
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: March 16, 2023 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Kim Coleman	Karen Hordinski	Tim MacConnell	Michael Rountree
Elese Daniel	Jane Keller	Teri Nau	Josh Smitherman
Pam Green	Samir Kulkarni	Jessica Powell	Greg Warner
Christina Hartlieb	Doug McClintock	Samantha Reeves	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Samir Kulkarni at 9:07 AM.

Minutes from the February 16, 2023 meeting were approved, Samir Kulkarni 1st, Greg Warner 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Tim reported that he made a funds transfer to the beautification account in order to pay the Parks Department for flower pot maintenance. Our general account stands at \$3496, with beautification at \$2000 and the 5K Race account at \$55. We have not had an influx of dues from member renewals or joining, but we should be collecting them soon. Samir noted that we were recently approved for our CNBDU operating funds request.

Committee Reports:

Finance – No Report

Planning & Physical Development – Samantha Reeves

Samantha presented a proposed major project funding request to NBDIP, for streetscaping along McMillan that will extend to Peebles Corner. This is for the peer-reviewed potential major and minor projects, of which only some get funded, based on votes. WHRF is not proposing any submission for a minor project, and in previous years it has seemed that streetscaping projects are not favored during the voting process. For this proposal, the streetscaping (light poles, trees, curbs and walks, etc.) will be matched by \$350k of similar work that Model Group will be installing in front of the Paramount Launch project; the major project ask of \$250k will extend this and leverage the same work crew(s).

Samir asked whether there is any contingent proposal in case we have to pull back due to financing, perhaps at another location, Samantha said the south side of McMillan near Fireside might be an option. Samantha requested a letter of support for this major project request, and the Motion to Support was approved, Samir Kulkarni 1st, Jane Keller 2nd.

Traffic & Safety – general discussion, no report

Samir noted that there have been a string of break-ins to retail storefronts recently, with about 8 in our neighborhood and another 4 in East Walnut Hills. One store in Over-The-Rhine even changed its locks and saw them get picked the next night. One suspect has been described as 6' tall, tan-skinned, with a non-distinct look, and another potential suspect may have been caught. Samir said that his company is considering hiring an off-duty cop to patrol during the hours of 2 AM to 5 AM. Samir is also installing glass break sensors into his buildings.

Membership – Michael Rountree; a committee chair is needed.

Michael presented the results of the online survey to poll our members regarding a preferred meeting time and day. There was no day or time that was as popular as the existing time (9:00 AM on Thursdays), thus no compelling reason to make a change. It was agreed to let the survey remain active and collect additional responses for next month.

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Communications & Marketing – no formal report

Events – no formal report

Other Matters:

Pam Green presented on behalf of Easter Seals, seeking a letter of support for their requested zoning variance. They are connecting 2901 Gilbert and the former YMCA to create an Economic Empowerment Center, and this will include consolidation of parcels. About 8 feet of the YMCA lot had been excluded from the prior Conditional Use approval, which will be corrected at this time. The requested Variance will expand the Conditional Use, as well as allow for a lower number of parking spaces, and permit parking within the designated front yard. The lot affords 112 total spaces, but Pam did not know how many total would be required without the variance.

Samir asked about the potential for job creation, and Pam said that part of the program is job training, and should add 18 new positions. The consolidation will let some youth programs that had moved off-site during the pandemic come back, such as a program that helps 18-24 year old dropouts to finish school. Construction is being done in partnership with Messer and Building Value. Samir noted that our ordinary process to approve such a request is that a vote is taken during a second meeting, and this presentation is the first. Due to the tight timeline, a vote would need to be taken at an Executive Committee meeting within the next two weeks, which would be open to attendance by all.

Jessica spoke about Talbert House's Veterans Supportive Housing, which they are developing in partnership with Easter Seals. This will provide workforce development as well as supportive services for mental health, substance abuse, etc. There are about 340 such housing units in Cincinnati, with a 2-year waiting list typically. 2631-33 Gilbert currently has 24 units of affordable housing and a soup kitchen, but they have had challenges due to crime and maintenance issues. The proposal is to relocate current tenants and demolish the structure, and build new 48 units (enough to justify an on-site manager). Tenants will come through the VA as well as CMHA; they are not currently reserved for veterans.

Funding will come from a private donor as well as tax credits and city funding. Talbert House would like to request a letter of support for their request for city funding, as well as for zoning variances pertaining to the front setback and lack of a main entry that fronts the street, a fenced-in courtyard at the building front, as well as parking within the front setback. Samir noted that this is under the Form-Based Code transect definition which emphasizes the look at the street, and said he would like to see more detail regarding the street frontage and fences.

Doug and Else announced that Red Bike will be expanding in our area, in the next three years. There are currently 65 stations across Cincinnati, and they intend to add 3 or 4 in Walnut Hills. They are seeking community input on preferred locations, noting that the new docks are battery powered and therefore more flexible in where they can be placed.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:18 AM.