

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday February 09, 2021

Online via Zoom

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

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

Guests: Laura-Leigh Palmer, ASAP Graphics, Karen Cordry, KHCA, Andrew Gagliano, Goyer Roberts, Duffie Companies; Carrie Sanders, Chief, Mid-County Planning Dept; Rob Fox, Jerry Kickenson, Luis Estrada, Planning Dept

Call To Order: 6:34pm by Chair Andrews, with a review of Meeting protocols followed by a welcome to new WUDAC members Pedro Matamoros and Ali Oliver-Krueger. Each new member in turn gave a short introduction.

Review Minutes: After a review of the Jan. 2021 minutes, Jim Epstein wished to insert a note that Mike Paylor may return by May. A motion was made and passed to approve the Minutes with that change.

Presentation: Carrie Sanders, Chief of the Mid-County Planning Division of the Montgomery County Planning Dept., presented slides detailing the County's planning process, giving an overview of the process and the various methods developers must take through that process. She highlighted By-Right Development, Standard Method and Optional Method development and the Referral process for government use projects. Carrie walked WUDAC through the steps involved in the various methods, explaining the points for community input, and defining terms like Sketch plan and site plans and zoning. Many questions from members concerned the Wheaton Gateway Project and the steps that the developer has taken and where the community still has an opportunity to weigh in. Questions arose about the ability of the public to influence setback, density, connectivity and the aesthetics of the Wheaton Gateway project.

Old Business:

a. Wheaton Gateway Subcommittee Meeting Report: Bill Jelen reported on a January 27th online ad hoc committee meeting on the Wheaton Gateway Project. The subcommittee proposed that WUDAC provide an initial reaction to the Gateway Plan. The Sketch Plan has not been formally accepted. Bill noted that the committee supports the sustainability goals, wider sidewalks, setbacks and bike lanes, that all included in the sketch plan. The areas of concerns are the boxy look and pancake top. Questions arose as to where the children of residents would go to school, building aesthetics, the desire to take advantage of the elevation with a possible rooftop restaurant and coordination with existing Veirs Mill Corridor and Wheaton Master Plans. Luisa noted that our bylaws prohibit a direct letter to the Planning Board. We work with the County Executive and County Council.

Reports:

a. W&K Chamber of Commerce: William Moore, on behalf of the Chamber, reported on their Board meeting held at 12 noon earlier that day. The meeting included a lengthy discussion about the treatment of small businesses and particularly restaurants during the pandemic. There are concerns that we are losing customers to other jurisdictions that are open. Merchants feel there is a lack of

communication on metrics from the County Government. County needs to reach out directly to individual businesses on relief measures rather than solely by newsletters or emails.

Other Chamber news: On Thursday February 11 we are cosponsor with other Chambers of a monthly Connect Speed Networking online event.

We are still planning for a virtual Biz Expo, possibly in March. Planning will soon begin for our annual Awards Dinner, likely virtual again this year.

Lastly, our Community Guide is hot off the presses. Get your copy today!

b. Mid-County: Mid-County RSC Director Luisa Montero Diaz announced that next Tuesday MCCAB will have a special guest, Richard Madaleno, Montgomery County Chief Administrative Officer. He will talk about the budget process but he can also take questions on the Covid vaccination process. There are not enough vaccines to go around and they are trying outreach to vulnerable communities most in need first. They are eying Covid Community Ambassadors to help reach these communities.

She also noted a Ghost Shoes ceremony conducted by the Action Committee for Transit at the corner of Georgia Ave and University Blvd for Ricardo Jimenez, a pedestrian who was struck and killed there. His family was in attendance and placed the ghost shoes memorial and flowers on the utility pole.

WUD is actively recruiting for a new Operations Manager to replace Joe Callaway, who retired.

The County has helped winterize the Steatery at Price and Fern with heated tents to help the merchants there.

c. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan Update: Mariela shared info on a meeting to discuss the Nature Center. They are thinking of moving it to the Equestrian Center in order to provide more parking for school groups. February 23rd is their next meeting.

Old Business (Continued) and Action Item Updates, Subcommittee reports:

1. Covid-19 Recovery: No meeting but Westfield Manager Stuart Amos reported that Westfield submitted a plan to the County to reopen their Food Court.

2. Town Plaza: Jim Epstein shared that the Committee has not met but he personally has met with Joe Callaway and is working with Sidney on sound and lighting potential

3. WUDAC Communications/messaging: Chelsea reported that the ReDiscover Wheaton brochures had been distributed in Wheaton and mailed to area homes. Luisa announced that Sidney is working on a series of webinars. The first one will feature Nori Sato and the team of artists, and the Humanities Council discussing the new art piece on the Town Plaza. Luisa also shared that it is the 10th anniversary of the Limerick Pub and Sidney is working with owner Tom Stanton to get the word out.

Jim Epstein asked about skateboarding and where to get the money to solve the problem. Luisa stated if there is no movement by March 9th they can write a letter. There is a long list of things for the developer to do. We need to get past that to see what money is left.

Community Concerns: Laura-Leigh Palmer, resident, stated that you can't weigh in on development often enough. She noted that she is also on the Wheaton Regional Park Committee along with Mariela and she will share her thoughts at the next WUDAC meeting on March 9th. Members welcomed new members Ali and Pedro and said a fond farewell to Omar and Leah.

Adjourn: 8:34pm