

Minutes of Westwood Civic Association General Meeting 10/16/12

In Attendance:

Joel Kimmet, Mary Jenkins, Karen Strasser, Valerie Baumann, Becky Weber, Melva Gweyn, John Sess, Jerry Hildebrand, Michelle Conda, Jill Minor, Tom Minor

Excused –

Mary Kuhl, Irene McNulty

The meeting was called to order by President Joel Kimmet. Guests in attendance, including Ben French of Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld's office, Greg Brinker owner of business property at 3344 Glenmore Avenue, Florence J. Parker, OKI Regional Council of Governments, Edith Thrower, and Chief of Staff for Charlie Winburn and Gamble Montessori Principal Jack Jose, were welcomed.

Police Report

Officer Rich Minella gave the Cincinnati Police Department report. There has been a decrease in crime of 6% overall in Westwood with a slight increase in robberies. The robbery task force will be working through the holidays.

John Sess found some stolen property behind the enclosed dumpster at Town Hall. Officer Minella asked him to follow through with him on the property.

Rich Minella asked to be emailed names and addresses of the landlords who own problem properties.

Ben French of Cincinnati City Councilman P.G. Sittenfeld's office

Mr. French reported on some work being done by Councilman Sittenfeld's office. Last year, Cincinnati City Council passed an ordinance that created a foreclosure pilot program for five neighborhoods that had been hit the hardest by foreclosure. The ordinance brings transparency to some of these vacant and foreclosed homes. The ordinance stems from these foreclosed homes being left vacant for an extended amount of time. The homes started deteriorating with windows being broken out and copper stolen. It is difficult to find a person from the bank who is accountable for these properties. The ordinance calls for foreclosed and vacant homes to be registered. It increases the standard for the maintenance on each individual home. For example, we don't want to see boards on the front or sides of foreclosed homes. This only lets copper thieves know that the house is vacant. A point of sale inspection has been created. A deteriorated house can't just be sold if it is in bad shape. The houses must be fixed up before being sold at sheriff's sale. If the party responsible for the home doesn't make the repairs, the city hires somebody to fix up the property and that expense is passed on to the owner of the home as a tax lien. The mortgagee must register the property. There is a stiff penalty the mortgagee doesn't register the property.

Mr. French passed out information on this program along with a handout listing currently foreclosed upon properties that have been registered. Residents can be very helpful by

checking this list if they see a vacant and foreclosed upon house that is in disrepair. Houses can be reported at the city's website at www.5916000.com . Sometimes banks will claim that a house is occupied when maybe it is vacant. This list of foreclosed properties is updated weekly. Any home foreclosed and vacant as of July 2012 would be included in this ordinance. Mr. French will forward electronic copies of the information handed out to the WCA Board.

(Gweyn) The house next door to Melva Gweyn is vacant and in bad shape. Some real estate people have been bringing potential buyers into this home. The state is apparently responsible for this home. There is a bad odor emitting from this house. Per Mr. French, this sounds like a Building Inspections Department problem.

Jack Jose – Principal of Gamble Montessori High School

Move date for Gamble Montessori High School will be the first day of school 2013. Gamble Montessori is now rated Excellent by the State of Ohio and the staff, students and community are very excited and happy about this accomplishment. The school is presently located at Old Cape in Winton Terrace.

Mr. Greg Brinker, owner of business property at 3344 Glenmore Avenue

Mr. Brinker attended this meeting to discuss the liquor license application for the 3344 Glenmore market, formerly called S & H Market. Mr. Brinker is the owner of the property. The current tenant, Mr. Sam Saleh, is operating under the name Glenmore Market and is leasing from Mr. Brinker at 3344 Glenmore Avenue. Mr. Brinker has no loitering signs at all the stores operating at this small strip. The tenant is giving this location a try as a convenience store. He is a U.S. citizen. Mr. Saleh would like to join Block Watch.

(Weber) Will there be drug paraphernalia in the store? There has always been more paraphernalia in the cellular store located two doors down in the same strip, than at the convenience store. Neighbors in the area say that problems have recently become worse at this address.

(Sess) John Sess reported that he witnessed a deal involving stolen merchandise at the cell phone store at this address. John believes there is more going on at this store than the selling of cell phones. We objected to this liquor license because within a block, there are plenty of places to buy beer and liquor. In my opinion, a liquor license is still not a good idea for that store.

(Conda) It sort of sounds like a threat when you are saying that if the convenience store can't get a liquor license, the whole little strip of businesses are going to go out of business.

(Brinker) I have been making an effort and so has my tenant.

(Weber) It would take more than six months to prove to us that the stores at 3344 Glenmore Avenue have changed.

(Gweyn) Often somebody in the family takes over a property. The only thing we could do to keep control of the situation was not to endorse the liquor license. The store managers only need to go out and say loitering is not allowed.

(Brinker) The kids are not loitering there any longer.

(Kimmet) Has COPPS noticed anything going on there lately?

(Baumann) There has been questionable activity over the summer.

(Kimmet) What is the time frame for the liquor license?

(Sess) The owner of the convenience store can apply in a year.

(Kimmet) Maybe there won't be any objection to the property having a liquor license after a year is up if things have really changed.

(Sess) Why open a convenience store right next to a UDF?

(Weber) We just have to see more proof of what you are saying.

(Brinker) Some of the problem is the low income housing next door.

(Kimmet) We have already written a letter objecting. We are supposed to be invited to a meeting with CPD regarding this issue.

(Brinker) My tenant says he can't make a profit if he can't sell beer. Two other guys have tried, but aren't as good at business as this new tenant.

(Sess) Are you in a one-year lease?

(Brinker) The lease is for more than a year.

(Kimmet) We will wait for the meeting with the CPD.

(Brinker) Who do I call to initiate a meeting?

(Kimmet) Our letter went to Officer Simpson.

Florence J. Parker, OKI Regional Council of Governments

OKI serves an 8 County Region and is the pass through for Federal funds that come through this region for the roadway projects. We are encouraged to go to the following website to learn more about OKI: www.howdowegrow.org

Edith Thrower – Chief of Staff for Charlie Winburn

Miss Thrower can be reached at 513-352-5354. Councilman Winburn's schedule had the date of this WCA meeting wrong so Councilman Winburn was unable to attend this meeting. He apologizes for not being here. Mr. Winburn has been talking about jobs and small business creation for a long while. Councilman Winburn wants some of the casino money invested back into our communities. He has a plan to purchase bonds to be leveraged to create revenue. He wants to hold the casino accountable to Cincinnati. The casino should invest some of this money back into the community. A division of U.C. is going to study this plan.

(Sess) We appreciate Mr. Winburn's voting against the streetcar. I am sorry that the money from the sale of the Blue Ash Airport is going to the streetcar.

(Thrower) It is very difficult to find a job out there right now. I gave each of you a handout that explains Councilman Winburn's plan. He wants to come back to talk to Westwood Civic in great detail about this plan.

(Gweyn) Are the revenues presently down at the Indiana casinos now? I am fearful that we are depending on this a little too much to generate revenue. With the government getting in on it too, this is a little scary.

(Thrower) The state of Ohio voted for this casino to come. We can't do anything about it. We might as well capitalize on it. Winburn says, "Take the money and create jobs." He will have public hearings to address this in more detail, etc.

Committee Report – Becky Weber

The Neighborhood Business District Cleanup has been cancelled. We will work through our Public Safety committee to try to bring the businesses together again in the Business District. The problem property on Orland is in total trauma now. The neighbors down there don't want to do a Block Watch or GGL or anything else to help along with this process. We will see what we can do. Most of our contact has been with one particular neighbor.

(Jenkins) Maybe we should talk to other neighbors to see if they are willing to start a Block Watch.

(Weber) There will be a Public Safety committee meeting on 10/30 at Panera Bread with COPPs to discuss Chronic Nuisance.

Meeting with the City of Cincinnati regarding Gateways – John Sess

John Sess reported on a meeting that he had with the City of Cincinnati regarding illegal advertising benches. John has worked towards this meeting for three years. There are very specific regulations on the advertising benches that we see placed around Westwood. This meeting was with Mike Nisewander, two City attorneys and a representative from Councilman Seelbach's office. Councilman Seelbach will try to

facilitate changes to the bench ordinance so the removers of the benches could be City workers or Community Council members. After the benches are finally removed, John Sess will look for a grant to get new appropriate benches that are aesthetically pleasing.

(Baumann) Will the new benches be easy to clean? Can we get more garbage cans at the bus stops?

(Sess) Call 513.591.6000.

(Baumann) I would like the WCA audit to be sometime in December.

(Jenkins) With Melva's permission, I'd like to report on the Community Garden's Nomination for a Keep Cincinnati Beautiful Clean Community Award. Our grant-writing group has not been very active this year. Mary Jenkins is seeking sources of potential funding. The retaining wall costs more than we anticipated. We have \$506.00. We need another \$769.00 to pay for the fence. The Westwood Kiwanis group paid for 2/3 of the retaining wall. Westwood Kiwanis has asked us to come back to them with another request. We are anxious to get the fence up.

MOTION BY JOHN SESS THAT WCA COVER UP TO \$775.00 TOWARDS PAYING FOR THE FENCE.

SECONDED BY JERRY HILDEBRAND.

Discussion followed: The Community Gardens has taken on a life of its own. Many, many volunteer hours go into the Garden and the Garden brings positive attention to Westwood. The fence will guard the wall, enclose the garden, give the sense of a boundary and finish off the fencing along the side of the nursing home. The nursing home wanted a fence up. The fence is a requirement for safety.

(Becky) Are you asking for a loan?

(Jenkins) Either a loan or designated funds.

(Weber) Did WCA ever invest funds into this garden?

(Jenkins) The Gardens has been self-sustaining to this point.

(Liliana) Guest Liliana Bramasco donated \$100.00 towards finishing the wall.

(Weber) I don't want this to become an issue where WCA is being constantly asked to give money to the Gardens.

(Kimmet) It won't cost much to run the Gardens after these initial startup costs.

(Hildebrand) We rent the land by the year.

(Kimmet) It was \$1.00 per year and now the City is not charging us.

(Jenkins) We have a land use agreement with the City of Cincinnati.

We have been advised by the Civic Gardens Center to get a longer term (maybe 5-year) agreement for land use on this property.

(Sess) Any time we have a project, we need to look at that project based on its own merits. I would like to move forward with the vote.

(Gweyn) Did we make any money on Celebrate Westwood?

In favor 7, against 3
MOTION PASSED

Upcoming Meetings and Hearings -

- Mercy Hospital, 3131 Queen City Ave. regarding ground signs at the hospital entrance
- MSD Breakfast and meeting to discuss Lick Run project.
- 11/6 and 11/7 CPS holding an auction for several properties in Hamilton County

Per the City Bulletin, we did not receive notification for several meetings including the 3037 Bracken Woods hearings for demolition. Anyone wanting to look through the publication for meetings we should be attending should feel free to do so.

(Weber) Somebody needs to notify Councilman Winburn's office that we are not getting the notifications that we should be getting.

Westwood Town Hall - Dina Hanks, Director

Town Hall tours will be held next Wednesday. The tours will not be by candlelight this year. Town Hall will be 125 years old next year. Girls on the Run are training to run a 5k. The Girls on the Run group will do a practice run on November 1, at Dunham Recreation Center at 5:30p.m. Please come and cheer them on. Dina is presently working on programs and looking toward next summer. Dina has designed a program interest survey. Many organizations in Westwood are all working with kids and these organizations are competing for kids. Dina wants to pull resources so that similar things are not offered on the same days, etc. All CRC Centers are standardizing their open times and Town Hall may need to be open until 9p.m. There are currently some problems with students from Westwood School. Town Hall is working to standardize rules, etc. with the Westwood Library. For example, if one is kicked out of Town Hall, one is also kicked out of the Library. Dina has not yet discussed this with Monica Battle, Principal of Westwood School.

Candidate's Night –

October 18th Westwood Town Hall
Doors open at 6p.m. Event begins at 6:30p.m.

Formation of 501c3 Committee –

(Kimmet) The President of the Mt. Washington Community Council spoke to us at our October Steering Committee about changing our status from 501C4 to a 501C3 status. We should form a committee and look at this more thoroughly and see if we can get some legal support. We should also talk to other Community Councils who already have this status. Joel Kimmet, Mary Jenkins and Valerie Baumann volunteered to serve on this committee. Michelle Conda will look for the attorney for this project. The committee will begin looking into this project and get back to the Board.

(Kimmet) It took the Clifton Community Council over a year to get their status changed to 501C3.

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING BY JOHN SESS
SECONDED BY TOM MINOR
ALL IN FAVOR