

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday

June 8, 2021

Online via Zoom

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

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director; Shawn Morris, Aide; Kevin Simpson, Community and Economic Coordinator, Jake Adler, Coordinator

Guests: Ronnie Warner and Amy Donin, DGS; Margaret Rifkin, The Art and Walkability Project; Rob Fox, Omar Lazo, Los Chorros; Chip Py, Marcus Ervin, HOC; Anderw Gagliano, Maier-Warner; Lorena Jarrin, LEDC; Dan Thompson, WAP

Call To Order: 6:33pm by Chair Andrews. She noted the updated agenda and zoom meeting protocols.

Meeting Minutes Review: The May Meeting Minutes were reviewed, voted on and approved unanimously with two changes proposed by Luisa.

Presentation

Wheaton Arts/Cultural Facility: Ronnie Warner and Amy Donin from DGS gave an update on the Wheaton Arts/Cultural Facility program of requirements progress. They reviewed and walked through the architect's test fit of a facility on Lot 13, as a standalone building AND as part of a larger residential building. They discussed the limitations of this site due to its square footage (18,000 sq ft), the lack of space for parking, the limitations to height of a residential building and the fact that the arts facility would need to be on two floors, thus minimizing efficiencies. The total cost of the stand alone would be \$38 million and would be 42,000 sq ft. The cost of the total building including arts center and residential is estimated at \$70 million. The CE was briefed and instructed DGS to explore other site options. This exploration is now in process.

QUESTIONS from MEMBERS:

Q: Are you exploring other sites as standalone or combined with something else?

A: Both – DGS is looking at all options

Q: We heard you had talked to Westfield and that the HOC site might be an option. Is this true?

A: Yes, but everything is still in process

Q: What is the dollar limit? Was \$38M reasonable?

A: Because of the inefficiencies of using Lot 13 as a site, that was the amount given and other alternative amounts using this site have not been explored.

Q: What's the timeframe? Was all of the \$100 K allotted to test fit spent?

A: DGS will continue to work on this. No set timeframe. The full \$100K was not spent and what remains will be used to do another test fit once a site is identified.

Q: Did you look at Lot 17 or 14?

A: We haven't looked at these, but will consider.

Q: What about the WMATA land north of AVA Wheaton?

A: This is owned by Parks and will be part of a land swap with MHP.

Q: If the center is on Westfield property, would it be a stand alone or connected to an existing building?

A: We are waiting to hear back from Westfield on options.

Q: How can WUDAC continue to provide input? EX: more classrooms, artists housing, maker space? (See Jim Epstein's white paper)

A: Before moving to any other site, we would come back to WUDAC to seek feedback. Expanding the current design would require budget re-considerations.

Q: What's going on with the retail and day care space in the new building?

A: Other DGS staff are working on this. Ronnie can connect us to them for answers.

Q: Is there an option for artists housing like the art space that is opening in Silver Spring?

A: This has not been considered, but if we find space that could accommodate housing for artists, that could be added.

Q: What is the ideal amount of space needed for the arts center?

A: 25-30,000 sq feet on one level. If both performance spaces are on one level, you save a lot of space. There is also interest in incorporating outdoor space, which would be additional square footage.

Q: Why can you only build 5-6 floors of residential on Lot 13?

A: We are constrained by FAR for P3 projects.

Q: Why not make \$38M available for a Lot 13 fit?

A: This is not off the table; we are looking for other options for comparisons.

Old Business:

- Wheaton/Kensington Chamber Awards Nominations and Vote: Islands Lounge for its mural was voted as WUDAC's awardee for Best Property Improvement of the Year. Stuart Amos was nominated and voted as awardee for Business Leader of the Year.

Reports:

- **Ali gave a report on the Chamber's activities:** Upcoming Awards Event; June 10 Zoom monthly ConnectSpeed Networking event; and that the Chamber is doing okay with dues collections.
- **Luisa gave a Mid County Office report:** COVID vaccine update; two new murals in Wheaton; first event on the Town Plaza scheduled for July 9th with the Night Hawks. (Chelsea thanked Luisa for her work and accomplishments as she prepared to retire from the County)

- **Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan:** Mariela indicated that the last task force meeting will be June 29th in person.
- **Sub Committee Reports:** Jim gave an update on moving the Plaza punch list forward. He has been working with Keith Compton for a sound/light equipment proposal which is nearing submission. The skateboard guards have been purchased and will be installed. Luisa added that Crystal is following up on getting the plants planted in the Georgia median where the new pedestrian fencing has been installed.

New Business:

- **FY22 Officer Nominations:** Nominations were received, and a vote was taken. A motion was made by Chelsea, seconded by Bill for Jim Epstein as the Chair. He was unanimously voted as the new WUDAC Chair. Chelsea then nominated Mariela to continue as Vice Chair, seconded by Stuart and she was voted unanimously to remain as Vice Chair. There was discussion about relieving William of the Secretary role. Members expressed gratitude to William for taking on this role and doing it for so long and that they didn't want to continue burdening him. Sincer William was not present, a motion to rotate the responsibility among all members except the Chair was tabled until the July meeting.

Community Concerns:

Lorena Jarrin from LEDC was introduced as the new Wheaton business contact. She talked about her work with the small businesses including trying to improve the awnings on Triangle Lane. She will reach out to Luisa to discuss further.

Rob Fox asked about the timeline for the bike lanes on University Blvd. Luisa indicated that SHA was planning on launching in the next 2 weeks.

WUDAC will need to discuss and later make a decision about how to hold meetings: in person, virtual or some combination of both. WUDAC will follow continue to follow the recommendations of the BCC.

Adjourn: 8:33pm