

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC)
Tuesday | March 12, 2024 | 7:00 pm-8:30 pm
Hybrid Meeting

In Attendance:

WUDAC: Jim Epstein, Philip Daley, Tanya Baskin, Kit Wood, David Jarrett, Riana Cole, Pedro Matamoros, Rob Fox, Nina Koltnow

County Officials: Mid-County Director Luisa Cardona, WUD Operations Manager Crystal Ruiz, Community Projects Manager for Mid-County Regional Services Stephanie Bello

Guests: Douglas Cobb (MCP), Kathia Chévez (Council Member Fani-Gonzalez office), Charles “Chuck” Kines (Parks Planner), Christie Ciabotti (Parks), Ron Peele (CIP Manager)

Public:, Laura-Leigh Palmer, Andrew Bzdega, Dan Obrzut, Krista Brick, Margaret Rifkin

I. 7:00 pm Call to Order - Jim Epstein, Chair

II. 7:02 pm Review and Approve February Minutes - Approved

III. 7:05 pm Community Concerns

Krista Brick reported on Gateway meeting last night. The presentation is linked to the website: wheatongateway.com. Keep an eye on the site for updates.

Next major step is the Site Plan; process will start in about 4 weeks.

The Gateway team will come back to report to WUDAC once this process has begun and had a chance for community comment.

IV. 7:15 pm Reports and Updates

1. Elected representatives in attendance - Kathia Chévez for CM Fani-Gonzalez

CM Fani-Gonzalez was in Annapolis last week asking for stricter penalties on drug distributors.

County Council: Funding for retail space under Reddie Building: she is asking for \$4 million. Glenmont space owned by DOT is under consideration for purchase

Governor Moore was in MoCo with his cabinet recently, looking at affordable housing at Viers Mill and Randolph.

CM Fani-Gonzalez is dealing with schools over using Identity (the bilingual organization that is helping the County with fentanyl use by teens): how to refer students, etc.

2. Wheaton & Kensington Chamber of Commerce

The Kensington - Wheaton Business Networking Expo will be held on 3/27 by the Wheaton & Kensington Chamber of Commerce. The Kensington Historical Society meets this Monday to discuss history of Warner Circle.

3. Committee Reports

None

4. Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) - Rob Fox, MCCAB Member
Community Health Needs Assessment Findings from MoCo health dept. Midcounty findings: high on the social vulnerability index (highly uninsured, low median household income). [Here](#) is the link to the assessment findings.

5. Mid-County Regional Services Center - Luisa Cardona, Director
Urban District: new exhibit "Soulful Pains" on outside of Reddie building (on Reddie). It reflects on the pain of being a Black woman in US. There are QR codes soon the exhibit for more information.

Taste of Wheaton, June 2 (11 - 4) Applications coming out soon. The Business Center team will reach out to Wheaton businesses regarding participation in Taste. They are working with HHS to assign an inspector to educate the restaurant owners in what is needed for participation. WUD will work to support restaurants on infrastructure (like washing stations). The Rec Department will pay teens to work, and teens will be trained to assist restaurants on that day.

Perhaps there could be a restaurant week or two after Taste. Let's ask the restaurants. That usually happens during slow season (winter). Restaurant Association of MD does a lot of the lifting for these events.

Internal meeting to establish comprehensive Small Business marketing strategy. Target outcome: make Wheaton a destination and increase traffic to businesses.

Safe Team is doing less security, more ambassadors to businesses. They spoke to 1301 businesses last month.

Safe Team hours now 10 - 8:30 (changed from noon - 10).

WUD has monitor display outside Costco entrance.

CUPF spaces are available for rental. \$75K in grants available to help. There has been a lot of interest.

6. Police Report - Douglas Cobb

He oversees Wheaton Central Business District. 98 officers in 4th district. From Plyers Mill Rd to Howard County, 89 square miles. There is full shift coverage for our CBD. Minimum staffing recently increased for the district, partly due to increases in crime and greater need for community involvement. Six rookies currently in training. They will be assigned in May.

Crime update for last 6 months (year over year) in Wheaton area: simple assaults up 25%, theft from cars are up 100%, auto thefts are down 10%, vandalism up 30%, robberies up 50%, burglaries up 100%, aggravated assaults down 30%, car part theft down 70%.

Officer's email is Douglas.Cobb@montgomerycountymd.gov, and his phone number is 240-773-5500. Also there are links to crime prevention programs (security camera rebate, catalytic converter theft prevention, car theft prevention. Kias and Hyundais at risk) on the MCPD website: [Here](#).

Violent Crime Information Center monitors real time information, both from security cameras and drones. Drone program is operated off the top of Reddie building in coordination with 911 calls and police radio.

The Drones have helped with apprehensions of shoplifting suspects, theft from auto suspects, auto theft suspects, and juveniles from a shooting event that later was determined to be a BB gun. They have also helped when looking for missing people, particularly in parks.

The police have partnered with Westfield for enhanced security: better lighting and new command facility, license plate readers, which record all plates going in and out of mall. It runs the tags against a national crime data base.

Weekly crime summaries: Google "Weekly Crime Summaries Montgomery County Police" and look for District 4, then Lincoln Sector.

Community Engagement: 10-11 March 13 Coffee with a Cop at Glenmont Starbucks.
March 23 Easter egg hunt at WRP

Downtown Wheaton has had increased fentanyl use. District Community Action Team deployed for proactive criminal enforcement, also brought holistic approach to get resources to affected individuals. There has been a reduction in criminal activity and in fentanyl use. Illegal firearms and drugs confiscated, recovered a number of missing kids.

Garage safety and security: cameras being added to Reddie and Amherst garages.

Police still plan to move administrative offices to Reddie building but has to resolve parking requirements first.

V. Presentations - 7:40 PM - FY25 Parks Budget

Charles “Chuck” Kines, Park Planner, Montgomery County Department of Parks, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)

Ron Peele, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Manager, M-NCPPC.

Budget was reduced \$24 million after Parks Masterplan approved, but \$6 million is planned to be reinstated. Citizens can comment to council members : [link](#).

WRP (“MoCo’s regional park next door”) is 2/3 undeveloped, which will remain. Natural areas will remain. It is accessible from 2 Metro stations. 200K residents live within 3 miles. The neighboring communities are 75% non-white.

Parks did extensive community outreach about the master plan.
Rubini Athletic Complex needs activation, greater variety of activities.
Great interest and momentum; want to deliver on master plan ASAP.

Are there any historic buildings left in WRP? (Just Stubbs barn.)

Rubini: Can ballfields 4, 5, 6 be kept open to public while awaiting demolition for Adventure Sports Park? It is very complicated; they tend to become littered and muddy, and still will be used for league games.
Bathrooms: can they be open during daylight? Mr. Kines will look into that.

What are priorities given the cuts? Rubini is initial focus. It is on a 12 year implementation schedule. Nairn Trail renovation under way. Pine Lake will be stocked with trout this spring. They will hold a youth fishing day.
Many natural surface trails are complete. Mountain bike skills trail near playground will be complete this summer.
Work will be started soon on comprehensive way-finding signage, including signage in the park and in Wheaton and Glenmont. [Master Plan here](#).

Can Ride-On modify its route to come up Glenallen to Brookside and up Orobaugh to Rubini Complex? TBD

VII Adjourn 8:30 pm

NEXT WUDAC MEETING: April 9, 2024