
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: January 18, 2018 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Kathy Atkinson	Gayle Givens	Toni Miller	Joe Sandmann
Gary Dangel	Christina Hartlieb	Fred Orth	Aimee Shinkle
Cindy Fischer	Mark Leeman	Officer Kandice Roper-Issa	Greg Warner
Sergeant Shawn George	Tim MacConnell	Michael Rountree	Kevin Wright

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathy Atkinson at 9:05 AM.

Minutes from meeting on December 21st were approved, Tim MacConnell 1st, Greg Warner 2nd.

Treasurer's Report by Kathy Atkinson showed no significant activity in past few months, and current balance does not include any CNBDU designated funds. Treasurer's Report was approved, Aimee Shinkle 1st, Tim MacConnell 2nd.

Committee Reports:

Safety – Officer Roper-Issa

Crime statistics were handed out, showing a changing trend with increase in robbery. A handout on “Robbery Prevention Tips” was also distributed, and copies have already been placed in several local businesses.

Officer Roper-Issa introduced Sgt. Shawn George and presented a flyer describing an upcoming training session for active-shooter preparedness. The session on January 29 is expected to fill up quickly, as they try to keep group sizes relatively small. Sgt. George said that he is willing to come in and teach organizations according to their schedule. It was asked whether the training addresses what can be done in public spaces, and Sgt. George replied that it can still be prudent to have thought through primary and secondary “safe” locations. He also said that we cannot assure that none will be injured during such a hostile event, but the training seeks to minimize casualties overall.

Membership/Activities – Aimee Shinkle

The Membership Committee will meet soon to get 2018 renewal notices out prior to the February meeting, or else they will be brought to the February meeting. Kathy asked whether any current CNBDU operating funds have been approved yet, and Cindy replied that the request has not yet been made, but will be submitted in February. Michael said that we need to prepare for the proposed staff hire that CNBDU funding would support; Kathy noted that we will need to advertise the position, and define the job's scope. Any member with input on these things should speak with Aimee or with WHBG Officers.

WHRF – Kevin Wright

Joe commented that it was Kevin's birthday that day. Kevin said the WHRF is working with the Stowe House on a grant application that may help to save a historic building. The Paramount Square project is underway. The Millhouse project may begin later than March. Cafe Vivace may have its opening in March.

Mark asked about the former warehouse at Lincoln, between Oak and May; Greg said that HGC owns it, and has it leased through 2019. The former Sears building at Lincoln is owned by U.C. and they are looking for a tenant; Kevin said it is intended to serve as an innovation hub. Michael asked about the Comfort Station, and Kevin replied that they have a signed lease for a new cocktail bar. Stabilization is happening now, with WHRF as the developer and owner, and new windows will go in soon while they are restoring the facade. This tenant will claim an Entertainment District License, but Kevin said the intent is not to do any more bars, so the remaining licenses will need to go to restaurants.

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CNBDU – No Report except for discussion recorded above under “Membership”

Communication/Promotions – No Report

Other Matters:

Christina said that the Harriet Beecher Stowe House will be opening in March with expanded hours this year.

Aimee said that Mercy Health has “new” job training programs that are focused on readiness for job placement in 5 local hospitals. They accept 8 to 10 in each class, and offer classes 4 times each year, with the next set to begin in April. These programs qualify for Hand Up tuition coverage for residents in 45206. Last year, they gained approval as an STNA program for a continuing education course designed to improve a participant's asking wages, in part by achieving certain certifications. This program runs for 2 weeks, Monday through Friday.

Toni announced her new role as President of WHAC. She called attention to reports of prostitution near the Shell gas station, and the Iowa/McGregor dead end. Her goal is to organize the leadership of multiple non-profit organizations in the area, and invited active participation from the WHBG.

Kevin said that purchase bids for the Alms building will be accepted by the bank in the next few weeks, and the receivership judge has a say in who the awarded buyer will be. We want the decision to be based on what is best for the residents and for the neighborhood, not just based on dollar amounts, and Kevin has drafted an Op-Ed to state such. It is unclear whether the building would remain as 200 units of affordable housing, or whether current residents might get displaced. Kathy suggested that it would be good to look at a comparison of hard data such as calls-for-service now versus 10 years ago. The Abatement process has been stopped for now, but depending on the new owner it could begin again, and it was noted that the Ramaninis (prior owners) are a potential bidder.

Kathy asked whether these bids are for a full portfolio of properties, but Kevin said that the Alms was separated out. Toni said that some residents have spoken to WHAC in support of the interim management, and that they don't want it to go back to the Ramaninis. Toni also said that the HVAC system is not properly installed and may pose a fire risk. Kathy noted that a Safety & Occupancy Agreement was effective while we stayed on top of it.

Kathy commented on how the building functions as project housing, with most residents unemployed. As soon as they gain income, they lose their housing eligibility, which provides the wrong incentives; we want to help residents to become productive and employed. Kevin asked whether it might be possible for some portion of the dwelling units to be “workforce” units that could be moved into as a resident transitions.

Kevin noted that the Alms used to be a hotel, so its design with narrow halls and low ceilings contributes to its problems. Mark said that it is not a good idea to concentrate 200 of the poorest residents all in one building. Toni said that at one time previously there were as many as 79 known felons residing there, despite rules against it. Kathy took notice of the work that is being done in East Walnut Hills just across the street, where some buildings are being torn down to make way for potentially hundreds of new apartments.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:00 AM.