

Westwood Civic Association Steering Committee Minutes

April 9, 2013

Submitted by Karen Strasser, Recording Secretary

**Present:**

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

President Joel Kimmet called the meeting to order. The meeting began with an introduction to Mr. Ken Cunningham, architect and Mr. John Spencer, Community Consultant. Both gentlemen were instrumental several years ago when they put together the Over the Rhine Master Plan by working with the Over the Rhine community.

(Cunningham and Spencer)

We have read about several things going on in Westwood with the coalition, etc. and have contacted you to see if we can share some things that would be helpful. We have created a process for gathering community input and developing a plan. This is a very simple process. We noticed that everyone in this community doesn't think alike. There are probably five or six or so sub groups in this room. We created a process that deals with all of those differences. We actually want people to be different thinkers. At the first meeting in Over the Rhine, the body language was negative. By the third or fourth meeting people were bringing cookies to share with all.

The litmus test is that everyone recognizes their contributions. We are independent contractors.

(Kuhl) How did you work with 3CDC?

(Spencer) They didn't exist at that time.

(Cunningham) I saw an interview about Westwood on the news and that is when we started thinking about contacting your organization.

(Hildebrand) The fear of Westwood Civic is that the City is going to come in very heavy handed. We want the plan to include the people who have been here for generations.

(Baumann) What is your opinion of City West because what has been built as City West is what we fear.

(Cunningham) As an architect, it is interesting, but I would not have designed City West as a City Planner. They are all new buildings. They tried to make it

look old and one can never successfully do that. They were trying to be sensitive to the historic area around them.

(Cunningham) I would need to interview the various groups and would want each group to tell me where the energy is in this neighborhood. Then I would develop a questionnaire with less than nine questions. Everyone works independently then sometimes we form little groups of four or five people.

(Kuhl) Montana Ave. is a good example of getting many people engaged in the process. We would like lots of people engaged in this process.

(Cunningham) We sped up the Over the Rhine plan by dealing with the leaders of the various Over the Rhine groups. That is a critical place to start.

(Jenkins) The Coalition that has been mentioned is working on a document to identify the process. This seems to parallel the process that you are outlining. We want to reach a large cross section of Westwood and invite many people outside of our ordinary stretch. It takes lots of research and a combination of sources of information to make a project like this something that will result in something positive.

(McNulty) We already have a Westwood Strategic Plan. We would like all of this to fall within the parameters of that plan.

(Kuhl) We often go back to the Multi family issue. We don't want anymore multi family housing built in Westwood.

(Spencer) We would be counting on you to bring the Strategic Plan into the process.

(Cunningham) I would interview somebody who really knows this Westwood Strategic Plan. Identify the groups, identify a leader within each group and get those people to me. That is where we will start.

(Gweyn) Does represent mean upheld because within this process that you are outlining we want the Westwood Strategic Plan to be recognized and upheld. Our stance on multi family housing has to be something that is upheld after the process.

(Cunningham) With regard to the Westwood Square, there is no multi family housing there.

(Kuhl) I beg to differ with that. We are looking at retail on the bottom of many places and then multi family up top. We are not for multi family.

(Spencer) Form Based Code (FBC) is supposed to have participation at it's root. The City is going to write a FBC for the City of Cincinnati.

(Kimmet) We know this is going to be a long process. We want to have the business owners and the residents involved.

(Kuhl) We may or may not be talking about a Square.

(Weber) This sounds like a good idea. We need to know if we could afford your services.

(Jenkins) We would present the parameters of the project and the scope, etc.

(Spencer) Most simple version is \$ 5,000 - \$6000. We have gone up to \$15,000 for a really large group. We could be hired privately or you could talk to the City.

[The over the Rhine master plan was given to us for review.]

### **Westwood Coalition Report – Mary Jenkins**

In my view it was a positive meeting. Representatives from Westwood Civic Association, WestCURC, Westwood Works, Westwood Historical Society attended as well as Herschel Benkert, Tom Bonhaus and Joe Henke from the business community attended. We decided not to have a slate of officers. John Lewandowski will be the moderator and Mary Jenkins will be the note taker. WCA representatives not authorized to vote without prior authorization from WCA. This policy was understood and treated as reasonable. We talked about building trust between the groups and building trust with the community. We talked about the importance of gathering public opinion. It was clear that everyone in attendance wants public input and public meetings.

We raised the idea of going to Traffic and Engineering first to discuss the possibilities about building a Square. We talked about the importance of the different groups sharing information with their membership. Jim McNulty offered WCA to share as an information conduit and the voice of the Coalition. The next Coalition meeting will be on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

(J. McNulty) We wanted to make sure that the Coalition didn't get too formal and is not like starting a whole new group. We didn't talk about the TIF funding. That City Council vote will be tomorrow. To me, the biggest function of this group is outreach because we need to see if the idea of this Square will float with the public. I don't think that we should ever vote at the coalition meetings.

(Kimmet) With regard to the building of a new District 3 station, all of the neighborhood was brought together in one room. I have not heard one complaint about this meeting.

(Jenkins) [About District 3] I brought that example up at the Coalition meeting.

(Weber) it is a power struggle. The NSP funds fall through us. The Zoning issues come through us. The other groups have this idea about a Square. We hear about never showing up for the charettes. Now the Coalition is formed, we only have two members on the coalition and much is already predetermined. They never came through this Board.

(Jenkins) I want to focus on addressing procedural issues. This is a moment in time when the community is excited about the potential for the Business District. We need to be at the heart of the dialogue that is going on.

(Kuhl) This is not about stealing the spotlight. WCA has been around for 102 years. There is a process. The City started the community process. We need to respect that and go forward. What is the hurry to get this down? We are not asking to be the Voice of Westwood. We are the voice of Westwood. I'm not asking any of the other groups if we can be the voice of Westwood. We are the voice of Westwood. That is what we do and how we roll.

(Gweyn) I'm getting upset about the fact that this whole thing is getting very one sided, biased publicity. It is not exposing the pit falls and why we want things slowed down. We are just trying to find out what is involved and what is the problem with our zoning now, etc.

(Kuhl) All of the St. Catharine's people who were at the meeting. They want to be for something. They see artist's renderings of something that looks very cool in the paper. They want to be part of something very cool. There is nobody at this table that is against anything that would be good for Westwood. We are going to get it right.

(Hodges) The media has simply run with a story that people are interested in. We are reacting to something that has lots of interest. It is a unique opportunity to harness this energy. When there is lots of energy and one is trying to be the voice of reason, one will get some push back.

(Conda) I'm from Pennsylvania. I moved to Westwood and saw all of these beautiful homes and I saw the "last" Cincinnati. My biggest fear is that we are going to loose the "last" Cincinnati.

(Weber) I have been in Westwood for 54 years. Somebody put two large apartment complexes on Queen City and thought that was a really good idea at that time. If we have to be the bad guy to slow this down and take a minute and look at this all of the way through, then so be it.

(J. McNulty) Westwood Square could be the candy that gets you in the bad guy's car. Let's separate Westwood Square from Form Based Codes. The main reason that FBC was invented is to fight suburban sprawl. I don't care about suburban sprawl. We don't need some political maneuvering called Form Based Codes. I don't care about all of those regional problems.

(Jenkins) It is very clear that many of us care passionately about this being done right.

(Lewis) My concern is that City Council will go forward with the TIF vote tomorrow. Does that \$10,000 still have to remain for the Westwood Square? When we hear Qualls speak about this, she is totally for this money to go for the Square. Is it etched in stone tomorrow?

(Kimmet) it may just be for the feasibility study.

(Jenkins) We raised that notion at the Coalition meeting. It would not be a study of the Westwood Square at a specific spot.

(McNulty) It would make more sense to begin a Traffic and Engineering study instead of blowing \$10,000.

(Strasser) We need to run positive public relations for ourselves.

(Kuhl) We need to go back and we need to draft a letter and a flyer and cover lots of areas and encourage people to come get involved.

(Sess) What is the root issue here? Could we have Joel write a letter to City Council stating that we want to separate the Westwood Square from the Form Based Codes issue?

(Kimmet) There could be ten different places where something like a Square would work. We are getting hung up on this being at Epworth and Urweiller.

(Scot Ryan, City of Cincinnati Building Inspector) It is important to realize that WestCURC is chartered for redevelopment. There are certain funds that are required to be funneled down to that organization. There are economic development funds that are available for this group.

(Weber) That may be true for some funds, but not for the TIF funds.

(J. McNulty) Our job is to be the interface for the community with the City.

(Jenkins) This about flow of information and what is the role of Westwood Civic.

(Weber) There is also distrust. How do we go forward?

(Tom Bonhaus, Business District business owner) The mechanics of WestCURC and WCA's roles were discussed at the Coalition meeting.

(Kuhl) We speak for the community. City Council is going to approve the TIF money. They have the votes. It doesn't mean that the money has to be spent just because it is authorized. We are not asking for their permission and we are not trying to be a bully either. The coalition can move forward. I would challenge them to not spend the money.

(J. McNulty) We are asking City Council to stop giving away our TIF money now and they aren't stopping it.

(Kimmet) There are five or so points in the TIF policy that are being violated by the City. These five points are as follows:

- *“The community Councils and business district associations will have the opportunity to review and/or comment within 30 days of being presented with the proposed project.”*
- *“Site Control or a letter of acknowledgment from the property owners is required for new Project TIF applications. For projects in a TIF District, the developer must have site control of the properties within the development site.”*
- *“TIF proceeds should not be the first dollars spent on the project. The developer should make its best efforts to spend private dollars first.”*
- *“It is required that the costs of the project be verified by the City and the Developer. This includes a detailed total project cost estimate inclusive of all hard and soft costs and/or any pending contracts supported by quotes, bids or estimates.”*

(Weber) Per Rick Dieringer, there is nothing in writing that says that WCA is the authorized decision maker in Westwood.

(Kuhl) We need to challenge the coalition to not spend the money.

**Motion by John Sess that a letter be sent to City Council and the Mayor stating that when the TIF money is approved for the Westwood Square that WCA should be the responsible party for determining if when and how the funds are spent.**

**Seconded by Jerry Hildebrand.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

(Kimmet) We need to decide as a Board when are we going to have the election. We had talked about doing it tonight. We need to make a decision one way or another.

(Jenkins) We have a mixed history on this.

**Motion by Becky Weber that we have the WCA Board election 4/16.  
Seconded by Valerie Baumann.  
All in favor**

**Motion by Valerie Baumann that we spend \$100.00 on appetizers at the Election Dinner next week. Seconded by M. Conda.  
All in favor.**

**Motion by John Sess, seconded by Michelle Conda that the March Steering and March General meeting minutes be approved.  
All in favor.**

**Problem Properties report – Joel Kimmet**

We will continue to pursue acquiring 2280 Harrison Ave. The owner wants the City to drop all of their fines and delinquent taxes, etc. The City will pay for the demolition. The Port Authority will take title and hand the property over to us. This is just a verbal proposal at this point.

(Kimmet) At some point we should vote on taking title of 2280 Harrison Ave. The selling price would be \$1.00. The City will pay for the demolition via the Hazard Abatement Program.

(Jenkins) We all need to understand what it means for us to take Title of a property and we need good information regarding liability, insurance, etc. We should have somebody come to talk to us about this at our next meeting.

(Kimmet) With regard to 2280 Harrison Avenue, Ed Cunningham moved it to the top of the demo list for us.

**Motion by J. McNulty that we authorize Kimmet to move forward on 2280 Harrison with the Port Authority and the City on demolition and exploring the possibility of acquisition. Seconded by Jerry Hidlebrand.  
All in favor**

**Motion by Strasser that only one student be nominated for the Wayne Brinkman Civic Leadership Award. Seconded by Michelle Conda.  
All in favor**

**Motion that Western Hills Universtiy and Dater High School be invited to submit nominees for the Wayne Brinkman Civic Leadership Award. Seconded by I. McNulty. Discussion followed. 6 in favor, 7 opposed Motion failed.**

**Motion by Strasser that one must be a Westwood resident and attend a Westwood School in order to be nominated for the Wayne Brinkman Westwood Civic Leadership Award, seconded by Becky Weber All in favor**

(Hildebrand) In light of our trying to make this a nice quiet community, there is lots of noise from cars on Glenmore Avenue .

(Baumann) I was told last year by Captain Neville that D3 was going to do a noise study in Westwood.

(Weber) Can Jerry send an email to Captian Neville, invite him to our May meeting and follow up on the possibility of a noise study.

#### **Art Show Committee –Mary Kuhl**

The next Art show committee meeting is on 4/17 6p.m. at Panera Bread. All are welcome. The committee is looking for sponsors from 50 – 200.00 and looking for sombody to sponsor the seating pavilion for \$200-400.

#### **WestFest –Becky Weber**

(Weber) I contacted Linda Bernhardt and asked if we could do something different at Westfest. We don't make that much money doing the Mug Slide at the event. She is going to check with people in charge to see if we could sell margaritas. A move in this direction would be more profitable for us. That location is just not good for us. We will find out the permits, insurance etc. that would be needed. The event will be held in June.

Motion by Michelle Conda that if we can't sell margaritas at Westfest then we don't do the event. Seconded by Mary Jenkins. Discussion followed.

(Jenkins) I am concerned about our sources of income if we don't do Westfest. Motion withdrawn by Conda.

Becky will explore our other options.

#### **Music at Westwood Town Hall outdoor theater – Mary Jenkins**

The Outreach committee will be meeting to discuss the possibility of creating this event.

### **Community Gardens - Mary Jenkins**

Only a few beds are open. The fence has now been completed. We are excited about a great upcoming growing season.

Scott Ryan – City Building Inspector

Mr. Ryan attended our meeting in an effort to be in good communication with us. Problems at the following properties were brought to his attention:

- ❖ 2614 Harrison – Just had a DBL hearing on this property and it should be demolished in upcoming months.
- ❖ Harrison Manor – per Melva Gweyn that property is full of nonsense.
- ❖ 3167 Goebel – per J. McNulty has been vacant and open for years. Reported as vacant and open to the City and the report came back as fine.
- ❖ Corner of Robert and Harrison, former Westwood Deli, is a mess. At the building next door, the owner sells stuff out of the buildings. Per Valerie Baumann, any animal could enter the Deli. The windows are not secured, etc.
- ❖ 3102 Glenmore per Sess – half a dozen cigarette signs are posted on the neighbor's fence.

(Sharon Lewis) it seems like many of the complaints to the City come back saying “closed no” with nothing having been done.

(Scott Ryan) There should be a note explaining what is going on with each of those properties.

(Sharon Lewis) I'll write and say, “Please reopen this case.”

President Kimmet tabled the remaining items on the agenda.

**A motion by Mary Jenkins to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jerry**

**Hildebrand**

**All in favor.**

**Meeting adjourned.**