
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: February 21, 2019 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Kathy Atkinson	David Estep	Jim Prues	Jerod Theobald
Peggy Bustamark	Christina Hartlieb	Samantha Reeves	Marc Von Allmen
Kathleen Colley	Samir Kulkarni	David Rich	Dr. Dain Wahl
Matthew Cuff	Anne Leeman	Officer Roper-Issa	Greg Warner
Gary Dangel	Matt Olliges	Michael Rountree	Allen Woods
Laura Davis	Fred Orth	Ciara Staunten	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Samir Kulkarni at 9:00 AM, with introductions.

Minutes from the January 17, 2019 meeting were approved, motion to approve not recorded. Minutes from meeting on Nov. 15, 2018 were approved, Samir Kulkarni 1st, Peggy Bustamark 2nd.

Treasurer's Report by Kathy Atkinson presented as handout, showing NBD funds in blue. Current CNBDU funds have not yet been received, so \$3,800 does not show in "2019 Actual" column. Samir commented that we are looking to develop revenue-generating activities. Kathy stated that she did not know the status of TIF funding; Kathleen replied that it has been tapped out since its usage with the Baldwin building. Kathy said that she thought that was to have been a separate TIF, and that we need to pay closer attention.

Committee Reports:

Safety (Safe & Clean) – Officer Roper-Issa

Handout of current crime statistics was presented. There was another shooting near the N&I Market, which took place soon after the Police had cancelled their detail to that area. Police are working with residents to address their concerns.

Officer Roper-Issa has responded to calls regarding vendors in the former Kroger parking lot, and said that she must work with the current lot owner. Officer Roper-Issa said that in general they do have the necessary vendor's license, but Laura noted that even so, it appears that some of their merchandise is illegal, and Officer Roper-Issa said that she is aware of this.

ALICE training (for active shooter situations) is being held at the Laser Spine Institute, and can occur elsewhere such as in places of worship if desired.

Communications & Membership – Samir Kulkarni, Allen Woods

Samir announced that Allen Woods will hopefully take over as chair, and Kathy has been helping. Kathy said that she has sent out dues notices, and is working on a draft of a letter to businesses who are not active WHBG members. We should create an incentive for existing members to bring in others; Kathy will report more on this in the future.

We need to identify our successes and benefits, such as our collective voice toward the City, noting that some projects may take involvement over several years (as it took 7 years to bring about 2-way traffic on McMillan & Taft).

This committee is also charged with hiring a person to maintain our social media and website presence, on a limited contract based on NBD funding. This job description must be posted on our web page to be publicly advertised, which Michael said he would do, and Gary said he would share it via the Facebook account once posted.

Planning & Development – Samir Kulkarni

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We want to create an inventory of commercial space in the business district, but we may need help from tenants to identify building owners. Samir is looking for additional persons to participate on this committee. Samir stated that the WHBG has partnered with the WHRF to guide their intern and start progress on this endeavor.

Events – Laura Davis

A Happy Hour that lasts from 5 PM to 8 PM will be on the 4th Wednesday of each month, to begin at The Greenwich. Laura suggested holding an event like a swap meet for back-to-school items at the 5-Points Alley. If we are to host a 5k run in September then Laura said she will need help from Gary; Gary noted that the schedule last year was on the same day as another race, which we should try to avoid. Raffle giveaways each month should be able to cover their costs with \$1 tickets. Another idea would be to coordinate 20 or so different pop-up galleries all being open over one weekend, Thursday-Saturday, one time in the spring.

Safe & Clean – Samir Kulkarni

One possible method of securing funding to enable hiring for the business district might be a Special Improvement District (SID), and Samir introduced Marc Von Allmen and Kathleen Colley from the City of Cincinnati to present the specifics regarding an SID. Ohio Revised Code 1710 concerns the formation of an SID, and Marc presented his handout of notes and an example map for discussion purposes. The SID would need to be managed by a designated non-profit entity that includes two Board Members appointed by the City Council and City Manager. To be approved, this entity would need to present to City Council the following: Articles of Incorporation which identify the boundaries of a contiguous district, Petition to Form SID showing assent from 60% of the abutting owners or 75% of those included in the district (excluding places of worship and publicly owned land), and a Service Plan that defines how the funds are to be used. The example map showed approx. 300 parcels with about \$39 million in assessed value, and at a rate of \$300 assessed per \$100k of value would yield \$100k of funding.

Samantha asked what other business districts might be doing, and Kathleen said that they may be relying on CNBDU funds or other grants. Kathy commented that Downtown Cincinnati Inc may have the community support to get something like this going, but we're not quite there yet. Samir stated that we could outsource some services to a 3rd party if necessary, and that this is just the start of a conversation.

Kathy asked about the use of Safe & Clean funds that may come out of asset forfeiture from the Police. It went to a youth drug prevention program at one time, but we have not heard of its use in recent years. Marc and Kathleen said that they are not familiar with the status of these funds.

Allen asked whether we might be jumping the gun by going to such an effort in order to facilitate hiring of one person for Safe & Clean purposes, and wondered whether there might be a simpler solution. Matt said that the issues to be addressed may change as more businesses move in to ongoing development, as he is already feeling more safe now. Matt commented that safety might be outside of the WHBG scope, as WHAC has its Safety Committee and we might just support their efforts. Allen said that business owners can be expected to take responsibility for the street in front of their locations, but Samir noted that some spaces would not be in front of a responsible business. Samir said that an SID might not be the ultimate answer but we will still need to address these issues. As an example, Laura said that she is still struggling to get the City to pick up trash along Gilbert, calling about it regularly.

Michael reminded all that the Safe & Clean Committee is in need of a chair and other participants.

Other Matters:

Samir said that he has been having conversations with Clarence (of WHAC) regarding separating WHBG from WHAC to pursue our own 501c-3 status, and has been processing the necessary documents. By-Laws will need to be drafted and presented for discussion at a future meeting.

Jim said that since hemp products are now legal, including oils and medicinals, it might be feasible to attract a processor/manufacturer to Walnut Hills.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:05 AM.