

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, Tuesday September 08, 2020

Online meeting via Zoom

Members Present: Chelsea Andrews, Chair; Mariela Garcia-Colberg, Vice Chair; William Moore, Jim Epstein, Bill Jelen, Crystal Myers, James Mensah, Leah Haygood, Omar Lazo

Staff Present: Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid-County RSC Director; Shawn Morris, Aide; Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing Manager; Joe Callaway, WUD Operations Manager, Jake Adler, MOCO Community Projects Coordinator

Guests: Chip Py, Resident; Justin Stone, Manager, MOCO SBAP; Goyer Roberts, Shane Pollin, Andrew Gagliano, Duffie Companies; Karen Cordry, KHCA.

Minutes Review: A motion was made and passed to approve the June Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and passed to approve the July Meeting Minutes

Community Concerns: Chip Py, resident, expressed concern that no one except politicians were invited to the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new P&P building. Luisa stated that it was not a formal Grand Opening but rather a ceremony to mark the first meeting of P&P. Member Jim Epstein remarked that it shows a disconnect between P&P which owns the building and the new Town Plaza under the supervision of WUD.

Reports:

a. Chamber of Commerce: Omar Lazo, Chamber representative, reported that they had no meeting this month, but activities revolve around economic stability of the Chamber in light of COVID.

Ali Oliver-Krueger has been elected by the Chamber to be their new Representative to WUDAC, replacing outgoing member Omar Lazo.

b. Mid-County: Mid-County RSC Director Luisa Montero-Diaz reported on work on a consolidated services hub with partner HHS. Currently primarily dedicated to food assistance and CoVid testing, they hope to expand soon into areas like SNAP and other health services. She noted that Hughes Church has been a great partner with food distribution. They are looking for another Church in the Aspen Hill area.

After success with their Streeetry program for outdoor dining at Price Avenue and Elkins Streets, the County is looking at a second location near Hickerson Avenue. Member discussion followed. It was noted that there has been a big problem with noise late at night. The WUD has worked with affected businesses to rectify this issue.

The WUD will be moving to their new office in the P&P building on September 19th.

There are three weeks to go before the Census count ends on September 30th. The MCRSC has had reps at Costco on Saturdays. Last week they got 25 people counted. That equates to \$1 million in additional County funding. So far about 76% of the County has been reached. This is ahead of the 2010 count.

WUD received \$15,000 in an emergency grant from The MD State Arts Council for programs in our District.

WUD will make a presentation at the National Capital Area Planning Conference on the Wheaton Crossroads Art and Entertainment District and share some of our experiences on what we went through.

McDOT will be closing one lane of University Blvd from Brunette to Amherst this fall for 6 weeks to promote pedestrian cycling.

There was a question about savings due to canceled events. Luisa stated that the canceled events were submitted to County to cover our 6% savings contribution to the County budget savings plan. In addition, too early to tell if the \$300,000 we were awarded for 2021 for Town Plaza needs will be able to be used towards events. We will reconfigure the Budget because we are doing things we hadn't counted on.

Joe Callaway, WUD Operations Manager, reiterated that that \$300,000 is for maintenance. He then went on to update members on the status of the Clean and Safe teams. The Safety teams are visiting eateries to remind them of social distancing guidelines as well as noise regulations. If there are problems he asked that people please contact him. He updated WUDAC on his staff move to the new building, parking for staff and areas where they are contracting out some weekend litter collections.

Luisa also noted that Joe and DHHS are monitoring the issue of people sleeping in the Plaza.

Sidney Cooper, WUD Marketing Manager, updated WUDAC on their outreach program, *ReDiscover* Wheaton, for the new workers moving into the P&P building. There will be a card introducing the Clean and Safe teams, attractions brochure with map, QR code with link to the WUD website and gift bags. They will also use the brochure as a direct mail piece to 9000 area residents. They also hope to allocate funds for signage on the Town Plaza with a plaque to honor Marian Fryer. Member discussion followed.

A question was asked about the public art from Nori Sato for the Town Plaza. It's supposed to arrive soon from Utah and when it's installed there will be road closures as it will need a crane. Jim Epstein questioned its placement as people will have to walk around it to get to Metro. Further discussion centered around the reconfiguration of Reedie Drive.

c. SBAP: Justin Stone updated members on the status of the SBAP program. It is still ongoing in spite of the P&P building being finished. From now until next June, businesses can apply for financial help dated back to the end of the construction. He explained that it sometimes takes a while for small businesses to get their information together. Disbursements in FY 2020 were \$596,989 and in FY 2021 there has been one disbursement for \$21,000. Discussion then turned to the PHEG program and ReOpening grants. Applications are still being accepted. Some members complained that there was a big lack of communication. William Moore stated that he had applied on Day One for a PHEG grant and still has heard nothing months later. He questioned whether it was worth applying for the ReOpening money if it's just going to die in limbo somewhere.

Old Business and Action Update Items:

a. Gateway Project Update: Shane Pollin, from the Duffie Companies, updated WUDAC on the progress on the Wheaton Gateway project. The old Mattress Firm building has been demolished as well as the Ambassador building. The underground parking garage is still there. They are working to beautify the corner area near Veirs Mill Rd and University Blvd and mask the temporary fence, hopefully with an Art project. He went over the timeline for the construction. Next step is a Sketch Plan. He alluded to future activity such as a Food Hall in addition to affordable housing on the site but stated that CoVid may impact those plans.

New Business:

a. OMB Budget Forums(operating and CIP): Luisa discussed the upcoming two budget forums on September 21st and 30th. These are Operational Budget Forums.

The CIP Budget Forums will be central to location so there will be five. The date for the one pertaining to our Mid-County area will be October 8th. More information will be forthcoming by the end of the week. Member discussion followed.

b. WAP Event: Jim Epstein announced that the Wheaton Arts Parade will not be a parade this year but instead will be a mix of virtual events and art on display. The event will be for two weeks, from September 20th to October 4th. In addition to the 13 tetrahedrons on display around the Urban District there will be Arts podcasts and performances online. Their gallery is still at Westfield. They will be moving to the old Ruby Tuesday space at the end of the month.

c. Member Recruitment: Luisa noted that the official announcement is out and open till September 11th for a candidate for small business representative

d. Planning Retreat: Chair Andrews noted that our retreat is usually in November but she proposed an earlier date like Mid-October. She will send out a Doodle Poll for member preferred dates and times. In response to a member question she remarked that some areas of discussion might center around a virtual ribbon cutting event for the Town Plaza, effects on CoVid on the community and pedestrian traffic across Reedie Drive at the Town Square.

Adjourn: 8:33pm