

Westwood Civic Association

January 10, 2012

Steering Meeting

Present: J. McNulty, M. Gwyen, M. Jenkins (recording secretary), V. Baumann, J. Hildebrand, M. Kuhl, J. Minor, J. Sess, B. Weber, K. Strasser, representatives of the Gamble-Nippert YMCA, and several community members

Absent: J. Kimmet (excused), J. Henke, Sr. Ann Rene McConn

Minutes of the December 20, 2011 General Meeting

MOTION by J. Sess to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2011 general meeting as written.

SECONDED by J. Hildebrand.

PASSED unanimously.

Gamble-Nippert YMCA Variance Request

Trish Kitchell, executive director of Gamble-Nippert YMCA, and Ray Siegel, representing ASI Sign, spoke about the variance request for a proposed sign at the corner of Boudinot and Montana Avenues. The sign would require a zoning variance because it would exceed size limitations for height, would include illumination, and would have a distance from the corner shorter than code permits. Most speakers commented negatively on the size of the sign, which would have increased height due to its proposed positioning on a slope. There were no negative comments on the purpose of the sign, the illumination, or the distance from the corner. One speaker commented on the contemporary design as incongruous in the older neighborhood. Speakers urged the designer to consider a horizontal design or a shorter vertical design to improve aesthetics.

MOTION by J. Sess to approve the variance request.

SECONDED by J. Hildebrand.

FAILED by a vote of 6 opposed, 2 in favor, with one abstention.

Following the vote, board members urged Gamble-Nippert YMCA representatives to return with proposal that is more in line with zoning law.

PLCHC Westwood Branch Library

J. McNulty recapped recent reports of patron behavioral problems at the Westwood branch of the public library. In the most serious reported incident, a library employee and a security guard were assaulted. M. Jenkins read library branch manager K. Bach's email response that addressed policy matters, an account of the assault, and protocol. Other attendees, including A. Simerlink, a library patron, and area residents, spoke unfavorably about teenagers congregating at the entrance and commenting disparagingly at passersby. Ms. Simerlink recounted an incident she witnessed in which previously reprimanded youth gestured and swore at staff and were not removed. One attendee reported calling the main library to report the problems and to ask for policy information. Several attendees remarked that a police officer should be on duty to support staff. J. McNulty suggested that K. Bach and community police liaison R. Minella be invited to an upcoming meeting to address this as a community issue. Later in the meeting, K. Bach arrived and commented on the incidents and expressed her interest in meeting with WCA and District 3 Police representatives.

CMHA Issues

J. McNulty announced the changes in Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority board composition, commenting that WCA should urge a community-wide discussion about subsidized housing and a favorable balance of housing types in communities. He indicated his interest in a seat on the board. J. Sess reported that he recently spoken with a staff member in Congressman Steve Chabot's office about the Chronic Nuisance Ordinance and potential legislation related to violations at subsidized housing.

Citizens on Patrol

Stephanie Smith, representing Westwood Citizens on Patrol, noted that COPP would be holding a celebration on January 14 to recognition of the 1,000+ hours of COPP patrols in 2011.

Nominations for WCA Board

J. McNulty noted that nominations are now open for WCA board membership. The nominating committee will present its slate at the February meeting if an election is necessary.

School Bus Incident

Ms. Simerlink reported a recent incident in which a young boy getting off a school bus near Cyclorama Dr. and Fleetwood Ave. demanded money and threw a heavy object at her. Board members urged Ms. Simerlink, and Westwood residents, generally, to call police as quickly as possible when observing or subjected to a crime and, in this particular incident, to call the bus company to report it.

Jeremy Murphy

A hearing is scheduled in Common Pleas court on January 11, 2012 in the case of Jeremy Murphy, the subject of discussion at WCA meetings throughout late 2011. J. McNulty urged a WCA presence at the hearing. He also noted that reinstatement of WCA Court Watch should be a 2012 priority.

Police Chief and Tracking Crime

J. McNulty reported that Cincinnati Police Chief Craig will meet with WCA representatives on February 8, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. The primary purpose of the meeting is to discuss action taken at the November 2011 general meeting to encourage Cincinnati Police to use enhanced crime tracking to inform a coordinated response.

Boudinot and Harrison Avenues

K. Strasser reported on an incident in which a man hopped out of a van and tried to sell her and her son a portable CD player while they waited for a school bus at the former Beppo's site. Ms. Strasser used this incident to illustrate her concern about increased crime and suspicious and problematic behavior in that vicinity. She hopes that WCA will work with District 3 Police to develop a plan to address problems at that intersection.

Crime in Westwood

M. Gweyn commented that the prison release/reentry program is having a negative impact on our neighborhoods. M. Kuhl commented on city-wide degradation of neighborhoods and urged a coordinated response by block watches, COPP, WCA, and District 3 Police. J. Minor encouraged attendees to support small businesses and non-criminal activity in Westwood to accentuate positive activity that benefits Westwood. K. Strasser voiced her support for secession from the city. M. Kuhl reminded attendees to participate regularly in Good Guy Loitering.

Membership and Attendance

J. McNulty remarked that WCA needs to address the means by which we will promote membership and meeting attendance. He suggested that the WCA promote the organization by distributing informational and goodie bags to homes throughout Westwood and invite people to attend meetings.

Adjournment

MOTION by K. Strasser to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.

SECONDED by M. Kuhl.

PASSED unanimously.