

Minutes of Neighborhood Meeting of the West End Citizens Association

November 9, 2023

Attendance

- WECA Officers: Margaret Magner, President; Ajay Khetarpal, Vice President; Kate Fulton, [former] Vice President – Outreach; Darlene Pierro, Treasurer; Angela Geer, Recording Secretary; Jane Pontius, Corresponding Secretary
- WECA Block Captains: Nadia Azumi, Noreen Bryan, Maggie Hadley, Andrew Sellman, Brian Shipley, Carol Starr
- Others Attending: Monique Ashton, Hjarman Cordero, Peter Fossellman, Katie Gerbes, Spencer Hauptert, Kelly Kalepe, Jack Kelly, Sara Kiesler, Aileen Klein, Heidi Liu, Peter Lovell, Louise Lovell, Lt. Kenneth Matney, Duane Rollins, Josh Schnell, Ken Sonner

Call to Order/Welcome

The meeting took place in-person at the Rockville Presbyterian Church meeting room and online via Zoom. President Margaret Magner called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Business Items

• **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Darlene Pierro gave the report. The report covered September and October because there was no report last month when we hosted the Candidate Forum. Summary: We began the month of September with a balance of \$2013.04. We had income during the two-month period of \$47 in donations. We had expenses in September of \$1287 for newsletter printing, and of \$341.50 in October, primarily for FallFest. Balance at the end of October was \$431.54.

• **Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The draft minutes of the September and October 2023 meetings were distributed to the Executive Board in advance of this meeting. A motion to approve them was made, seconded and carried.

• **Report from the City**

Hjarman Cordero provided a report on upcoming City of Rockville events and reminders.

• **Report from the Rockville Police Department**

Lt. Matney provided the police report. There was discussion about concerns about traffic safety. Lt. Matney noted down areas cited as unsafe intersections (including Mannakee/Anderson).

Items of Interest

Guest Speaker: Katie Gerbes, AICP, Comprehensive Planning Manager, City of Rockville

Ms. Gerbes gave a presentation about the update to the Town Center Master Plan which is currently underway. She focused on the feedback the City received from residents during the recent public commentary period.

She reported that the Top Ten priorities Rockville residents cited in their feedback about Town Center were:

1. More/better retail and other activity options
2. More variety of restaurants or better restaurants

3. Better pedestrian/bike infrastructure, safety, and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods
4. More housing/density
5. More events and concerts
6. Retaining businesses and filling vacant storefronts
7. Easier, more accessible parking
8. Dog park and other pet-friendly spaces
9. Longer free parking or completely free parking
10. More parks and open/green space

(Ms. Gerbes' presentation slides are attached to these minutes for detailed information.)

Following the presentation there was discussion, with the main points made/feedback given by the West End residents at the meeting being:

- The City's pace of addressing problems with Town Center is too slow. Many of the top ten feedback points cited in the presentation have been given by residents for years. The Urban Land Institute study was completed in 2019. People are frustrated by the view that action and improvements by the City are taking so long.
- The importance of easy and plentiful parking should not be minimized as a factor in bringing people into Town Center.
- The "Road Diet" bicycle lanes recently installed in Town Center, and the execution of lane reductions on N. Washington Street and Middle Lane, are causing much frustration among Rockville residents.

Upcoming Events

- **Small Business Saturday in Rockville Town Center**

WECA has arranged for discounts for West End residents at specific Town Center businesses on Saturday, November 25. Residents can download the flier listing merchants and discounts from our website and present it for deals when doing your Small Business Saturday shopping. Support great small businesses in Town Center!

- **WECA is updating its logo**

VP Ajay Khetarpal presented the logo contest prize of \$100 Town Center gift certificate to West End resident Heidi Liu, winner of the new logo contest, following the voting by neighborhood residents during the FallFest event. The new logo will be featured soon on WECA correspondence and website.

Open Forum

- Josh Schnell, owner of the Bookville Bookstore (located inside Dawson's Market) spoke about the bookstore's mission, products, and the importance of supporting small business in Town Center from the merchant's perspective.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be posted shortly on the website. It will be either December 12 or January 11.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.