
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: June 27, 2024 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Frank Arena	Paul Haffner	Lynn Love	Susannah Tisue
Cierra Bickel	Christina Hartlieb	Samantha Miller	
Kathryne Gardette	Karen Hordinski	Bobby Minelli	
Lexie Grimes	Esco Jackson	Michael Rountree	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathryne Gardette at 9:15 AM.

Minutes from the May 23, 2024 meeting were approved by Paul Haffner 1st, Samantha Miller 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – no report.

Discussion Topics:

Transportation & Planning – (discussion)

Kathryne said that, since our last meeting, the City's "Connected Communities" legislation has passed, which includes many reforms to zoning. A representative from the City will come to speak to us about it in the fall. It is unclear at the moment how it will impact the Form-Based Code that is already in place, with transects defined for parcels in the Walnut Hills business district (especially along Gilbert). Connected Communities has been under consideration for some time, and one can learn more about it by going to the City's web page:

<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/planning/connected-communities/>

Kathryne also noted that we should expect presentations by two development prospects, seeking our support for zoning variances. One is a proposed 200+ dwelling unit building at the location of the former Dairy Mart, and the other is a hotel on Beecher. She said that both will come to us during our July meeting.

CNBDU Funding – Samantha Miller

Samantha reminded all that earlier in the year (during the January 2024 meeting) a vote was taken to determine spending categories for CNBDU operating funds, which included \$2,000 of the \$3,750 total to go towards flower pots. The categories are flexible, and it appears we will need to commit \$3,700 (all of the unspent budget) to flower pots, due to a lack of other fundraising. The total bill for flower pots this year will be \$9,000 and of that, \$4,700 is now due. Donations towards street flower pots are accepted and sought.

An invoice must be dated before the end of June in order to qualify for reimbursement by CNBDU. Michael asked how soon we might be able to submit for next year's CNBDU funding, as it may be able to help cover the final invoice later in the calendar year; Samantha said we could submit as early as August if we make that a priority.

WHRF updates – Samantha Miller

The Street Food Festival will take place on the afternoon of September 29th and will have a focus on arts, events, and culture, to celebrate what makes up Walnut Hills. The planning committee is open for volunteers and will begin meeting in July. The location should be in front of Green Man Park and they are seeking approval to use the grassy lot adjacent to the park.

Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Regarding the VTICA application that was made some time ago, there were some follow up questions asked and WHRF has now resubmitted for it. The grant request includes \$10,000 for event planning, which they hope to use to generate a template or model that can be adapted and repeated in the future. It also includes \$13,000 for beautification and cleanups, which they hope to use to create a fundraising structure that can support regular cleanups and maintenance plans going forward. The initial funding should cover cleanup events at Green Man Park, the Gilbert median, 5-Points alley, and three other locations.

Events – (discussion)

America 250 is upcoming, and WH is part of the corridor for which submissions are sought. We may want to consider drafting a letter of support for any of our members who choose to submit or participate, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe House, ArtWorks, or Household Books.

Kathryne mentioned Blink, for which in previous years our neighborhood has provided decoration at a bus stop. She said we should do the same this year, and that she would provide contact info later (Justin Brookhart, Blinkcincinnati.com, 513.579.3194).

Other Matters:

Bobby said that he is working on getting a newsletter going, as an alternative to social media.

Karen said that the Spencer Center is looking for internships for their juniors and seniors, for positions that entail about 5-10 hours per week. She also reported that Spencer will be moving out of the former Douglass building and into a new location at Riverview East, as they need a facility with a full size gym and labs. There was a community engagement meeting to discuss the topic on June 26, and another planned for July 1 as a web meeting. Kathryne said there may be a smaller high school program that can move in, and regardless of how it goes, the change will be impactful to Walnut Hills.

Paul said that the Shakeley Center is doing well, the building is being restored after damage from a sprinkler flood.

Frank and Cierra from Springhill Suites said that there have been break-ins at the hotel, and despite having security cameras the perpetrators tend to hide their faces or wear hoodies. They do want to support the community and try to send guests towards WH when asked about places to eat or other activities. They asked that we let them know about interesting events or special deals in the neighborhood.

Lexie reported that many WHBG members were able to tour the new Mortar facility on Gilbert last month. Construction has been delayed a bit and completion is now expected by the end of July. This year marks Mortar's ten-year anniversary, and there will be a celebration along with a grand opening to be held in October.

Esco said that Artworks will open in their new location in July, with a grand opening event to be held in November.

Christina said that Harriet Beecher Stowe House remodeling is finishing up, with a grand reopening planned for July 19th and tours resuming July 25th. She gave a “Yay for civic engagement” noting that they had a need for a place to host an event, and though it was short notice, Bobby Minelli agreed to allow the use of Household Books. Paul commented that Lighthouse Youth Services does have a space that could be used by up to 50 persons, and answered Lexie that it does have white boards.

Lynn reported that everything has been installed at Market Wines, and they are just waiting on the City's inspections.

Kathryne confirmed that the meeting in July will be held at Household Books.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:00 AM.