
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: October 21, 2021 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Christina Hartlieb	Tim MacConnell	Samantha Reeves
Jane Keller	Colin Mulvey	Michael Rountree
Samir Kulkarni	Jason Radachi	Kate Zieverink

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Samir Kulkarni at 9:11 AM. Meeting was held as a video conference using Zoom software.

Minutes from the September 23, 2021 meeting were approved, Tim MacConnell 1st, Jane Keller 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Our primary account balance stands at \$6,665.96, while the 5K Race account is \$8,364.78 (there was a \$1,000 transfer just this morning). The Beautification/Flower Pots account should be about \$700 after a check to the Park Board for \$1,500 clears. Samir noted that our accounts payable will include some race expenses.

Committee Reports:

Beautification – Samir Kulkarni

Samir expressed special thanks to Fred Orth and Gary Dangel for their efforts to mobilize recent neighborhood clean-ups. Prior to the 5K race, there were two groups, comprised largely of high school and U.C. students, that cleaned up trash in Walnut Hills generally as well as along the 5K race route specifically. Samir noted that each time after one of these clean up efforts, he hears comments on how good the neighborhood looks.

The planters throughout the business district have looked great this year, and they were recently replanted. Tim MacConnell is to be thanked for his leadership in coordinating this, along with the Parks Board.

Neighborhood/District identity banners will be a topic that we may bring up again during the November meeting.

Communications – Samir Kulkarni, on behalf of Jerod Theobald

Jerod has been keeping up with Facebook and Instagram, and may have some reimbursable expenses related to social media. If we have events in the neighborhood, we need to make better use of social media to publicize them, with a goal of attracting participation from those outside of Walnut Hills.

Samir mentioned the concept of issuing an annual newsletter, asking who might be willing to take that on. Samantha said that the WHRF may pull back some on reposting content that is broadly relevant to our business district, instead focusing more on their specific endeavors.

Membership – Michael Rountree, on behalf of Sahir Rama

Nominations for officer elections are due by the end of this meeting, in order to hold a vote during the November meeting. Sahir has been understandably tight on time, and another volunteer may be needed to chair this committee going forward. Samir said that we will need a stronger push to gain new members.

Events – Samir Kulkarni

The Peebles 5K inaugural race turned out to be a huge success. While we had hoped for 100 participants in order to break even, we ended up with 121 registrants from throughout the region. Runners said that they loved the course as well as the prizes. The men's fastest time was 17:26, and the women's fastest time was 19:31, which was achieved by a woman 53 years old. People seemed to be eager to do it again next year, and Samir said that we should begin planning in January, though it should be easier to plan the second time.

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There were inquiries after the race, because we were unable to get an after-race party organized; this is the biggest lesson we should learn. Samantha asked whether we have a rough idea of how we did in light of fundraising, and whether costs or profits will scale up with more participants. Samir said that we basically broke even, which should be counted a success for a first time event. Many fixed costs won't change, but police time might increase if we do have after-race events. Other costs will scale linearly with the number of participants. In general, we should bring in significant funding if we could scale up to 300 or so participants. Samantha suggested that we consider tapping the Neighborhood Activation Fund for expenses toward a 2022 Peebles 5K, assuming those expenses are incurred before the cutoff date (see <https://www.investinneighborhoods.org/neighborhood-activation-fund/> for more information).

Planning & Development – Samir Kulkarni, Samantha Reeves

Carvana, who presented at the prior meeting, has since determined that they are no longer interested in the location at May & Tuxedo. They are usually located closer to major retail, and it is possible this location was not visible enough. Samantha has offered to help Jo Ryan connect to developers in the area, but has seen no expressed interest.

Samantha said that NCR will be the facility manager for Alexandra apartments after renovations take place during the next year. Renovations will be phased, in 4 or 5 segments, in order to avoid displacing of current residents. The Durner Building and Peebles Apartments have had applications for historic tax credits made. Demolition of the former Kroger building may not happen before the end of the year, as WHRF is still working towards closing.

Safety – Samir Kulkarni

There are still more issues regarding transportation to discuss going forward. Police and other city personnel have looked into the timing of lights at Peebles Corner, so some minor progress has been made. An agreement has been made to change to cycle timing from 60 to 80 seconds overall, and to add 8 seconds (16 seconds in lieu of 8) to the portion for pedestrian crossing.

Tim noted that police officers are showing up at the WHAC meetings, and Samantha said that they have made a commitment to be at the WHAC Safety Committee meetings more regularly. It is understandable that they are pressed for time, and may not be able to attend every community meeting. Samir asked whether we might be able to get reports for ourselves, or at least prioritize the information that we most need from them, to make their time effective. Tim commented that in the past, we were able to bring up specific issues of concern either during the meeting or afterwards. Christina noted that the Safety Committee meeting being in the evening might be a challenge for officers on a 9-5 schedule.

Other Matters:

Nominations for Officer elections were collected. Current officers (Samir Kulkarni, Chair; Tim MacConnell, Treasurer; Michael Rountree, Secretary) each accepted nominations to continue to serve in their current roles, and there were no other nominations.

Representing Solica Construction, Samir presented a request for a letter of support to obtain city tax abatement for 726/728 McMillan (at the corner of Hemlock). This building has sat empty for past year, as the previous owner passed away in December 2020, and Solica purchased it in June 2021. It is three stories with ten apartments on the upper floors and two storefronts, and work will include redoing the roof, fixing soffits, replacement of windows, and full interior renovations. It has already been submitted for permit, and Solica hopes to get property tax abatement for 12 years, up to the 58% limit (certain school and infrastructure levies cannot be abated). This would amount to \$40k to \$45k of annual abatement, which may be offset by income taxes generated by residents or retail tenants, or disposable income that is spent in the neighborhood. This building will feature higher-end rents of \$1,300 to \$1,700 per month, to balance their portfolio (another Solica building further down McMillan has rents under \$1,100).

Jane asked whether we have targets for the overall mix of housing rates in WH, and Samir said that the WHRF had put together a Reinvestment Plan that called for more market rate units. Samantha provided a link to show the current balance of units, noting that the Reinvestment Plan goal was 30% affordable housing, 60% market rate – walnuthillsrf.org/affordability-update/. Samir said that Solica lacks the management expertise to handle affordable housing (below 60% AMI), preferring to offer units in the range of 60% to 120% AMI. Michael pointed out that this is the first presentation before WHBG, and a vote (with abstention by Samir) will be taken at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:10 AM.