

Westwood Civic Association

General Meeting, March 20, 2012

Present: Jim McNulty (President), Becky Weber, Valerie Baumann, Mary Jenkins (recording secretary), Irene McNulty, Jerry Hildebrand, Joel Kimmet, Mary Kuhl, Sr. Ann Rene McConn, Karen Strasser

Absent: Jill Minor (excused), Melva Gweyn (excused), Joe Henke

J. McNulty called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the group in a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Fire Department Report

S. Bepler reported on behalf of the Westwood firehouse. In February, there were 15 fire responses and 275 EMS responses. He commented on building inspections and hydrant inspections and reminded attendees to change batteries in their smoke detectors.

District 3 Police Report

Officer Darrell Beavers and Captain Russ Neville reported on behalf of District 3. They offered crime and comparative statistics and suggested that residents sign up for the District 3 newsletter and for sector-specific alerts. The alerts are available via Officer Beavers at 513.263.8383 or darrell.beavers@cincinnati-oh.us. Officer Beavers noted that violent crime is down 11% from last year. He encouraged participation of the Great American Clean Up on April 21. Police reported that speed was not a factor in the accident that killed a nine year old girl at LaFeuille, but many people do speed on that road. Police urged motorists to slow down. Police mentioned that Traffic Engineering is studying the area and probably will not install speed humps, though stop signs are a possibility. Several residents from the LaFeuille area spoke in appreciation of police presence and about a petition that they are circulating regarding traffic calming. They were asked to discourage parents from parking up to the stop sign in a no parking zone. J. Sess asked if the Westwood drug activity issue from several months ago is still active. Captain Neville affirmed that. M. Conda inquired as to reports of a brothel on Morningridge. Lt. Beavers will look into it. An attendee inquired about a possible shooting on Buell by Schwartz and Stanhope on March 20. Captain Neville was not aware of it but commented on another incident at McHenry by the gas station and said that uncooperative victims of violent crimes will be monitored as part of the investigation. Another attendee inquired about a dog fight involving pit bulls today. No information was available. An attendee asked in parking across a sidewalk at a driveway is illegal. Captain Neville encouraged talking to the owner but did remark that the vehicle can be cited or towed. B. Weber inquired about traffic problems due to school traffic at Midway, commenting that school officials say it is a police issue. Captain Neville suggested that it is a matter to be addressed by citizens, police, and the school. He will send a patrol. Another attendee remarked on schoolchildren being pushed out into traffic along Harrison at Bracken Woods. In response to all the traffic questions, the head of the Transportation Engineering department, Michael Moore, will be invited to a meeting.

Foreclosures, Attorney General

Charlie Norman from the state Attorney General's office spoke about the AG's foreclosure settlement suit involving 46 states that sued five mortgage servicers for abuse and fraud. Ohio's portion, \$335M, includes \$102M to Ohio consumers for loan term modification, \$44M to people who have been victims of mortgage frauds, funds to help people with underwater mortgages, and \$97M for neighborhood revitalization or demolition of abandoned, neglected, and condemned properties. Mr. Norman noted that these properties are breeding grounds for crime and they depress property values. The state AG has \$75M to tear houses down. Cities and nonprofits are eligible for the funds on a matching grant basis. Houses to be demolished would have to be condemned or have a serious tax liability, etc. An attendee asked if sweat equity would count toward the match. Mr. Norman said that the AG will accept in-kind matching funds. Asked if WCA would be able to use TIF funds as a match, Mr. Norman said he was not sure and suggested working with the local land bank. M. Kuhl commented that WCA is opposed to tearing down single family homes, wanting to preserve single family residences and not lose the potential for tax revenue. Mr. Norman commented that the houses that would be under consideration are uninhabitable. M. Conda asked if a vacant house that is still inhabitable might be eligible for rehabilitation. Mr. Norman commented that there are some grant funds for people in the foreclosure process. An attendee who is a realtor in the neighborhood says that a lot of foreclosed homes are not on the market right now because banks are holding them so as not to flood and depress the market further.

Another attendee asked if the program would help homeowners with rehabilitation after a fire. Mr. Norman remarked that it's eligible for the program if it has been condemned.

H.R. 4145, Steve Chabot

Katie Striker from Representative Steve Chabot's office spoke about a bill drafted by Mr. Chabot's office regarding Section 8 housing. She noted that the bill would create structural reforms, including a five year cap on benefits eligibility, add work requirements, create eligibility restrictions for undocumented immigrants and convicted felons, designate veterans as the highest priority, and, as desired by WCA, make any Section 8 voucher-accepting property and residents comply with local laws and rules. Ms. Striker remarked that Mr. Chabot is finding it difficult to get people on board with this politically unpopular initiative; the bill has no co-sponsors to date. She encouraged attendees to contact Rep. Kevin McCarthy, sponsor of an affordable housing bill. S. Lewis expressed concern about CMHA's ability to handle responsibility for managing Moving to Work funds. Several attendees urged others to support Mr. Chabot's bill and to help it get national attention.

MOTION by John Sess to have WCA contact other civic associations to make them aware of HR4145.

SECONDED by J. Hildebrand.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION by J. Sess to indicate WCA's support of HR 4145.

SECONDED by I. McNulty.

PASSED by a vote of 9-1.

Ronald Mosby

Ronald Mosby spoke about his candidacy for state representative, running against Dale Mallory in the newly created district. He said that he is passionate about public education, concerned about a bad school funding formula and unfunded mandates to measure kids for body mass index, pro small business, concerned about teacher performance and additional expectations on teachers to serve as social workers and counselors, and supports corporal punishment in the schools.

Street Calming Petition

Jack Jose, a resident on Epworth, asked for WCA support of a street calming application for Epworth between Hull and Wardall, signed by the appropriate number of residents. Discussion included references to the variety of street calming solutions that the city will consider.

MOTION by John Sess to support the application.

SECONDED by Sr. Ann Rene McConn.

PASSED unanimously.

WCA Constitution

Civic associations are to include their boundaries in the constitutions. After some discussion, J. Kimmet offered to amend the WCA constitution to include Westwood's boundaries per request of the city.

Community Priority Requests

J. McNulty noted that the deadline for Community Priority Requests is April 6. He requested ideas and volunteers for authoring proposals. Suggestions included electronic signs at the corners of the Westwood Town Hall property, more attractive triangles with plantings at the gateways to Westwood, nice park benches at bus stops. Via a motion, I.

McNulty, J. Sess, and V. Baumann offered to write proposals on WCA's behalf.

PASSED unanimously.

LaFueille Traffic Calming

Tracy Lovins, a resident in the LaFueille area, spoke on behalf of parents in attendance. She is calling for signatures on a petition to city council to address traffic problems along LaFueille. She has gathered about 500 signatures so far and is coordinating protests at the intersection. LaFueille apartment owners have agreed to contact the bus company to have bus stops moved into the apartment complex. Ms. Lovins is worried about the students and the elderly walking and at bus stops along. She is determined to get city action.

MOTION by J. Sess to have WCA support a Transportation Engineering traffic calming study done along LaFueille.

SECONDED by J. Kimmet
PASSED unanimously.

Westwood Town Hall

M. Kuhl asked for volunteers to respond to Peg Rhein's requests for volunteers for Westwood Town Hall gardening. Marlene Trapp, manager of Westwood Town Hall, announced that she will be moving from Westwood recreation center management to Hartwell. Dena Hanks will be the new WTH director starting next month. S. Lewis thanked Marlene for her long-time support for neighborhood meetings and events.

Citizens on Patrol

A representative of Westwood COPP commented on COPP activity, noting that they are conducting four to six patrols every week. He encouraged participation.

Westwood Community Gardens

M. Jenkins remarked on the waitlist status for beds at the community gardens and on several major site development projects slated for the coming months, including a retaining wall, fence, tool shed, arbor gates, and farm rows, much of which has been made possible by contributions and grants. J. Kimmet announced a \$2,500 gift from Westwood-Cheviot Kiwanis and gave the check to the treasurer.

Donation

V. Baumann donated \$380 to WCA from the sale of a car that J. Sess helped her with.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 21 general meeting were approved as written.

WCA Election Dinner

J. McNulty and M. Kuhl reminded attendees of the WCA election dinner on April 17 at Outback Steakhouse.

NSP Funds

J. Kimmet announced that on March 1, Invest in Neighborhoods approved \$5,000 in NSP funds for WCA, with \$3,000 allocated to the WCA newsletter and \$2,000 for other projects around Westwood.

Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by M. Kuhl at 8:55 p.m.
Seconded by J. Hildebrand
PASSED unanimously.