

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday November 10, 2020

Online meeting via Zoom

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

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

Guests: Chip Py, resident

Call to Order: 6:32pm by Chair Andrews

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

Reports

a. Chamber of Commerce: William Moore, on behalf of the Chamber, related that they held their monthly board meeting earlier that day. The meeting centered around discussions on how to hold a virtual Business Expo in the new year. Chamber's discussions focused on noting that restaurants are active participants at the Expo, and how they might be included and gain value from an online event?

b. Mid-County RSC: RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz shared the following:

-There has been COVID testing at Westfield on a regular basis with good participation

-Update on the Consolidated Service Community Hubs. Hughes has been active in this area. Oak Chapel Church came onboard October 22 as a third Hub in the Mid-County region.

-The move to the new building has had some issues, mainly with IT, in part due to the fact that WUD does not have an IT liaison; issues should be fixed by end of the week

-The Art piece was installed on the new Town Plaza. Photos have been sent out.

-A ribbon cutting for the Plaza is in the works. Details will be forthcoming.

-Ongoing concerns about homeless people camping on the Plaza. A multi-agency task force is meeting on a regular basis to tackle the problem.

-The pedestrian barrier will be installed starting November 15, 16. Traffic signal at Georgia and Price is still in the works. There have been issues with an easement in the shopping center to facilitate a crosswalk.

-Arts on the Block completed the mural on the Clock Tower

-Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, created by CE Mark Elrich to recommend changes to the County Police Department, has been formed and is meeting. A survey is being sent out.

-As part of Wheaton's rebranding, a loyalty card created by the Urban District is being sent out to homes within a one mile radius. We need to have more businesses sign up to make it worthwhile.

c. Veirs Mill BRT Advisory Committee: Mariela briefly discussed two virtual open houses. The design of the Veirs Mill Rd portion is underway. Complete design by 2023 and construction should begin in 2024. Mariela will send out powerpoint presentation to members. In response to a question, Luisa noted that the Wheaton Gateway Project will be in coordination with BRT.

d. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan Update: Mariela shared that there have been discussions on signage and way finding both inside and outside the Park. There has been no request for funding yet. There will be a meeting concerning the Athletic Fields on Nov. 16 and they will be touring those fields this Sunday. Meet near Field 1. Member discussion followed on issues of funding and connectivity to the Urban District.

Other Business

In response to a question, Luisa noted that Shawn is setting up interviews for candidates for the WUDAC openings. Ali Oliver-Krueger, the new Chamber rep, will join in December. A brief discussion then followed on new eateries coming to the Wheaton area; a few of them at the Mall.

Old Business and Action Item Updates

a. Sub-Committee Reports:

-COVID Recovery: Chair Andrews led a review of issues from last meeting. Discussion centered around what role WUDAC could play to support the struggles of small businesses in the Urban District.

-Town Plaza Punch List: No meeting (See below)

-Pedestrian/Traffic Safety: Jim discussed Michael Paylor's 7 areas of traffic concerns but the fact that he only has a commitment to fix two. Will check back with MCDOT in January.

-WUDAC Communications and Messaging: This committee had first meeting where they laid out a strategy and rules.

b. Town Plaza Issues:

Stage Lighting/Sound: Luisa noted that there will be a walkthrough of the Plaza and stage next week with the County Executive's office and a theater expert. Jim will represent WUDAC. They will look at the stage and possible the lighting and sound needs. In response to a question, Luisa stated that they are looking at stop guards to be installed to prevent use of Plaza benches by skateboarders and cyclists.

Retail Space: They are reviewing the idea of retail space in the new P&P building. It is too pricey to build out. These are some of the same concerns for a childcare facility. The County is stepping in to see what can be done.

Marian Fryer Town Plaza Dedication: The Marian Fryer dedication is in the works. It needs to be small, 25 people or less. Marian's family is available November 22 at 1:00pm. Jeannette Feldner, a close friend of Marian, designed the plaque. A videographer will be there to live stream the ceremony. Senator Van Hollen will be there as will the County Executive. Councilmembers Katz and Navarro will represent the County Council.

Community Concerns

Chip Py, resident, stated he would send out a link to the weekly COVID briefings. Discussion followed on WUDAC's role as a possible clearinghouse for information.

New Business

a. Special Session on Protection against Scams: Kevin Simpson shared that they are bringing in a liaison to talk about COVID 19 and Holiday scams. She will present for one hour via zoom. A flyer has been sent out.

Other Announcements

WUDAC member and Westfield Manager Stuart Amos noted his support for a skateboard park. He also shared the successful COVID testing event on October 10th and that they would be doing it again the next two Sundays near JC Penney from 12-4pm.

Chair Andrews announced that we will discuss our next retreat at our January meeting.

Adjourn: 8:04pm

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