
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: April 15, 2021 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Gary Dangel	Christina Hartlieb	Sahir Rama	Robert Sanders
Cindy Fischer	Samir Kulkarni	Samantha Reeves	Zach Woolard
Kathryne Gardette	Ridge Strand	Michael Rountree	Kate Zieverink

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Samir Kulkarni at 9:05 AM. This meeting was held as a video conference using Zoom software.

Minutes from the March 18, 2021 meeting were approved, Kathryne Gardette 1st, Sahir Rama 2nd.

Treasurer's Report - Tim MacConnell was not present. The first payment to the Parks Department has been made, for the flower pots throughout the business district. Trash has been seen in some of the planters, take the time to throw trash away in a trash receptacle. Michael said that he will add an acknowledgement of the donors towards the flower pots on our web site, with links to each donor's web site.

Committee Reports:

Beautification – Samir Kulkarni

Michael reported on preliminary investigation regarding placement of district identity signs on buildings. As long as signs are no more than 20 square feet in area, less than 8' tall, there is an exception in Zoning code that allows them without affecting the allowable area of other signage. Projections into the right-of-way will still require DTE approval, and each installation on a building will require a specific building permit.

The cleanup that was held on April 10th had about 35-40 participants from UC, and they were able to canvas about 75% of the business district.

Communications & Membership – Sahir Rama

Sahir has sent out renewal notices, and hopes to be able to go visit businesses in person once pandemic restrictions are relaxed. The ability to pay dues online may already be established, Samir said he may need to discuss it with Tim later in reference to the configuration of our multiple bank accounts.

Samir said that Jerod is doing well with social media on Facebook, and will be adding Instagram activity as well.

Events – Samir Kulkarni

The 5K Peebles Run is set for Oct. 17, 2021, and Samir will be talking to Police in the following weeks. The race consultant will soon have a website set up for it.

Planning & Development – Samir Kulkarni

Some input regarding points of improvement that the WHBG can champion (to follow up on exhortation in previous meetings to come up with a list of three initiatives) has been received, and a compiled list will be sent out. Activating 5-Points Alley, transportation and ideas to make traffic patterns safer, such as sidewalk bump-outs and crosswalk locations, were mentioned. A "Constellation Committee" is being formed, with about 10 participants from more than just the WHBG, to consider multimodal transport throughout the neighborhood and develop a cohesive plan to present to the City.

Samantha mentioned that there may be stimulus money that could go towards our proposal(s), and that other neighborhoods have drafted one-page statements of their wish lists, which we might want to do as well.

Two presentations for consideration were made, by Robert Sanders and Zach Woolard; see below.

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Safety – No Report

CNBDU / NBDIP – Samantha Reeves (Cindy Fischer had to leave prior to end of meeting)

Samantha proposed only one major project proposal for this year (no minor project), which is to seek funding for a renewed Facade Improvements Grant program. This program will allow applicants who are doing work to enhance their street facades to get matching funds (20% to 50% matching) for the work, as approved by the program manager. Samantha said that WHRF would prefer to have the improvements be managed by one general contractor, perhaps SSRG. Previously a similar program was funded by grants from local banks; using City funding will mean that applicants must be within the business district as recognized by the City. One likely applicant located on Taft to the west of Melrose thus requires a formal extension of the business district in order to be eligible, but Samir noted that this would be a significant change. The application is due May 14th, and the Executive Committee of WHBG agreed to discuss this further in a separate meeting.

Other Matters:

Robert Sanders, of Sanders Development Group LLC, made a second presentation regarding proposed development at Curtis and St. James. This presentation was to formally ask for a letter of support of the proposed tax abatement which will enable the development to go forward. The project will renovate an empty building on Curtis Street to serve as offices for Triversity Construction, who would move from Norwood. Support from WHAC was gained the week prior, as it will bring approx. 25 jobs to Walnut Hills and address some of the blight. There was discussion of the amount of tax abated compared to new income tax and VTICA revenue brought in, with the expectation being that VTICA will result in \$5,500 per year, versus \$29,000 per year of tax abatement. Sahir noted that there is no guarantee that the new jobs will be filled by residents of WH, and asked whether it could be structured such that the amount abated reduces over time. Samir commented that abandoned buildings impose a less tangible but still real cost on the neighborhood, and Michael said that it isn't really giving up any current money since the approximate \$450k over 15 years is tax money that is not being generated now anyways. Kathyne commented that while an individual resident might choose to move in order to avoid expiration of an abatement, the same is not as likely for a business. Samantha and Kathyne pointed out that there is a portion of property taxes that does not get abated, which goes to public schools and indigent care programs.

As the meeting ran a bit long and not enough members remained to take a vote, it was decided to poll the current WHBG membership via email and determine whether WHBG would support the Curtis Street development that way.

Zach Woolard presented an update on the Alexandra and Peebles Apartments, which will be developed by Model Group on the former Kroger parking lot site. The intention is to construct mixed use in multiple phases, and Model Group will be working with Yard (Kevin Wright) and Kathy Atkinson for community engagement. Closing on the Alexandra was on 04/02/21 and it is now owned by WHRF and managed by Model Properties; renovations are expected to begin in March 2022. Unit affordability is mandated by the court for the next 17 years. Funding sources will include Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Historic tax credits, and other city funding. 80 of 83 units are currently occupied, at or below 60% AMI, and relocation of current residents during construction will be budgeted for.

The Peebles Apartments will front on Gilbert, with 42 units of family affordable housing in a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom units. Rents will be restricted such that 7 units will be for 30% AMI, 19 units for 50% AMI, and 16 units for 60% AMI. Model Group will ask for two letters of support (one for each building) at the next WHBG meeting, as they seek City HOME funds; the application for HOME funding will be due on 05/26/21. Yard will be working on community engagement in May and June. Samir asked what was planned for the remainder of the former Kroger site, and Zach replied that it would be a mix of market-rate housing and commercial space at the first floor.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:15 AM.