
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: June 22, 2023 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Kim Coleman	Samir Kulkarni	Michael Rountree	Alex Zyndorf
Merret Collister	Tim MacConnell	Josh Smitherman	
Karen Hordinski	Julie Martin	Greg Warner	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Samir Kulkarni at 9:12 AM.

Minutes from the May 25, 2023 meeting were approved, Michael Rountree 1st, Greg Warner 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Tim said that he closed the account for the 5K Race, as it held no funds. We recently took in new member dues from LaSoupe, but we are having trouble getting dues collected in general. Alex Zyndorf and Josh Smitherman volunteered to form a Membership Committee to meet the challenge of renewals by existing members, as well as pursue expansion of membership. Regarding the flower pots that are maintained by the Parks Department, last year we had solicited sponsors to cover a portion of the cost, but have not yet done so for this year; Samir said that he has this on his list.

Committee Reports:

Planning & Physical Development – Samir Kulkarni, Alex Zyndorf

Alex introduced herself as being new to the neighborhood, and representing Model Group. There is approximately \$100 million in development under way at the former Kroger site, which will include a further 60 to 100 dwelling units and 220 parking spaces in the center of the block. One business that is coming will be a 4,000 s.f. higher-end grocery that will still have many staple items at affordable prices. Model Group is focused on supporting local businesses rather than national chains.

Alex asked about the status of the Greenwich, as Model Group has an interest in it. The property has had a condemnation issued against it, and they are not permitted to host music shows, although they continue to work with music groups. Samir noted that one issue with the building is the sidewalk which extends over the original coal chute that has not been fixed. Tim said that Mark Yates used to manage the Greenwich. Karen noted that WHAC was unable to make headway with an attempt to support them, especially when a huge bill was assessed due to previously overlooked water meter.

Samir asked about the potential for a phase 2 parking garage, but Alex said that Model Group is not at that stage yet. They are looking into an option to lease or buy the lot at Taft/Gilbert, across from the Alexandra. Samir said it has been sold to the City. Model Group has also closed on the former mail sorting facility, and are looking for a creative use to go there; it offers about 10,000 s.f. of office space and 75 parking spaces. Kim said that Jostin Construction might be interested, it could enable them to consolidate employees who are currently located outside of Walnut hills, such as in Bond Hill.

Traffic & Safety – No Report

Membership – Alex Zyndorf and Josh Smitherman agreed to convene this committee going forward.

Communications & Marketing – No Report

Events – Merret Collister invited all in attendance to an Open House at LaSoupe on July 11th, from 4:30 to 6:30 PM. They are at 915 E. McMillan and they offer carryout lunches daily, with no dine-in. They offer free meals on Friday afternoons, and they rescue food that might otherwise be discarded from other establishments. Michael agreed to send out an email notice on their behalf.

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Other Matters:

Jake Dietrich with Onyx and East made their second presentation requesting a letter of support for zoning variances that are being sought for a townhome development at May and McMillan, which will include 42 units. Jake was not present but gave a presentation by phone while their presentation was shown on a laptop screen. The presentation was for two projects, one on May Street and one on Concord. At May Street, 1.63 acres will contain 34 townhouses and 5 rowhouses, and the variances sought would include minimum lot depth, maximum front yard, drive width (14' existing curb cut instead of 20'), and balconies instead of 100 s.f. ground floor open space per unit. At Concord, 5 rowhouses are planned, and variances are needed for accessory structure separation, protrusion of steps in excess of 5', and drive width (14'). Karen noted that the area is very residential and less dense; Samir stated that a previous proposal for 192 apartments was reduced down to the current 39 based on community feedback a few years ago. Jake said that the quality of construction and materials will be there, it will be better than traditional apartments. Karen said that WHAC did not vote in favor. Samir noted the lack of 1200 to 1800 s.f. options, and the need to attract residents with greater disposable income. Michael noted that the requested variances are all for relatively minor technical issues based on the existing conditions. Motion to issue a letter of support in favor of the requested variances was approved, Samir Kulkarni 1st, Michael Rountree 2nd with one abstention.

Karen asked whether schools have been participating with WHBG, as it would be good to have them here. Spencer hosted a big event in May, and they will be having a back-to-school night in August, about a week before school starts. There is an Activities Beyond the Classroom program that provides enrichment during or after the school day, and they might consider career day programs which could be like an internship or just visit for a day, or else a job fair in the gym. Spencer is for grades 3-12 gifted individuals and is relatively rigorous.

Samir said that WHRF is putting together a new 5-year strategic plan, and wants to host it online as a Google document to be able to collect community input.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:25 AM.