

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday October 13, 2020

Online meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Chelsea Andrews, Chair; Mariela Garcia-Colberg, Vice-Chair; William Moore, Chris Pyon, Crystal Myers, Leah Haygood, Stuart Amos, Omar Lazos, Jim Epstein, James Mensah

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director; Shawn Morris, Aide; Jake Adler, MOCO Community Projects Coordinator, Kevin Simpson, MOCO Community and Economic Coordinator, Joe Callaway, WUD Operations Manager

Guests: Dr. Gilberto Zelaya, PIO, Montgomery County Board of Elections; Karen Cordry, KHCA; Chip Py, Rob Fox, residents; JJ Khandpur, merchant, Westfield; Kimba Brown, Westfield; Taman Morris, MOCO Office of Mgmt. and Budget

Call To Order: 6:36pm by Chair Andrews. There will be a shift in the agenda so that our guest, Dr. Zelaya, will go first after the Minutes Review.

Minutes Review: A motion was made and passed to approve the September Meeting Minutes without changes.

Presentation: 2020 Elections: Dr. Gilberto Zelaya, PIO of the Board of Elections led a discussion on aspects of the upcoming election and then answered questions from WUDAC members. He shared that 350,000 mail-in ballots had been requested. Voter registration deadline is tonight but there is same day registration available. Early voting commences 10-26 and ends 11-02. He noted various methods to obtain voter information, including text options and BOE website. He urged everyone mailing in a ballot to get it in early. There are 11 early voting centers and on Election Day there will be 39 vote centers. Member questions included security of Drop Boxes, provisional ballots, election day harassment, the ballot questions and voter assistance.

Reports:

a. Chamber of Commerce: William Moore, on behalf of the Chamber, reported on a ribbon cutting ceremony at Signal Financial for their Mobile Banking Vehicle.

b. Mid-County RSC: RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz announced that the Arts & Humanities Council commissioned artists to do 'Promote the Vote' murals in Montgomery County. There will be three in Wheaton.

The Wheaton Urban District staff has moved into the new P&P building. The building is open so you can walk in. Three tetrahedrons from the Wheaton Arts Parade are on display in the lobby.

At the CIP Forum last week, Wheaton issues concerning the need for an Arts and Cultural Center and also our traffic issues were brought up.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Census can't be extended so the Count must stop.

Luisa then turned the discussion to Consolidated Service Hubs. She explained what they are and how the County is involved. Hughes United Methodist Church is a partner in this area. They hope to expand to other partners in the community.

c. Veirs Mill BRT Advisory Committee: Mariela shared that there will be two virtual open houses for Bus Rapid Transit on 10-15 and 10-22. Luisa noted that the FLASH bus on Rt.29 opens tomorrow. They will be the test and Rt.355 and Veirs Mill will follow sometime later.

d. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan: Mariela updated WUDAC on work for a new Master Plan for Wheaton Regional Park. The last Master Plan was in 1987. There will be a meeting later this month. Their goal with the update is to make Park use more equitable to those that live in the community around it, with special emphasis on minority input for needs. It was noted that we had a group in several months ago to give a presentation to WUDAC. Luisa said she would research that and have them come back for an update.

Old Business & Action Item Updates:

a. Planning Retreat: Chelsea reviewed the recent planning retreat on October 6th. Due to uncertainties with the pandemic, it was felt that our plan would reflect the next 90 days. Sub-committees were formed for the following areas of concern:

1. CoVid Recovery
2. Town Plaza Punch List
3. WUDAC Communications and Messaging
4. Pedestrian/Traffic Safety Issues and Funding

The CoVid sub-committee stated that they had a meeting this week. Chris Pyon shared that some businesses are closed but he got the thoughts of a few businesses. They stated County is not much help, they haven't come around at all. They aren't eligible for most grants and they are in bad shape. Member discussion followed.

b. Member recruitment: a Chamber rep has been nominated and is awaiting County approval. Two members are needed to interview candidates for the open Small Business seat. There are 5 candidates to be interviewed.

c. Town Plaza issues: Nancy Navarro has scheduled a meeting at 1:30pm on October 22 to update all concerns on the Town Plaza. Our letter to them has guided this discussion

Community Concerns: Resident Chip Py asked if Triangle businesses are still eligible for aid. Luisa stated yes, but documented losses must be before building opening. Chip questioned whether they should still be eligible for aid now since they were promised tenants would be in the building but it is still largely empty so area businesses are not getting the customers they were expecting. Chip also shared concerns about the secrecy of the building opening and why the public wasn't invited to a MNCPPC ribbon cutting.

Mr. JJ Khandpur, a merchant at the Westfield Food Court, shared his dire predicament and asked for help from the County to keep his business afloat.

Luisa noted that she had forgot earlier to mention that the Art piece will be installed on the Plaza at 3am on October 22.

New Business:

- a. Marian Fryer Town Plaza Dedication:** Luisa spoke of plans in development for a Virtual ceremony to honor the late Marian Fryer on the dedication of the Town Plaza named for her.

Adjourn: 8:24pm