

**West End Civic Association
Board Meeting Minutes
Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ
September 8, 2015**

PRESENT: Amy Bergquist, JoAnne Bauer, Max Condren, Ruth Fortune, Lakisher Hurst, David Jorgensen, Lucas Karmazinas, David Klein, Jan Klein, Dorothy Lovett Bukcley, Bonggi Magubane, Ed McEachin, Angela Pomfret, Cristina Renn-Chillogalli, Philip Stampul, Zephyr Strassner, Anne Thompson, Florence Wolff-Nicholas. Also in attendance: Caroline Finnegan.

Bonggi Magubane called the meeting to order at 7:07p.m.

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Magubane welcomed the Board. Everyone went around and briefly introduced themselves.

2. JUNE MEETING MINUTES

Ruth Fortune announced that that she emailed the June 2, 2015 minutes about 35 minutes before the meeting. David Klein moved to approve them subject to any subsequent comments from the Board. Amy Bergquist seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. FINANCIAL UPDATE

David Klein provided a brief overview of WECA's budget process for the new Board members. The budget runs on a calendar year basis and the membership campaign runs from November to November. Membership contributions to date total to about \$20,000 and the DineAround raised \$22,000. Currently, WECA's checking account has about \$10,000 and the Fidelity brokerage account has about \$52,000.

The summer was fairly typical with almost no income and lots of expenses totaling to about \$17,000. The major expenses were: (1) the Farmer's Market staff costs and double value SNAP offset by grants - waiting on additions grants, (2) the Education Committee's Honor Roll Assembly at Noah Webster, (3) the Elizabeth Park concert grant, (4) the salary of the community organizer for the SE Sector, and (5) the cost of the summer movie nights. WECA also paid for the insurance of block parties, the sector meeting spaces, the rental of the UCC conference room for the Board meetings and the AH&R Committee's discounted historical district plaques purchased at \$35 and sold at \$20.

Ms. Magubane asked about the \$5,000 allocated to youth programs on the budget. Mr. Klein explained the funds are distributed in the form of grants usually made in May to organizations like Camp Courant.

4. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Ms. Magubane said her agenda will be to primarily uphold WECA's reputation and programming. In her view, WECA's area of opportunity is new people from various socioeconomic backgrounds and ages who can be reached by casting a wider net.

After being elected President, Ms. Magubane spent some time this summer walking around the West End to engage neighbors. She said other NRZs and people outside of WECA have much respect for West Enders, though others wish WECA was more involved. The local businesses have been supportive. Some expressed anger towards WECA.

West Enders in their mid-20s shared lots of fun memories around the youth programming WECA used to offer. New folks indicated an interest in getting involved. Perhaps a gathering place where people can get more information and some programming or committees to support youth activities, housing and elders could benefit the community. In response to David Jorgensen's question about the type of youth programming, Ms. Magubane answered whatever keeps the kids busy and off the street, such as arts, music and skills development. David Klein suggested the cleanup crew with 8-10 kids which allows them to earn some cash and clean-up their neighborhood. Max Condren added that as a teenager his former classmates from Noah Webster were WECA youth counselors and would help run youth programming. Many of them have reconnected and want to be involved with what stems out of WECA.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

Public Safety

David Jorgensen said while crimes in the West End have quiet down a little bit, many of the nuisance problems stem from the halfway house at the end of Girard. The police traced the crime trails back to the halfway house and feel it is the root cause of many of the problems in the area. Moreover, the halfway house was inserted into the area without requiring community approval or involvement due to the source of funding. Many of the kids (technically young adults) in the halfway house have moved into the Evergreen, Warrenton and Sisson area. After the break-in at 105 Warrenton, the stolen iPads were traced back to Sisson and Capitol where the police have found the halfway house kids.

Mr. Jorgensen also shared the following news. One of the former residents of the halfway house told Officer Sherbo that he knows where the officer lives. Despite making the threat he was released on a promise to appear, no bond. In a separate incident during a traffic stop on N Beacon, the police arrested the driver for having a loaded gun. He confessed to pulling over because his girlfriend was in the car. A 28 year old male called the police then hung himself on a tree at Elizabeth Park. The police found him alive with a note in his pocket and now he remains in critical condition. The stair cases west of the playground at Elizabeth were known for prostitution and drugs. The secluded area is still a place where such activities happen late at night.

Mr. Klein asked if additional young people are being brought to the halfway house by DCF. Mr. Jorgensen affirmed it and added that the supervision at the halfway house has been poor due to staff and resident turnover. Representative Matt Ritter got involved and had his legislative aid looking into the halfway house. In addition to Mr. Ritter's efforts, Mr. Jorgensen thinks WECA needs to make it clear that the halfway house is a priority. Jan Klein suggested and all agreed for Ms. Magubane to send a letter to City Hall on behalf of WECA before the next Board meeting. Mr. Jorgensen believes it will be difficult to re-engage the halfway house current and former residents. Max Coldren said WECA can fill in and start trying to figure out how to prevent more kids from ending up at the halfway house. Mr. Coldren grew up playing in his parents' yard with two young adults involved in a Hartford shooting and wants to figure out what WECA can do to inspire the youth.

P&Z

Amy Bergquist announced that approximately 50 people attended the P&Z meeting. In short, the developers working on the project want to build 4 buildings to house about 225 people. No

traffic study was done nor does historical preservation seem to be a key priority. The developers agreed to come back to WECA before their next meeting with P&Z.

Lucas Karmazinas added that the developers don't have much of a preservation plan, therefore there's not much for AH&R to consider.

Farmers' Market

Caroline Finnegan, the FM manager, said the FM will run until the end of October. This year, the FM will give away nearly \$9,000 by doubling EBT, WIC and senior checks through grant matches from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and Wholesome Wave. The vendors and shoppers seem happy. Ms. Finnegan is thrilled with the progress and thinks the new location has made a huge difference. The Harvest Festival, a big party with food trucks and spending incentives for that day only, will take place on September 29 and serve as an event to remind folks that the FM is around through the end of October.

Anne Thompson said they want more ongoing fundraising and want to make the FM a more integral part of WECA and the community. Ms. Finnegan pointed out that there is not much West End presence in the market. The FM can be a venue for WECA to further engage the community.

Ms. Magubane turned it over to Max Coldren. Mr. Coldren shared his preliminary thoughts on WECA hosting a big event through the FM. Ideally, this new event would complement other WECA events and attract a wide demographic. While Mr. Coldren compared it to the DineAround, he explained it would be at a lower price point and would not primarily serve as a fundraiser. Like an event held on Pratt St in early August that attracted about 200 people, this event could have attendees bring their own food but provide drinks and desserts.

If WECA chooses to proceed, Ms. Magubane said she's hoping to get some financial support from WECA. Jan Klein said she thinks it's a great idea to pursue but asked how much funding is needed. Ms. Magubane explained the preliminary funding would cover consultation fees with Hartford Prints, the hosts of the Pratt St event. Amy Bergquist said people usually ask for money during the budgeting process. David Klein concurred. Florence Wolff-Nicholas said some of her committee's funds, Social Activities, can go towards this event. Ms. Magubane emphasized that Mr. Coldren and others involved will need help from people who have successfully planned such events like the owners of Hartford Prints. Mr. Klein said WECA is not accustomed to paying for event planning. Ms. Finnegan said she has extensive event planning experience and is willing to help.

October 13 General Meeting

Ms. Magubane passed around a summary and detailed agenda of the October 13 general meeting. She asked for input on the agenda. Z Strassner suggested using the meeting to get a sense of how WECA can better serve the artist community in the West End. Many of the artists feel like the ArtAround is not inclusive enough. Ms. Magubane explained that the October meeting usually focuses on Education but could explore this suggestion at another meeting.

Ms. Magubane expressed her hope that Angela Pomfret, a West End parent, can help bring more parents to the October meeting.

The current agenda will be published in the newsletter and finalized at the October Board meeting.

The group briefly discussed the agenda item on the list of schools that West End kids attend.

6. SECTOR UPDATES

Southwest: Max Condren said they will have a first general meeting on September 29 at 114 Warrenton at 7pm. Angela Pomfret serves as co-representative. Alan Paluck is still active in guiding and advising Mr. Coldren and Ms. Pomfret.

Central East: Dorothy Lovett Buckley announced they have no scheduled meeting and Jory Johnson resigned at the last general meeting.

Southeast: Cristina Renn-Chillogalli said she's continuing to plan the Evergreen block party and is trying to figure out what the community wants.

North: Philip Stampul said the block party did not come together but the idea is still alive.

7. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Engagement: JoAnne Bauer said there is a new Community Engagement. She is seeking more volunteers. Ms. Strassner and Ms. Renn-Chillogalli volunteered.

Social Activities: Florence Wolff-Nicholas said she is helping with certifications for the block parties. There will not be a tag sale this fall.

Architectural History and Resources: Lucas Karmazinas provided a summary of the committee for the new Board members and said they have been on a break this summer. An issue was brought to light when someone called about an illegal construction at the house at the corner of Whitney and Warrenton. AH&R obtained a stop work order which delays the construction until approval is obtained through the proper channels.

Jan Klein added that state of CT has a program that allows historic homeowners to apply for tax credits for improvements to the house. AH&R runs an event every April and October to further inform homeowners about the program.

8. OTHER TOPIC

Arnold Skretta resigned as the VP. An advertisement about the vacancy will go the in the newsletter. Candidates will go through Ms. Magubane.

David Klein said the newsletter is partly mailed, partly hand delivered. Some new and existing Board members said they have never received it. All sector representatives agreed to inform Mr. Klein if there are issues with the delivery in a particular sector. This will allow WECA to plan for all deliveries accordingly. Send articles for the newsletter to wecanews@yahoo.com.

Ms. Magubane received a call from the Ethel Donaghue Foundation to discuss spending priorities for Elizabeth Park. A meeting is scheduled for November 10 and will be advertised in the e-news. Also, Blue Hills Civic Association wants to share their development plan with WECA. Ms. Magubane asked for permission to invite them to a Board meeting. All agreed to have them meet with WECA's Planning and Zoning committee and to involve John Gale.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49p.m.