

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Online meeting via Zoom

**Attendees:**

Jim Epstein (Chair), Mariela Garcia-Colberg (Vice-Chair), Chelsea Andrews, Ali Oliver-Krueger, Stuart Amos, Chris Pyon, Pete Fosselman (RDS), Rob Fox, Shawn Morris (Exec. Assistant), Crystal Ruiz

**Presenters**

Lt. J Bunge.

**Community Members:**

Chip Py, Omar Lazo, Margaret Rifkin, Pete, Greg Golden, Max Socol, Celeste Banda, Sarah Dollman, Brian Kramer

Chair Epstein opened the meeting and opened the committee meeting with the rules and regulations of the meeting.

Celebration of Luisa Cardona's newborn daughter. In a business matter update, A and E updates will be moved to the January meeting. In the interim, we will continue to be supported by Shawn Morris and Crystal Ruiz.

Pete Fosselman is present in this evenings meeting in absence of Luisa.

**Chamber Report**

Ali Oliver-Krueger

Annual holiday mixer took place along with annual toy drive. Toy and gift collection continues. Holiday on Duty is collecting funds for first responders on duty.

MCAB – Rob Fox

No update outside of preplanning meeting for Luisa C's leave.

**Crime and Safety – Lt. J Bunge**

Uptick in violent crime most recently. Property crime has decreased.

The 4<sup>th</sup> district is down 22 officers. Expected to be 30 post-holiday. There are many reasons for the shortages including hard to hire, pay etc.

Lt. Bunge commented on Juvenile theft and break ins in the triangle. Reported that there is an attempt being made to increase the presence. In the area.

The 4<sup>th</sup> district has recalibrated the CBD deployment schedule with the appointment of the new district commander of a central business district patrol team.

Rob Fox inquired about the nature of violent crimes and if the assailants knew one another.

Westfield Wheaton challenged the contact within the department due to turnover in the department and highlighted the need to deal with the juvenile issue and fights in the mall

Community member Omar Lazo asked for an update on a suspect who was consistently breaking into back entrances of businesses.

Lt. Bunge commented that he was unaware of these incidents. He also agreed to send more police in that area while they are writing reports etc.

There is also a new Lt for the Central Business District.

Resident Chip Py inquired about the tenure of the new Lt (3 weeks) and about the County's recruitment strategy. He expressed that the elevator pitch for joining MCPD was less than satisfactory.

Lt. Bunge replied that recruitment is housed in Gaithersburg and he is willing to put people in touch with the appropriate people as needed.

Resident Greg Golden inquired if the county supported alternative policing initiatives.

Lt. Bunge replied that the question needed to be answered by the Chief of Police.

Resident Margaret Rifkin inquired about tables being removed outside the Safeway/Arrive apartments and about open-air drug dealing. Lt. Bunge was unable to comment on the specifics of the case.

Board Member Chelsea Andrews raised the need to revisit meeting protocols at the end of the meeting

Chair Epstein closed the segment out with a request to have a representative from the CBD police come to the meeting.

**Crystal Ruiz – Urban district updates**

Shared power point of upcoming projects.

Chair Epstein inquired about the program manager position for the Town Plaza. It is open all MoCo departments to use currently.

The Urban District continues to push to get the funding to provide an equitable environment as Silver Spring and Bethesda.

Chair Epstein asked what needs to happen for this to happen? Concerns were expressed about a 3-month hiatus on pushing forward. He offered WUDAC's assistance.

Crystal replied that we are in the middle of the process to push forward, and the process needs to take its course and recommended that we leverage Pete Fosselman in his interim role while Luisa is out on leave.

Chair Epstein pressed for details to contain in a letter to the Executive. Crystal then asked for solid ideas and offered a collaborative brainstorming session to iron out ideas for the plaza. Item needs to be moved forward to the next meeting agenda

Resident Margaret Rifkin offered herself as a resource in creating a charette for the way forward to the town plaza.

**New Business:**

Margaret Rifkin's art and walkability project – mural on bakery Georgia and Price. Open call for MD artists, funded by MSAC <https://www.theartandwalkabilityproject.com/>

**Old Business:**

Committees – Stuart will head up Crime and Safety

Jim is soliciting feedback for candidate forum

**Board Member Chelsea Andrews revisited the topic of meeting rules and policies.**

Meeting Adjourned