

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday March 09, 2021

Online Meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Chelsea Andrews, Chair; Mariela Garcia-Colberg, Vice Chair; William Moore, Ali Oliver-Krueger, Chris Pyon, Bill Jelen, Jim Epstein, James Mensah, Crystal Myers

Staff: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director; Shawn Morris, Aide; Kevin Simpson, Community and Economic Coordinator; Jake Adler, Community Projects Coordinator; Crystal Ruiz, WUD Manager

Guests: Karen Cordry, KHCA; Dan Thompson, WAP; Paul Mortensen, Luis Estrada, MoCo Planning; Andrew Gagliano, Maier & Warner; Marcus Ervin, Kristyn Greco, HOC; Margaret Rifkin, resident; Amy Donin, MoCo DGS; Goyer Roberts, Duffie Companies; Natalie Vetter, Wheaton Recreation Center, Bob Mazoka, Wheaton Gateway

Call to Order: 6:34pm By RSC Director Luisa Montero Diaz in the temporary absence of Chair Andrews. Luisa noted the one year anniversary of the Covid pandemic. She continued by addressing the meeting protocols and agenda. WUDAC members introduced themselves.

Minutes Review: Chair Andrews led a review of the February Meeting Minutes draft. A motion was made and passed to approve the Minutes without changes.

Presentations:

a. MNCPP-C Mural/Artist Selection Process: Paul Mortensen, Chief, Senior Urban Designer, the County's Planning Dept.(MNCPPC), led a discussion on the selection process for an art mural on the North wall of the new P&P Building. Stonebridge provided funding and the County initiated an RFQ. There were 28 submissions. A jury named 4 finalists. A stipend was issued to the 4 finalists to submit drawing and budget. One did not complete assignment so 3 finalists will go to a public vote. They will need to submit a final image by this Friday. Vote will begin next week.

Member inquired about touching up existing mural on building in same area. Luisa stated they inquired but property owner Greenhill showed no interest.

b. Wheaton Gateway: Goyer Roberts from the Duffie Companies updated WUDAC via a slide presentation on the progress of the Wheaton Gateway Project. He introduced himself and gave background information on the three partners in the project: Duffie, Willco and HOC. He went over the proposed Sketch Plan and the project timeline from the Concept Plan completed in 2020 through the commencement of construction scheduled for 2023. Member discussion and concerns ensued. It was announced that the Wheaton Arts Parade would partner on the Gateway project for site beautification.

Old Business: None

New Business: Luisa introduced Crystal Ruiz as the new Wheaton Urban District Operations Manager, replacing Joe Callaway. She is currently the deputy Manager in Silver Spring so there will be a transition period with a tentative start date of 3/29. Crystal then greeted everyone and gave some background information.

Reports:

a. Chamber of Commerce: James Mensah, on behalf of the Chamber, reported on the Chamber's monthly meeting held that afternoon. They had a lengthy discussion on the new PPP loans and concerns about the financial health of restaurants in the area and the effects the 10pm curfew on alcohol sales was having on area bars. Also on the agenda at today's meeting was the Cultural Arts Center at the Lafayette Building in Kensington and how it could be promoted.

b. Mid-County: RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz updated WUDAC on the progress being made on the problems of the homeless and skaters in the area of the new Town Plaza. DHHS has partnered with Pathways DC to provide two outreach workers to work with the Red Shirts on those issues.

SHA is piloting a Shared Street program on University from Arcola to Amherst, closing a westbound and eastbound lane for bicycles and pedestrians.

c. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan: Mariela Garcia-Colberg reported on the results of a previous meeting. Mobility to and from the park needs to be managed on a comprehensive level. Currently the only comfortable way is by car. P&P, MCDOT, and SHA need to collaborate to find solutions. Some recommendations are a Circulator Bus to the Wheaton Urban District and Glenmont/Wheaton Metro Stations, Entrance/Access improvements along Shorefield, Glenallen and Orebaugh, updated Bike racks, trail improvements, and signage and wayfinding. Next meeting is March 23 from 7-8:30pm. She will send a calendar invite to the meeting.

Action Item Updates:

Sub-committee Reports

1. Covid-19 Recovery: Chris Pyon reported that he is helping one business with the PPP application process.

2. Town Plaza: No meeting. It was noted that the committee lost two members due to term expirations.

Luisa noted that Project Manager Keith Compton is looking to use CIP money to improve sound and light system. Skateboard issue is also part of CIP budget.

Member shared concern about ice and water damage to the stage. It will be fixed on Punch list but will be WUD responsibility going forward.

3. Communications/Messaging: No meeting. Sidney is working on podcast. First piece is an interview with Nori Sato and local artists on the art piece on the Town Plaza

4. Pedestrian/MCDOT safety and Funding: No meeting

Community Concerns: Margaret Rifkin shared that she is creating a core group for a walkability project. She has an art project at Price and Elkin. She needs help with crowdfunding, applying for grants. She has three projects she wants to move forward.

Adjourn: 8:29pm