

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Tuesday July 13, 2021

Online via Zoom

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

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director, Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing Manager, Shawn Morris, Aide; Crystal Ruiz, WUD Operations Manager

Guests: Omar Lazo, Los Chorros; Ron Maxson, Cathy Bowles, CUPF; Lorena Jarrin, LEDC; Luis Estrada, Jessica McVary, MoCo Planning Dept.; Chip Py, Rob Fox, Del. Al Carr

Call To Order: 6:34pm by new Chair Jim Epstein. He thanked outgoing Chair Chelsea Andrews for outstanding leadership of WUDAC over the last year. He then went over the protocols for our online meeting.

June Meeting Minutes: A draft of the June Meeting Minutes was presented for review and discussion. A motion was made and passed to approve the June minutes without changes.

Presentations:

A. Marian Fryer Plaza Events

Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing Manager, was joined by Ron Maxson Jr. from the Office of Community Use of Public Facilities(CUPF) for an overview of how the Town Plaza and public space in the new P&P building would be operated and a recap of the first event, the dedication of the Marian Fryer Town Plaza. After congratulations from Jim Epstein to Sidney on the great opening event, Ron was introduced. He proceeded to give a brief background of his career including 20 years at CUPF. He is the Core Services Manager. The Director is Ramona Bell Pearson. They have 14 staff members managing 17000 facilities in MoCo used by 6000 groups. The Silver Spring Civic Center and Veterans Plaza is their biggest facility but they will be located in the new P&P Building here in Wheaton. They will present the fee schedule for the Marion Fryer Plaza by September and will begin allowing groups to use by March. The hearing room in the new P&P building is not under CUPF but rather is under P&P but smaller rooms will come under CUPF. School facilities opening in the fall also come under CUPF. Sidney Cooper stated that although CUPF is the permit authority on the Plaza, WUD would help with police and road closures. CUPF does not staff events. In response to a WUDAC member question Ron stated that CUPF keeps all permit fees and will not share the money with WUD to help with staffing or maintenance. WUDAC asked Ron to return in January to discuss solutions to this.

B. Wheaton Urban District Study

Luis Estrada, Planning Coordinator with MoCo Planning Dept., along with colleague Jessica McVary, shared with WUDAC that they have been tasked with conducting a study of the Wheaton Urban District. It's been 10 years since the sector plan. They will do a snapshot of WUD from this time period. They will survey properties and businesses to see which have staying power. They will do a deep dive into uses of property and public benefits of open space and streetscapes. Also, they will question whether small businesses can afford community improvements. They hope WUDAC can help them on developing a clear description of the physical being of Wheaton and convey how things like BRT, Vision Zero and

Streetscapes can contribute to the community. They are preparing a scope of work to present to the Planning Board by September. They emphasized that this is just a study and not a Master Plan.

Reports:

a. Chamber of Commerce: Chamber Representative Ali Oliver-Krueger shared that they had a Board meeting earlier that day. They discussed the results of their online Community Awards. Six officials spoke at the event and they had 367 views on Facebook. The program was broadcast in partnership with InterAct Story Theatre with Ali as host.

The Kensington Labor Day Festival will be from 11am-3pm on Monday September 6th. There will be an Art show, booths, food and kids activities but no parade this year.

The Wheaton Arts Parade will be September 19th. The Parade and Festival be from 10am to 5pm. It will be centered around the new P&P Building and Town Plaza.

b. Mid-County RSC:

Jim Epstein noted that this is the last report from RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz. She is retiring,

Luisa updated WUDAC on the Shared Streets Bike lanes. The 1 ½ mile stretch on University from Arcola to Amherst is going well with no traffic backups on University or Arcola. In 3 ½ to 4 months SHA will have data to share. A member asked if that would include data on traffic conditions after school starts in the Fall and Luisa stated that it would.

The County Executive is seeking replacements for 4 of the 5 regional directors due to retirements and promotions. No update on names at this time but recommendations are to be submitted to the Council this week.

c. Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan Update:

Mariela stated that they held a meeting at the new P&P building and took a tour there. Their work is now done. They have recommendations ready but Mariela doesn't know if there will be a public review or presentation. Luisa shared that it will be presented to the Planning Board.

Old Business:

a. WUDAC Secretary position:

William Moore stated that he would be willing to stay on as WUDAC Secretary if it was acceptable to WUDAC members. A motion was made and seconded to nominate William for the position. The vote was unanimous to approve.

b. In-person vs virtual in the Fall:

Luisa: BCC to decide with feedback. How does WUDAC feel? Chesea advocated for a dual platform, virtual preferred. She felt there was better flexibility for getting speakers to do presentations.

Stuart Amos mentioned that if we do dual platform we need protocols to govern the rotation of who shows up. Chair Epstein stated that the consensus is for dual and asked Luisa to take that feedback back to the BCC.

Action Items:

a. sub-committees:

Outreach: Chelsea stated they haven't met. They will try to circle back to Marketing Manager Sidney Cooper. Chair Epstein asked about posting on Next Door APP. Luisa said it would be better to post as individuals.

Covid: Stuart Amos stated that they've wound down activity but Westfield continues to drive awareness and help FEMA with vaccinations in the community. They are working with Del. Solomon to get community action.

Pedestrian Safety:

Chair Epstein mentioned Del. Solomon's public hearing.

Town Plaza:

Chair Epstein shared that the Sound and Light improvements for the stage at the Town Plaza are moving forward. Waiting for final funding from MCDOT. He also noted that WUD put up signage concerning skateboarding. Lastly he noted that the crosswalks on Grandview and Reddie in the area of the Town Plaza have had a flashing beacon installed and that they did a great job installing barriers for the Plaza dedication.

William Moore asked about the number of tenants who are actually occupying the P&P building versus those still working from home. He stated that if the building continues to be underutilized it is a betrayal of what was promised to the area businesses with regards to workers who would patronize Triangle shops and restaurants.

New Business:

The lease between Park and Planning and the County has been approved. Discussion returned to the nearly empty P&P Building. Businesses were promised a full office building with workers streaming out at lunch time and at this point the building is a dinosaur and the economics promised is a lie. Luisa stated that WUDAC can vote to give Chair Epstein authority to draft a letter but if there is disagreement there will have to be another public vote. A motion was made and passed to approve Chair Epstein to draft a letter to send to the County Executive and County Council.

Adjourn: 8:40pm