

**West End Civic Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ  
November 10, 2015**

**PRESENT:** Amy Bergquist, JoAnne Bauer, Fi Bookwalter, Max Condren, Abigail Dym, Caroline Finnegan, Ruth Fortune, John Gale, Toni Gold, Lakisher Hurst, David Klein, Jan Klein, Dorothy Lovett Bukcley, Bongsi Magubane, Kurt Malec, Ed McEachin, Guy Neumann, Cristina Renn-Chillogalli, Zephyr Strassner, Anne Thompson, Florence Wolff-Nicholas. Also in attendance: David Barrett, Jeff Hill.

JoAnne Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**1. OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES**

David Klein moved to approve the minutes from the October 6, 2015 meeting with a second from Kurt Malec. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. FINANCIAL UPDATE**

David Klein announced the 2016 membership campaign started and the membership forms will go out over the next few weeks. Office Expenses are driven by Constant Contact and supplies. WECA paid Elizabeth Park for East Lawn work totaling \$3,200, as approved at the last board meeting. The Farmers' Market anticipates limited expenses and receipt of grants.

In response to Fi Bookwalter's question about her street not receiving the newsletter, Mr. Klein explained that the December newsletter will be delivered by mail to the North and SE sectors, and hand delivered by volunteers to the other sectors.

**3. HARTFORD DECIDES**

Max Condren announced the City Council earmarked \$1.25 million for improvement works throughout Hartford and are looking for residents to present their ideas during the first phase of the project. The meetings are open to everyone, not just Hartford residents. The second phase will focus on turning the best ideas into projects to be completed by various teams. More information is available in the e-news.

Mr. Condren added that he and Ms. Magubane are representing the West End. Each NRZ has a member representing its area and is responsible for coordinating the community meetings.

**4. FARMERS' MARKET UPDATE**

Caroline Finnegan reminded everyone that the 2015 market was hugely successful and ended in October. SNAP members got double the value due to matching grants. The biggest challenge was coordinating with the Farmers' Market Committee. Ms. Finnegan also asked for help from the Board with fundraising ideas and social media update. Kurt Malec suggested using some of the content from the e-news on the website.

As the FM awaits the matching grants, there is a closing fundraiser at the Half Door on Sunday, October 15 from 4:30pm-7pm. The FM will get a portion of the proceeds from the drink specials.

**5. HARTFORD STATE GRANT UPDATE**

Ms. Magubane announced she will go to Noah Webster to plan how to coordinate families to go see a holiday show at the Hartford Stage, which was pre-approved through a WECA grant. There are 48 seats available to West End parents and students only and the event is advertised at other schools. Folks are asked to sign up.

## **6. STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH**

Kurt Malec announced he formed a small committee to refresh the WECA strategic plan. Other NRZs are constantly updating their plans by setting new goals. The primary focus of the committee will be to ensure the strategic plan reflects WECA's purpose while making sure the needs of the community are being met.

## **7. I-84 UPDATE**

Tony Gold is WECA's representative on the I-84 project, which has been under design for about 2 years. Ms. Gold showed an image of the side view of the highway. Of the four options proposed, two are now under serious consideration – (1) a lowered version of the highway, and (2) a tunnel. A lowered highway is less expensive than building the tunnel which would require relocating the park river conduit. Ms. Gold added that the tunnel does not produce good traffic outcomes and failed traffic tests. She's personally leaning towards the lowered version but that depends on relocating the railroad track since the highway currently goes over the tracks twice. There's not yet any consensus on where the rail line would go. She also explained that the lowered highway provides most of the advantages of the tunnel with better traffic. The studies assume no increase in traffic. The project is mostly federally funded project and has a large consulting team.

Ms. Gold then passed around ramp alternatives. No exit alternative survives the tunnel option, though at least one other neighborhood in Hartford fervently wants the tunnel. If the ramps from Exit 46 at Sisson Ave which directly impacts the West End were removed, it would lead to another road downtown.

Certainly the project will affect CT Fastrack, though Ms. Gold is not sure how.

This is a long project with a possible start date five years away. The duration of the construction will be contingent upon which chosen option and how much the City restricts access to the highway during the construction period.

John Gale voiced his concerns about the Department of Transportation (DOT) perceiving Ms. Gold's preference for a lowered highway instead of a tunnel as WECA's position, as well. Ms. Gold clarified she will send her comments to the DOT on her own letterhead and explicitly state the comments represent her own view, not WECA's. Mr. Gale made it clear he personally favors the tunnel and added he finds it inappropriate for Ms. Gold to continue to represent WECA while expressing her personal views on the matter. During a passionate discussion, some argued Ms. Gold should step down, while others disagreed. Mr. Gale encouraged WECA to have a public meeting to get a sense of what the community wants. He added that the Mayor-elect said he's not giving up on tunneling the highway.

Ms. Magubane emphasized the importance of this decision and encouraged everyone to attend the open studios held to inform the public about the project, though few in the community have attended. She will send the time and location of the open studios.

Ms. Gold invited everyone to visit I84hartford.com for more information and warned the website is complicated given the nature of the project. All agreed on having Ms. Gold invite the DOT to the December 8 General Meeting.

## **8. Planning & Zoning Committee (P&Z) UPDATES**

**P&Z Chair:** John Gale announced he has chaired the P&Z Committee since 1997; however he cannot continue to serve as Chair. He resigned as Chair and highly recommended David Barrett, who previously chaired the P&Z Committee. Amy Bergquist who has been very involved cannot serve as Chair due to potential professional conflict of interest. Mr. Gale will share his email list of about 50 people who have expressed interest in the P&Z Committee, though they generally have yet to get involved.

Mr. Barrett introduced himself and said he has been a West End resident for about 3 decades. He advocated for the business overlay district on Farmington Ave and firmly believes WECA needs to represent all of the West End. Mr. Barrett said 75-80% of West End residents are tenants. In response to JoAnne Bauer's question on frequency of P&Z meetings, Mr. Barrett stated the P&Z Committee, in addition to responding to issues as they arise through ad hoc meetings, must also have regularly scheduled meetings. In Mr. Barrett's view, the P&Z Committee ought to answer to and do what the WECA Board wants. In response to Zephyr Strassner's question about preventing gentrification, Mr. Barrett shared an anecdote about a small community market in the West End and stated it's critically important to never forget the diversity in this community and ensure all that is done serves the whole neighborhood.

**Vote:** Mr. Barrett exited the room for a vote to have him join the Board and the P&Z Committee chair. However, a few people, including Bongsi Magubane and JoAnne Bauer strongly advocated for advertising the position to the community to allow others a chance to get involved. Some found it unnecessary since Mr. Barrett is extremely qualified and thought WECA should take a vote right away. After much discussion, below are the final motion and vote.

David Klein moved to appoint David Barrett as interim chair of the P&Z Committee while WECA institutes a 2 week search for other qualified candidates, with a second from Guy Neumann. All present voted in favor, except JoAnne Bauer who voted against the motion. David Klein relayed the motion and vote to Mr. Barrett, who said he will let WECA know if he is still interested in two weeks.

**Prospect Ave:** Amy Bergquist announced someone purchased the 2 family house at 502 Prospect Ave but wants to convert it to a 3 family.

## **9. CLEMENS PLACE**

Ms. Magubane announced that the City requested WECA's position on granting Clemens Place a second signage. Most agreed the President should send a letter stating WECA does not have enough information to take a position and a letter indicating as such will go out to P&Z Commission and Clemens' place. Gale and Amy will handle this and put a meeting together.

## **10. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**DineAround:** Jan Klein said all is moving along, but they still need a dessert reception house.

**Community Engagement:** JoAnne Bauer announced that she sent an article about the successful Evergreen St party. Guy Neumann contributed financially to support the block party. They gave out Halloween costumes to the neighborhood kids.

Zephyr Strassner announced that not many people showed up for the mural project, which shows a lack of interest.

**Social Activities:** Florence Wolff-Nicholas helped with the Evergreen St party.

**Architectural History and Resources:** Jan Klein announced that the last info session on the historical tax credits was surprisingly attended by 3 people, instead of the 40 or so attendees in the past.

**Public Safety:** Jeff Hill announced the next meeting will be January, not December. Mr. Hill also said neighbors are not calling after witnessing crimes because they are afraid of retaliation.

## **11. SECTOR UPDATES**

**Central East:** Dorothy Lovett Buckley got EverSource to put the light back on at a street corner where it went out. The neighborhood showed little interest in a sector meeting.

**North:** Kurt had a sector meeting 2 weeks ago with 30 or so attendees. Medical Society property building was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59p.m.