

**West End Civic Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ  
March 1, 2016**

**PRESENT:** JoAnne Bauer, Amy Bergquist, Fi Bookwalter, Dorothy Lovett Buckley, Max Condren (via phone), Ruth Fortune, Lakisher Hurst, David Jorgensen, Lucas Karmazinas, Kurt Malec, Guy Neumann, Charlie Ortiz, Angela Pomfret, Anne Thompson.  
Also present: Maura Cook (United Way), Aaron Gill (Frog Hollow NRZ), and David Morin (Parkville NRZ).

Ms. Magubane called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**1. WELCOME**

Ms. Magubane welcomed everyone.

**2. FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES**

Ms. Fortune moved to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2016 meeting with a second from Mr. Ortiz. The motion passed unanimously. Corrections to be made to correct JoAnne Bauer's name and the sector update from Central East.

**3. YOUTH PROGRAMS ALLOCATION**

Ms. Magubane attended a youth program that she would like to replicate in the West End. The program is run by the Special Service Unit in the Police Department. Over the years, it has become a pipeline for the cadets and future police workforce. Ms. Magubane said Mr. Jorgensen informed her the West End previously had this program at Noah Webster. She asked Mr. Jorgensen to look into whether it is possible to have it again for West End youth at Noah Webster, which he confirmed. The cost is \$5,000, which covers the coaches' wages for the summer. Prior to the Board meeting, Ms. Magubane sent an email to all Committee Chairs requesting they allocate some of their budget to this youth program. It is also aligned with the Mayor's goals for the City.

Ms. Buckley asked if the program was well attended. Mr. Ortiz confirmed it was.

**Motion:** Mr. Neumann motioned to allow the Committee Chairs to reallocate funds from their budget to finance the youth program. Ms. Bauer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**4. UNITED WAY**

Ms. Bauer introduced Maura Cook who contacted her and asked to speak with the Board. Ms. Cook works at United Way in the Community Engagement Committee.

Ms. Cook proceeded by announcing she has a model of doing community events to facilitate conversations meant to be aspirational. The conversations, she said, are a good way to hear from a good cross section of the community. They allow United Way to stay connected to the community and know what is relevant to the community. She would work with WECA on a theme for the event. Conversations usually take about an hour. She prefers groups that already meet, but can also invite individuals to gather solely for this conversation. She worked with the Asylum Hill NRZ a few years ago and will likely host an event with the Parkville NRZ on March 9.

Ms. Bauer asked about sources of funding. Ms. Cook said The Hartford provided funding for the Asylum Hill conversations which she conducted with employees at The Hartford and Asylum Hill residents. Ms. Bauer asked to clarify the outcomes for the community. Ms. Cook said WECA would get to hear directly from neighbors what they actually want and their feelings about their community. There is a great deal of diversity in the West End and this would be a good opportunity for people to come together, she added.

Please direct questions about partnering with United Way to Ms. Bauer.

## **5. PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jorgensen announced the Police Department (PD) has a couple of surveillance photos of the car break-in offender. They are working to identify the individual. As a safety measure, Mr. Jorgensen urged neighbors not to leave anything of value in their car and to lock their doors.

About 50 people wrote in favor of keeping the Conditions Unit which works to proactively reduce crime. Despite originally planning to keep the Conditions Unit, the PD cut it entirely in February.

The PD suffered a 10% cut for the last 2 years. Not having Academy classes for 15 years led to a massive understaffing and overtime being paid to current officers to make up for being 100 officers short. Thus, the City's goal of cutting overtime due to budgetary concerns seems unfeasible. Ironically, there is federal funding available to the PD contingent upon satisfying the requirements – one of which is that they are fully staffed.

During the March general meeting, Officers Rivella, Sherbo and Brooks will talk about the state of public safety city wide and in the West End. They also welcome an open dialogue with the community. Mr. Neumann requested that the officers also address the possibility of installing surveillance cameras. Ms. Magubane said the Public Safety Committee can get together to discuss whether or not there is a need and/or want for surveillance cameras.

## **6. I-84 PROJECT**

Prior to this meeting, Ms. Magubane sent an email to the Board which included a Courant article on the i84 project. She introduced Toni Gold, Aaron Gill and David Morin to offer their perspective on the i84 project.

Ms. Gold began by reminding the board of the three alternatives she last presented: (1) a lowered version, (2) the tunnel, which is completely submerged, and (3) an elevated version, which is virtually eliminated. At a recent meeting, a new alternative was presented – a lowered version with a cap at various parts. She passed around some visuals and clarified upon being asked that a cap is strong enough to carry cars, bikes and pedestrians.

In Ms. Gold's opinion, there are two options worth considering: (1) the tunnel, a cost prohibitive alternative, and (2) a lowered version with the cap as an addition. Ms. Gold prefers the latter.

The cap preserves the ramp at Sigourney St which helps with traffic flow. It appears like under any plan, the Sisson exit is gone. Ms. Gold reiterated that doing away with the ramps at the Sisson exit (Exit 46) would allow West Blvd to connect directly with Aetna and free up about fifteen acres of buildable land. The project managers plan to make a final decision soon. For more information, please visit [i84hartford.com](http://i84hartford.com).

Mr. Gill is a civil structural engineer and purchased a building on Capitol Ave. He prefers the tunnel version though he realizes it is the most expensive option. He cited Boston's success with its underground roads and how they helped to revamp the area. He seems to think cost is a moot point since federal funding would cover about 80% of the cost of any option. More importantly, Mr. Gill believes the community should seek the option that not only addresses the City's transportation concerns, but one that also revitalizes the City. In his opinion, the tunnel is the option that best does both.

Mr. Gill acknowledged that the capped option returns land to the City. According to him, over 50% of Hartford land is not taxable, thus the City stands to gain from additional buildable land. Mr. Gill believes that advocating for the tunnel option as a first choice and a capped option with an extended cap as a second choice gives him (and the community) more bargaining power. In response to Mr. Neumann's question about the top of the cap, Mr. Gill answered there are ways to drive over the caps or greenways could be added. There will be impacts to the buildings with any option, but that's part of the next stage.

Mr. Morin agreed with most of the information provided. He said both, the tunnel and capped options, affect the Park River conduit. There may be ways around it. He personally prefers the capped option; though his group sent a letter previously preferring the tunnel. Mr. Morin would want to see more capped surfaces than currently proposed. From the Parkville NRZ's perspective, the chief concern remains the neighborhood's access to the highway since it is more heavily reliant on manufacturing.

Ms. Gold added she will share the dates of upcoming open studios on the i84 project with WECA. She also advised having a subset of the board develop some positions on the alternatives. Mr. Gill advised against dwelling on the details and encouraged folks to focus on the general goals.

The following people agreed to form a group to explore the alternatives: Magubane, Bauer, Ortiz, and Gold. They will also work on a draft letter to send out. Mr. Karmazinas said the board should be able to vote next month.

## **7. MARCH AGENDA**

The next quarterly general meeting will be held on March 8. The following committees/people will make announcements: Farmers' Market, Mr. Condren on Hartford Decide\$, Community Engagement and Hartford Blooms.

## **8. HARTFORD DECIDE\$**

Mr. Condren announced via phone the voting period is from March 19-25. Each of fourteen neighborhoods will have a pop up event to encourage and maximize participation in the voting process.

## **9. HARTFORD BLOOMS**

Ms. Magubane said Mike McGerry will put together a grant request. Plans are in full swing, but there is still a need to clean up the neighborhood.

After some discussion about blighted properties in West End, Mr. Karmazinas offered to send his list of blighted buildings throughout the neighborhood to Ms. Magubane. Mr. Neumann

volunteered to complete the documentation process for five blighted properties. Mr. Morin offered to provide guidance to Mr. Neumann and others who want to be involved in this process.

#### **10. NORTH**

Mr. Malec has been working in his sector to be more involved in the zoning process. They created a list of their eight key concerns to have their voice heard. Their concerns range from the definition of family/household/people to what lies ahead for the Hartford College for Women.

Mr. Malec and Ms. Magubane will chair the next WECA P&Z meeting to discuss the proposal for the Hartford College for Women. The date is to be announced.

#### **11. FARMINGTON BUSINESS**

Ms. Magubane said they are looking to create a tax increment financing (TIF tax) like in Downtown Hartford.

Mr. Malec asked for a courtesy email to confirm receipt of the print newsletter.

#### **12. COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Community Engagement:** Ms. Bauer introduced West End Wednesday. The next one is at Metro Café on March 16 and will possibly feature a poetry open mic. A committee meeting will follow the same evening.

**Farmers' Market:** Ms. Thompson said the volunteer meeting is also at Metro café.

#### **13. SECTOR UPDATES**

**Central West:** On behalf of Mr. McEachin, Ms. Magubane announced the next sector meeting on March 29 at 7pm at 164 N Beacon St.

**South West:** Ms. Pomfret said there will be a sector meeting on March 22.

**Central East:** Mr. Neumann announced a sector meeting on March 9 at 148 Kenyon St. Council Member Julio Conception will be present to meet and greet the neighbors.

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