
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: January 23, 2025 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Frank Arena	Kathryne Gardette	Mona Jenkins	Ciarra Wooten
Cierra Bickel	Lexie Grimes	Samantha Miller	Alex Zyndorf (by phone)
Heather Britt	Christina Hartlieb	Michael Rountree	
Sam Dobrozzi	Officer William Holthaus	Josh Smitherman	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathryne Gardette at 9:08 AM. Kathryne asked all to introduce themselves and share something that they appreciate about Walnut Hills. Comments included that it is a good location for restaurants even though the City lost 41 restaurants overall last December; that we are an actual community and not just a geographical neighborhood; that we have cooperation and diversity; and Josh said that Jostin is looking for new office space here.

Minutes from the December 19, 2024 meeting were approved, Samantha Miller 1st, Josh Smitherman 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Alex Zyndorf joined by phone to report we recently paid for our portion of the Parks Department bill, and we still need to reimburse the WHRF for the \$4,950 that they previously covered on our behalf. Samantha said that we still owe \$100 for our CNBDU dues, and Alex said she will prepare a check. We have \$300 in recent dues intake to be deposited, and Alex said she will send details for wire transfer to Heather, regarding submission of funds recently collected from the holiday fundraiser event. Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was accepted, Mona Jnekins 1st, Cierra Bickel 2nd.

Discussion Topics:

Safety – Officer William Holthaus

Crime has generally been down in all categories in Walnut Hills, with the exception of car break-ins and theft. Sam asked about the weather, and Officer Holthaus agreed that it could play a factor, as winter typically sees a slowdown in activity. When asked what we could do to help drive numbers lower, he said that privately-owned security cameras are recommended, and that we should call in suspicious activity (use 311, or 911 only for crimes in progress). Josh reported that in their gated parking lot they saw someone come in, looking in car windows, and this person fled when they went out to confront him. Officer Holthaus noted that the number of perpetrators might be small, as once an arrest has been made the activity may subside for several months. Samantha said there was a break in to the job trailer at Lincoln & Gilbert.

Cincinnati's Community Problem-Oriented Policing strategy (CPOP, also Police Visibility) will be focused on Walnut Hills for a 90-day period. One tough issue is that it used to be the case that teenagers found on the street used to be picked up or questioned, since they should otherwise be in school, but these days there is uncertainty due to remote learning programs, such that police patrols cannot make such assumptions. Kathryne thanked Officer Holthaus for being a part of our meeting.

Membership – (discussion)

Dues for current membership renewals all begin in January 2025. Kathryne brought up the fact that our dues structure has varyign dues amounts based on the organization size except for non-profits, which all are assigned the lowest dues rate of \$50. She pointed out that there are some larger non-profits in our area that would otherwise qualify for greater dues (up to

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\$200) if not for their non-profit status. Kathyne proposed that organization size be gauged by their full-time employee equivalence, with a caveat that negotiation can be had for cases of financial hardship. Motion to change the dues structure to have non-profit organizations follow the same dues tiers as other organization was approved, Sam Dobrozzi 1st, Frank Arena 2nd.

Kathyne noted that we need a point person in charge of membership. Michael said that the mailing list for meeting notices is essentially email-only, and that Alex may have a more thorough membership list. Mona said that there may be many who would participate, it's just that they aren't being invited. Sam said that he recently attended a meeting that was for three neighborhoods (Columbia-Tusculum and 2 others) and they only had as many as we do regularly. Sam asked whether we might consider holding meetings at noon or 4 PM to better accommodate restaurateurs.

Ciarra asked why we all might be enthused about participating, and Samantha noted that we have struggled with such a value proposition in the past. We might bring in outside assistance like City personnel, in addition to our Police liaison. Mona noted that it is good to know each other in order to promote one another and give referrals. Cierra said that Madisonville had occasional happy hour events in lieu of meetings, and asked whether we could put together some form of networking event. Sam said that Fireside could provide pizza; it was agreed to host a Membership Mixer of Wednesday, Feb. 19th, 4 PM at Fireside. Kathyne said she would put together a flyer.

Michael reiterated that a Membership Chair or point person is still needed, and Frank volunteered to take on this role.

CNBDU Funding Request – Samantha Miller

This year's operating grant allocation will be \$3,600, for which we need to submit a proposed budget. The spending categories that we identify in the proposal will be flexible and allow funds to be re-allocated if necessary. Motion to submit a request for funding in the amounts of \$3,300 for Marketing, \$100 for reimbursement of CNBDU Membership Dues, and \$200 for Beautification was approved, Samantha Miller 1st, Cierra Bickel 2nd.

There will also be opportunities for major and minor project grants upcoming, as the pre-applications for NBDIP proposals will be due in March. Samantha asked that we send her any ideas we might have.

Other Matters:

Mona said that recently there have been distributions of flyers with bigoted messaging going out to local residents, as well as egging of vehicles; similar flyers have been seen since 2020. Sam asked what the best practice might be when we encounter such things; Mona said to report it to the WHAC, with the goal to create awareness rather than fear, and to avoid posting about it on social media. It was noted that flyers cannot be posted on private property without permission, and egging can be a prosecutable hate crime.

Josh said that the developer who was requesting variances for an apartment development on the lot near McDonald's seems to have gone silent after we voted not to support their proposal, which did not provide enough parking. Kathyne noted that the Port Authority got funding to demolish a nearby building, which might be a reason.

Kathyne mentioned CityBeat's Best of Cincinnati 2025, with online voting through the end of January.

Model Group has vacant storefronts for which they are looking for tenant referrals. Alex will be doing a push in which they will offer a \$5,000 reward for any referral that results in a signed lease.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:10 AM.