

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Online meeting via Zoom

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

Staff Present: Luisa Cardona, Mid-County RSC Director; Crystal Ruiz, WUD Operations Manager; Shawn Morris, Aide; Jake Adler, MoCo Community Projects Manager

Guests: Sam Statland, Montgomery Redistricting Commission; Luis Estrada Cepero, Jessica McVary, MoCo Planning Dept.; Dan Thompson, WAP; Del. Al Carr; Omar Lazo, Los Chorros; Karen Cordry, KHCA; John Doherty, Marice Morales, Meg Morrow, Natali Fani-Gonzales, Yladrea Drummond, Rob Fox, Marquette Rogers, Charlotte Cook, Margaret Rifkin, Kim Persaud, Raymond Py, Residents.

Call To Order: 6:36pm by Chair Jim Epstein, with a welcome to new Mid-County RSC Director Luisa Cardona. Luisa delivered brief remarks and then Jim went over the meeting protocols

Review Minutes: After a short member discussion, a motion was made and passed to approve the July Meeting Minutes without changes. WUDAC did not meet in August.

Presentations:

a. Montgomery Redistricting Commission: Sam Statland, a member of the Montgomery Redistricting Commission, led a discussion of their work to redraw District lines based on results of the census and the increase in Council districts from 5 to 7. With a slide presentation he shared that the new districts will be equal in population with approx.. 150,000 residents each, +/- 5%. They will consider compactness and contiguity, and minority representation will be a priority to reflect the County's growing diversity. The Commission hopes to avoid crossing city or town boundaries and will also attempt to preserve communities of interest, which may include shared language, religion or ethnicity. He hopes WUDAC can help identify some of these communities of interest. The Commission will meet September 23. By October they will have draft maps ready for public comment and they will present recommended maps to the County Council on November 15. The council will vote on a final district plan. WUDAC member discussion followed his slide presentation.

b. Wheaton Downtown Study: Luis Estrada Cepero, an Urban Designer for the Montgomery Planning Dept., updated WUDAC via a slide presentation on their progress in outlining the scope of their study to present to the Planning Board in October to be conducted in 2022. The Study will explore the potential for small businesses and individually owned properties to continue to enrich the Wheaton community while evolving alongside larger scale redevelopment. Luis shared that a Sector Plan was approved in 2012. This study will supplement that Plan. By using research, data and conversations with community stakeholders they hope to refine to a block level that larger Sector Plan. They will evaluate Development progress, promote complete communities, improve pedestrian safety, and establish a fine grained urban design vision for Wheaton while retaining its character.

New Business: Members discussed the need to retain or disband the WUDAC subcommittees. There was member support for further discussion of subcommittees for outreach and crime/safety. Also

support was noted to add an MCCAB report. Guest Rob Fox shared that he will be joining MCCAB and will be happy to give a monthly report.

Reports:

a. Chamber of Commerce: William Moore requested consideration of a proposal to have the Chamber Representative give the Chamber report. Although he has been giving the report for years, he is the large business representative and its hard to take the notes as Secretary while also delivering the Chamber report. Also, this is his last year on WUDAC so eventually the Chamber Rep will have to step forward anyways. Today, on behalf of the Chamber, he reported that they had a virtual meeting at noon and the discussion centered mainly around financial issues. He then ceded the time to Chamber Rep. Ali Oliver Krueger to talk about the great work she and her company, Interact Story Theatre, are doing to organize the Wheaton Arts Parade and also their upcoming Fall schedule of kid's storytelling events.

b. Mid-County RSC: RSC Director Luisa Cardona shared that she has spent the last month doing background work getting to know the personnel and also the issues facing the Urban District. Sidney, Crystal and the Red Shirts are doing a fantastic job supporting her as she gets up to speed on her new position.

Community Concerns: Jim Epstein reported that the sound and lighting improvements for the Town Plaza stage have been put on hold until the operations issues have been resolved. There are lots of issues on the management of the facility. CUPF was supposed to take over in the Spring. Luisa stated that the improvements have not been put to a halt but rather they want to put them together as a package. There will be a meeting in the next two weeks to try to utilize money from CIP budget to close out punch list rather than go back for a supplemental from the County Council.

Action Item: Chair Epstein requested, in lieu of a Retreat, that WUDAC members email him their 3 top issues that they feel WUDAC needs to address this term.

Adjourn: 8:36pm