

**West End Civic Association and NRZ
Board Meeting Minutes
United Methodist Church
September 5, 2017**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Kyle Bergquist, Rick DuVerger, Lakisher Hurst, Bongsi Magubane, Kurt Malec, Ed McEachin, Cindy Courtney, Jon Esmail

ALSO PRESENT: Janice Castle (Department of Public Works), Director of Blight Remediation Laura Settlemeyer, Officer Sherbo, and many residents.

Meeting opened at 7:00pm.

1. WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Magubane welcomed everyone.

Mr. Malec gave the following updates:

- The format is now to combine a general meeting and the board meeting at the first Tuesday of the month. Board business is conducted in the first portion of the meeting, whereupon the meeting is opened to the community for questions and discussion.
- Committee vacancies:
 - Committee Chair Christina Chillogalli has resigned.
 - The open committee chair for membership has been filled by Rick DuVerger returning to that position. Jan Klein has stepped down from the AH&R committee; Kurt Malec will fill her spot on that committee.
 - The Education Committee needs a chair.
 - The Beautification Committee still needs a chair. This important committee works in partnership with the Blight Committee.
- There is a new principal at Noah Webster.

2. MINUTES

It was moved and seconded to approve the June 2017 minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

3. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Klein explained that WECA's budget runs from January to December, and that a financial report is not produced in the summer. After the June meeting WECA received about \$2100 in membership due to the newsletter distribution. Total received from the membership campaign is just under \$20,000. In addition:

- a. We paid the UMC for the use of their facilities for the year. (\$2000)
- b. We paid Noah Webster for our share of the Honor Roll Assembly. (\$1500)
- c. We paid the UMC for the food bank and community breakfast Grant. (\$3000)
- d. Movies finished right on budget. (~\$1300)

4. FARMERS' MARKET

Mr. Klein reported that the Farmers Market is in fairly good shape, although funds coming in don't sync up with expenses. We are trying to identify other sources of funding in addition to the \$6000 grant that WECA provides. WECA acts as treasurer for the market and pays out more than is received; money is also received from the SNAP program.

Caroline Finnegan explained that there is a requirement to have a paid staff member, although staff expenses are about \$14,000 and WECA can't cover that. Funding from other sources such as the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving would not have the paid staff requirement. The market serves constituents outside the West End, especially through the SNAP program.

5. PLANNING AND ZONING

Mr. Bergquist reported on 3 requests for variances:

- a. 172 Whitney Street presently operates with three units in a 2-unit zoning area. They wanted to meet legal requirements and applied for a variance, which was granted. WECA had an internal e-mail discussion but ultimately did not take a position. Discussion ensued about whether two-unit zoning is appropriate and whether that should be revisited. Ms. Castle stated that is a long-term discussion.
- b. 641 Farmington Avenue applied for a variance relating to their law firm signage, which is non-compliant. Planning and Zoning could not act this summer, so the law firm went directly to the City Board of Appeals, which was meeting at the same time as this meeting. The law firm has become a WECA member.
- c. 108 Kenyon's recent purchaser is now selling. The garage was damaged and then removed; owner wants to replace it using the same concrete pad, but the rules have changed. Discussion ensued about the process of applying to the City, followed by request to the community organization for input. Mr. Bergquist is willing to be approached about the routes that should be taken.
- d. Ms. Magubane reported that there appears to be activity at the medical society building.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY

Officer Sherbo introduced Lieutenant Cunningham, whose new assignment is to attend NRZ meetings. Officer Sherbo reported on burglaries, larcenies, and stolen vehicles, and reminded people to lock belongings in their trunks. He also remarked on a trend of calling when a theft occurs, instead of waiting a couple of days, which helps secure a resolution.

A member of the audience commented on speeding and reckless driving on Whitney Street. Ms. Castle commented that multiple traffic calming methods exist and that there are pilots being considered around schools, which requires attention. Questions were raised about solar flashing speed signs. Ms. Magubane plans to invite Jim Ford from the City of Hartford to address options.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Mr. Klein reported on the declining attendance at the movie on Evergreen. The Elizabeth Park movies are much better attended. He asks whether there is a better way to spend this \$700. Discussion ensued about whether Evergreen is a good location for movies and the factors that affect attendance.
- The West End won't get a mural through the Paint the City project. Firehouses elected not to participate. Ms. Magubane commented that the project committee should have assured that properties were available and that there was a willingness to participate.
- This Sunday is Rally Day at the Methodist Church, which is open to the community and includes breakfast.
- Val Bryan from the Hartford Food System reported that there is a free breakfast on October 26 at Billings Forge where food policy in Hartford will be discussed.
- Jon Esmail enthusiastically reported on the success of the PAL program at Noah Webster this summer. Ms. Magubane stated that Dine Around supports this program.
- Representatives from Hartford Stage spoke about a new program called Our Community Access which aims to reinvigorate relationships with NRZs.

8. CITY OF HARTFORD REPRESENTATIVES

- Hartford Director of Community Engagement Janice Castle reports that September 26 at 6 pm is the next town hall meeting for Hartford. It will take place at Infinity Hall. She also reported on a program that the Science Center has for high school students, which provides food and bus passes.
- Director of Blight Remediation Laura Settlemyer reported on new ownership of the Colonial Arms at 479 Farmington, stating that the owner wants to rehabilitate the building and get commercial and retail businesses on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors. Also, 181-83 Sisson has a new owner who wants to bring the residential property back on line. Ms. Magubane has invited these owners to attend WECA meetings.
- A discussion ensued about how to get properties labeled as blighted.

9. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Mr. Malec reported that a group wants to open a restaurant in the Brazza Building.
- There is a new café called the Fiddlehead Café.
- Ms. Bauer suggested that the practice of inviting businesses to speak at WECA meetings be revived.
- The owner of Passages Art Gallery was introduced.

10. SECTOR UPDATES

Terry Road and North Beacon Street did not want speed humps; Evergreen will get them.

11. COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Ms. Magubane asked for an update on the DIG program. The next event is at the Bowling Alley.
Ms. Magubane asked Ms. Hurst to put together a flyer about it.

Mr. Malec reported that the West End Farmers market is having a brunch at Sarah's Coffee House.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.