital signage + power source
 - CUPF Project Manager and 2 staffers – Supports private events
 - County budgeted events
 - Marion Fryer Plaza needs: Equipment, power,
 - Clean and Safety team (Red shirt team) – Need 4 – 5 more staffers
- WUDAC asks that the county begin redevelopment of Veterans Park, which currently sits empty, to be a more welcoming and vibrant place as well as a memorial to all who have served. Community ideas for this area include: public art, a playground, a dog run as well as a plaza for events.
- Pedestrian Safety improvements – detailed conversation about bike lanes, connection walking path Hermitage to Amherst, etc. Will highlight previous points raised.
- WUDAC requests base budget funding for the yearly Wheaton Arts Parade (\$15K), the Mural Arts Program (35k). In the past five years Wheaton has proven it can support and foster homegrown initiatives. It is time the county gave these entrepreneurial initiatives a solid foundation for further growth.
- Façade and Streetscape Improvements. WUDAC requests greater support for our small businesses and property owners in the form of larger facade improvement matching grants and the implementation and funding for the new streetscape plan the planning office is developing.
- Determine who are key people we can follow-up; we will finalize letter

Motion: Move by Ali Oliver-Krueger to approve letter with major bullet points as discussed and allow the subcommittee to make revisions as needed; Rob Fox, Seconded motion; Discussion – Need additional numbers and closing verbiage; Passed unanimously

WUDAC Retreat Reminder (Della Stolsworth, Montgomery County Conference Resolution Center) – A survey has gone out to committee members to help frame retreat. Retreat will occur on February 23rd. Della introduced herself and background. Meeting recommendations will be anonymous. Retreat topics will discuss forum, committees, relationships and figure out priorities.

Candidate Forum – Will follow-up to discuss whether it should be virtual or in person.

No public comment

8:28 p.m. - Mariela moved to adjourn, William seconded.