

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday May 11, 2021

Online via Zoom

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

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director; Shawn Morris, Aide; Crystal Ruiz, WUD Operations Manager; Kevin Simpson, Community and Economic Coordinator

Guests: Michael Paylor, Division Chief MCDOT; Elizabeth Everhart, Sr. Development Manager, Mission First Housing Group; Natalie Cantor, HTAA Synagogue; Margaret Rifkin, The Art and Walkability Project; Rob Fox, Scott Matties, Architect; Omar Lazo, Los Chorros; Jay Elvove, SSCAB

Call To Order: 6:32pm by Chair Andrews. She noted the updated agenda and zoom meeting protocols.

Meeting Minutes Review: A review of the April Meeting Minutes draft was postponed until later in the meeting

Presentation

Traffic Needs/Initiatives-Follow up: Michael Paylor, Division Chief, MCDOT, returned to WUDAC to discuss the status of pending traffic, pedestrian safety and infrastructure improvements. Aided by a slide presentation Mr. Paylor first noted the proposed crosswalk at Georgia and Price. Due to utility obstructions they will have to redesign the crosswalk and lights. Next up was the Blueridge/Grandview intersection with Georgia. The redesign is on track to be completed by end of 2021. It is 3-5 months to get signal constructed. The poles have been delayed due to the pandemic.

Next the discussion turned to the area of the Town Plaza. The plan is to put Rapid Flashing Beacons instead of a full signal at crosswalks on Reddie and Grandview. A review has led them to determine that larger circular lights are needed for visibility. A member pointed out that the crosswalk proposed for Reddie will lead pedestrians head first into the public art piece located there. Other concerns centered around the length of the signal to cross, the pedestrian count at certain hours, closure plans for Summer concerts, detour signage and the need for WUDAC to advocate for more funding. Also brought up was a malfunctioning signal at University and Grandview and incorporating our Hotspots map into FY23 funding, including a bicycle path up Grandview.

Lastly Michael shared that due to funding shortfalls they haven't purchased the vehicle barriers for Reddie yet but they hope to do so in the next couple of weeks and he also noted the installation of a curb extension so cars using the loop from Georgia to Veirs Mill can't cross over lanes to access that first Mall entrance.

Old Business: Member Chris Pyon inquired about the dim lighting in Lot 13 that was discussed in an earlier meeting. WUD Operations Manager Crystal Ruiz shared that some of the lights are powered through the P&P Building. She's working with PEPCO on the situation. Some lights have to be tagged and they hope to have them on the map soon. A member suggested that they may want to measure to ensure proper foot candles for the area covered.

New Business: Natalie Cantor, former Mid-County RSC Director and representing HTAA Synagogue, gave a history on the synagogue and a brief overview of a proposed sale of one of the buildings owned by the organization, and then introduced Elizabeth Everhart, Senior Development Manager, Mission First Housing Group and Scott Mattie, Architect, for a detailed review of the project. The site will be developed into Senior housing, 85% one bedroom and 15% two bedrooms. Site will use existing apron entry. Architect Scott Mattie then shared details with a slide presentation. Member discussion followed. One member asked that a bike path to connect Reedy Drive be incorporated into the project if possible.

Reports:

A. Chamber of Commerce: William Moore, on behalf of the W& K Chamber, reported that they held their monthly Board meeting earlier that day via Zoom. Discussion centered around the health of many of their small businesses. William then asked guest Omar Lazo to speak in detail on what he has learned through his various community groups on this issue.

Next William noted a grant given to Chamber Board member Ali Oliver-Krueger and her organization, InterAct Story Theatre. William invited Ali to share the details of that grant.

In addition William shared that another group, the Civitans, headed by Chamber Vice President Mirza Donegan, secured a \$20,000 grant for Sunflower Bakery for their work training people with disabilities for jobs in the workforce.

More discussion in the Chamber meeting centered around the art by Nori Sato that was installed in the Town Plaza. The Chamber is concerned that no local artist was tapped for that project. **Luisa indicated that three local artists worked with principal artist Norie Sato to design and install the piece.**

The Chamber Awards will be a virtual event again this year. It will be held online in partnership with InterAct Story Theatre on June 23, 6:30-8:00pm.

B. Mid-County RSC: RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz made remarks on the workings of the Mid-County Covid Committee and shared that they meet on Wednesdays and members get the word out on vaccines through their community contacts. Walk ups are now welcome, no appointment necessary as they now have more doses than arms to put them in. Hughes Church has been active in appointments and this Saturday will host an event in partnership with Safeway to distribute 500 doses.

There is discussion to have a FEMA trailer to distribute the vaccine, maybe at Westfield since they have space.

The Streeery tents have been removed by agreement, but the tables and chairs remain.

Workforce Montgomery is partnering with Community Action Agency and United Way for classes in financial literacy.

The Latino American Youth Center has acquired space in the Mall for Community outreach.

Nominations are needed for the WUDAC awards for the Chamber Awards program

WUD Marketing Manager Sidney Cooper facilitated a meeting with employees in the new P&P building. Member discussion followed on the vacant retail space on the ground floor.

c. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan Update: Mariela shared that they will hold another meeting at the end of May.

Action Item Update:

a. Sub-committee reports: WUDAC member Chris Pyon shared that he was invited to be a guest at President Biden's address and attended virtually. Congressman Raskin had nominated him as a local hero.

Jim Epstein reported that Keith Compton has gotten some proposals for the lighting and sound for the stage at the Town Plaza. Jim asked about the skateboard guards. WUD Manager Crystal Ruiz stated that they are waiting on their delivery and will be installed when they arrive. Jim also noted that the stage from the stage has been damaged by water falling off the canopy.

Chair Andrews brought up the decision to not have another retreat and asked if anyone had reconsidered.

b. FY22 Officer Nominations: Chair Andrews announced that she would not stand for re-election as Chair. Luisa went over the process for nominations. We can vote in June if nominations are finalized by then.

Jim Epstein was nominated for Chair

Mariela Garcia-Colberg was nominated for Vice Chair

Minutes Review:

A motion was made and passed to approve the April Meeting Minutes without changes.

Community Concerns:

Jim Epstein announced that the Glenmont Forest Neighbors Civic Association has put out a call for artists for a project in a community park beside Fire Station 18. GFNCA received a \$5000 design grant from the Maryland State Arts Council. Each of the artists submitting proposals amongst the 3 to 5 semifinals will receive a \$750 honoraria to expand upon and present their proposals to the community. The winning proposal will be selected by the community and will be used to apply for a \$20,000 implementation grant in August.

Jim Epstein also requested that Urban District and others come to WUDAC in June/July to explain what we will do when we have live events again.

Adjourn: 8:33pm