
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: February 27, 2025 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

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| Cierra Bickel | Christina Hartlieb | Michael Rountree |
| Kathryne Gardette | Mona Jenkins | Jessica Vasquez |
| Lexie Grimes | Samantha Miller | Alex Zyndorf |

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathryne Gardette at 9:09 AM.

Minutes from the January 23, 2025 meeting were approved, Christina Hartlieb 1st, Samantha Miller 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Alex Zyndorf reported a balance of \$983.45 after reimbursing the WHRF for their payment towards flower pots. Samantha said that there will be additional CNBDU funds available to us for the current year, and will let us know when we can draw on these. Samantha also said that she will ask for a letter of support during the March meeting regarding NBDIP project proposals.

Discussion Topics:

Kathryne opened up the floor to general discussion of things happening within the neighborhood.

Lexie took note of Black History Month and said that Mortar will be hosting a vendors market on March 8th that may feature discounts for those who live or work in Walnut Hills. Mortar's space includes coworking spaces and conference room that can be rented on short terms.

Jessica announced the upcoming grand opening for ArtWorks on Saturday, April 26th, from 11 AM to 4 PM. She also presented a handout listing upcoming ArtWorks events. ArtWorks will be hiring 128 youth apprentices ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old.

Christina reported that Harriet Beecher Stowe House recently held a pop-up shop for entrepreneurs, and for Women's History Month there will be author talks coming up in March and April. Harriet's Birthday Party on June 8th will include a poetry slam and tours Thursday through Sunday.

Jessica asked whether there is a comprehensive events list for Walnut Hills, and Kathryne said that such a feature has been discussed in relation to the updated WHAC/WHBG web site. Kathryne said that we will need a volunteer to manage and support our web site events as well as other social media, and Alex said that her Model Group coworker may be available to take this on.

Samantha said that WHRF had found a good candidate for their Vista position, but lost funding, and so they are hoping to regain funding during a second round in April. WHRF is negotiating with the City regarding their applicants for business improvement grants; they hope to complete 12 to 15 projects this year. The Street Food Festival is being targeted to occur on September 20th, but this is not firm and they are not announcing it yet.

NBDIP Project Proposal – Samantha Miller

The portion of CNBDU finds dedicated towards development of a business district map could potentially be tied in to an NBDIP project proposal for wayfinding or installation of totems. It could be a minor project that focuses on branding, or a major project that fully implements and installs totems throughout the neighborhood. We will need to research the City's

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process and rules for totems; Christina suggested that some totems could be designed to honor black artists. Samantha also noted that in the competitive process for NBDIP project approvals, matching funds from other sources tend to help a proposal to score well. A formal request for a letter of support for an NBDIP project proposal will be made during next month's meeting.

Cierra has been getting good feedback after attending a conference last month and trying to push for more tourism to Cincinnati. Most tour buses go to the Ark and Creation Museums, which are in northern Kentucky, but there is at least one black-owned tour bus company that was interested in the Underground Railroad Freedom Center and Harriet Beecher Stowe House. Cierra said she will be creating events to try to sell Cincinnati more, and Mona said that we should know when tour groups come in, so that we could organize a welcoming meal or other event.

Michael announced his intention to resign from his service as Secretary of WHBG at the end of this year, and said that it would be good to identify the new volunteer in advance for a smooth transition when elections are held.

Model Group is looking for an active-hours tenant in the former Artworks space on Peebles Corner. A food service establishment would be difficult due to the lack of chase for a hood. The space may be split into two and a restroom added, with other flooring and electrical work. Alex said they want to activate the plaza, but it is not up to Model Group only to achieve this.

Alex said that her boyfriend has moved to Walnut Hills, and as a glassblower he is looking for studio space.

There is an upcoming Cincinnati Neighborhood Summit on March 29th, at the U.C. Tangeman University Center, organized by Invest In Neighborhoods. The programs will begin at 8:15 AM and continue past lunch to breakout sessions in the afternoon.

Kathryne encouraged us to invite new businesses to come and join our group, and remind others to return. Samantha and Mona suggested that we might do well to keep single-topic presentations short so that they don't dominate the meeting, perhaps by distributing the presentation in advance.

Kathryne reported that the recent social mixer went well. Josh from Jostin Construction was present and spoke about Park Avenue Square.

Mona brought up two things that we should be aware of. First, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) has been facing budget issues, so communities may need to get creative. There will be impacts on Douglas School, the Owens Center, and maybe other facilities. Dohn Schools, who has owned the charter school at 608 E. Mcmillan, is looking to sell this building. CPS was given first right to purchase, but they are not interested, both due to their budget issues as well as the condition of the building, but Mona said that there may be another charter school operation that will purchase it. Second, Vision & Beyond, which owns many residential properties in the area, is being sued by the City for failing to provide quality housing and essentially abandoning their tenants. More homelessness might be expected as buildings get condemned and residents evicted after inspection failures.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:07 AM.