

January 15, 2013 Westwood Civic Association General Meeting Minutes

Present: Joel Kimmet, Michelle Conda, Mary Jenkins, Mary Kuhl, Irene McNulty, Jim McNulty, John Sess, Karen Strasser, Jerry Hildebrand, Valeria Baumann, Becky Weber

Excused: Jill Minor, Tom Minor

Cincinnati Police Department Report – Captain Russ Neville

Captain Russ Neville is going to try to implement something new with regard to drug trafficking.. CPD is overrun with drug complaints. When CPD gets complains in the near future, Captain Neville is going to authorize officers to go to the address and do a knock and talk. Officers will tell the resident that the neighborhood is not comfortable with what is going on at the house. Captain Neville is going to try to send a good solid message. Officers will be able to determine if there is a reason for the CPD to invest more time at the residence. The CPD will also send a letter asking the resident to cooperate and will bring that letter to any court hearings if one should arise.

Officers should never ask for a phone number over the air.

There is going to be a new District 3 station built. East Price Hill requested a motion to have active involvement in the selection of a site There will be an open forum, February 6th at Elder from 6-8p.m.. A site has not been identified yet, however, Captain Neville wants the new location to be central to the service area so that resources can be used wisely. East Price Hill is concerned, but we need to look more broadly. The volume of calls, etc. is much greater than years ago. Westwood should be looking out for our own interest.

For a site to be considered, it needs to be about four acres, no building on the premises and as flat as possible. There will be no imminent domain. CPD would like to be breaking ground by May.

(Kimmet) The Buildings and Properties committee will get a list of suggested sites available. Is CPD thinking about redistricting? There is some talk of this, but it is all just discussion. That is a big deal and a long term thought.

(Conda) Is there a list of all of the places with liquor licenses?

(Neville) Vice would have that, but the CPD is not allowed to object anymore if saturation is the reason.

Mary Jenkins distributed the police reports brought by Captain Neville.

Presentation by Ms. Brenda Byrd, Area Manager for Newcomer Funeral Home.-

Ms. Byrd thanked us for allowing her to come and speak.

Newcomer Funeral home is in the location of the old Golden Corral.

The Funeral Home would like to let the community know that they are here offering a dignified service for an affordable price. They want the community to be aware that they are here. They would like a sign that is visible to the community. They propose a sign on an existing pole 40 feet in the air. The sign measures 16' by 8'. The 40 feet length would include the 8' of the sign.

(McNulty) What is the existing law?

(Byrd) Fifteen feet. We will not put up a sign if we are only allowed a height of 15 feet.

(Sess) M. Conda and I attended the zoning meeting when the hearing was discussed. John Sess and Michelle Conda would like to see Newcomer adhere to the 15'. The reason being that this is not a restaurant and the sign won't attract business.

(Byrd) Once a funeral is scheduled, we want families to be able to easily see and find us. The signs would be very helpful.

(Byrd) We are willing to come down to 28'. With anything less than that, nobody will be able to see the sign.

(Dena Hanks) How does the sign size compare to the sign size of Golden Corral sign?

(Byrd) Our sign would be much smaller.

(Sharon Lewis) The sign would not bother me if you would go with a smaller sign. Are you going to have another sign?

(Byrd) Making a left hand turn onto Parkcrest, there will be a sign at the top of the building.

(Kuhl) Exactly what are you asking from us?

(Byrd) We would love to have the 40' sign. The minimum would be the 28' sign.

(Kuhl) I never paid attention to how large the Golden Corral sign had been. We voted against this initially so that we could have this discussion with you.

Motion by John Sess that we go on record as standing firm on the zoning code as it is written, seconded by J. Hildebrand.

Discussion: (Sess) We are inundated with large signs in Westwood. We are used to seeing them so much so that we don't notice the signs anymore.

(J. McNulty) These rules are made for a reason. I don't see a big reason to go outside of the rules.

(Byrd) We've hired people from the community and spent thousands in the community. Our service and prices are why we attract customers. This tall sign will make it easy for the people who we serve to see where we are located.

(Gweyn) I agree that we do want to help businesses. We are trying, in our neighborhood, to think ahead. One can go along Colerain Ave. and it is very unpleasant. We are trying to keep from turning into an area that looks like that.

(Byrd) Our sign will sit back on our property. It is not going to be visible at the corner of Parkcrest and Glenway.

(Jenkins) I don't have a problem with the 28' sign. This area is a commercial business area.

Vote:

6 in favor

6 opposed

Motion by Irene McNulty to support the 28' sign, seconded by Mary Jenkins.

Discussion: (Sess) I believe we are setting a dangerous precedence. We were adamant that the YMCA had to stay within the confines of the ordinance. For us to pick and choose that we were going to oppose the Y and not oppose this is not right.

(I. McNulty) The YMCA's sign was in a residential area so this is different.

(Hildebrand) I am a firm believer that we need to stay within the laws made by the City. If the City states 15', we should stick with 15'.

(Jenkins) The YMCA radically improved their proposal, and we approved it.

(J. McNulty) If this was in our business district, we would be saying, "Absolutely no way." This is not an urban setting.

(Weber) There's no competition for funeral homes in this area and Newcomer doesn't need a big sign. The big sign makes the business look tacky.

(Sess) We are the stewards of all Westwood residents. We should take our offices seriously and adhere to the zoning.

(Kimmet) The City allows for the process of applying for variances.

(Sess) This in no way fits into the letter of the law.

(Kuhl) We change our minds all of the time. I take my stewardship very seriously. We pick and choose when it come to opposing liquor licensing all of the time. We all agree that the sign proposed by the YMCA was too big and distracting when people made turns at the intersection of Montana and Boudinot Avenues.

Vote:

6 in favor

6 opposed

Motion failed

(Sess) I recommend that Ms. Byrd come back with a revision.

2280 Harrison -

Ed Cunningham called Joel Kimmet. 2280 Harrison Avenue is listed by Prodigy Properties. The owners are \$39,000 behind on their property taxes. There is a law that states that if a property is for sale, the seller must state that the property is condemned, etc.

There is a hearing on 2/8 at 9a.m. The Port Authority will continue to be involved with this property, but in the meantime, it appears that this property has a pending sale. We need a stronger letter directing the City to tell the realtor that this law exists.

(J. McNulty)- The law says the City must notify the buyer if a building is condemned. The owner is Jeffrey Lane.

(Kimmet) Ed Cunningham fully supports this building being demolished.

(Sess) They are in arrears on their taxes, but there is no tax lien on the property. It is always buyer beware when buying a new property.

(Jenkins) What is the point in going to the City now? It isn't our job to police this law.

(J. McNulty) The Port Authority is one avenue. We want to encourage the City to follow the law.

Motion by John Sess, seconded by Michelle Conda that WCA sends a letter to the City stating that we want the City to follow the Hazard Abatement program and follow the state law with regard to 2280 Harrison Ave. and our strategic plan.

Discussion:

(Kimmet) We need to have some people from the City who have seen this building. We can say that it would cost much more than it is worth to ever fix up.

(Conda) Are COPPS thinking about attending the hearing?

(Baumann) I can attend the hearing and state that I am a member of COPP.

(Weber) The earlier you get there, the greater the chance that you will get to speak.

**Vote –
ALL IN FAVOR**

E-Newsletter –

(Jenkins) Many of us are subscribers to electronic newsletters that come from other community organizations. It positions the newsletter as the “go to place” to gather info on what is happening in Westwood. This would position Westwood Civic at the center of Westwood. This newsletter would promote all Westwood organizations.

Committee Reports –

Gateway committee

(Sess) I am in contact with Metro to get them involved in a matching grant with Keep Cincinnati Beautiful.

(J. McNulty) Did they stop issuing bench permits?

(Sess) There never were bench permits. That is why benches are all over and they are all illegal.

Joel Kimmet passed out a list of all of the vacant and condemned buildings in Westwood.

(Kimmet) Let's invite Mary Ronan to an upcoming meeting.

(Jenkins) Keep Cincinnati Beautiful has a February 1st deadline. The Gardens will submit a grant application.

(Sess) I will be submitting a Safe and Clean grant request as well for the bench project.

(Jenkins) The Gardens has a revised quote for the last section of fence from Mills Fence. We will check the budget to see if we can afford to go ahead and buy the fence.

Town Hall Report

(Dina Hanks, Director) We have a new Zumba instructor who is trying to build her clientele. We also have a new watercolor class for teens and adults. We are also starting a duct tape class.

We are looking at summer camp info, etc. Next month there will be more info on these things.

Compost event

(Jenkins) I was contacted by Hamilton County in regard to hosting a 1 hour composting training event.

**Motion by Jim McNulty to support this event, seconded by John Sess.
All in FAVOR**

Hazard Abatement buildings in Westwood

(J. McNulty) It is very exciting news regarding all of the buildings that are going up for demolition hearings. Some of the buildings have languished for years and we have not been able to get them torn down. I would like to work with Ed Cunningham and Michael Cervay to find out exactly how they want to handle the Hazard Abatement. They should never be helping anyone find a buyer for a building that we are trying to get torn down. We need to hammer out a formal agreement with the City to insure that we are all moving in the same direction.

Westwood Square project Update

(J. McNulty) Town Hall would be a great place to host a community meeting especially because they have a wonderful, big screen. This is a forum where we might want to get as many neighbors involved as possible to provide input into the Westwood Square project.

(Kuhl) I have many, many questions about the Westwood Square Project. I would like to see somebody from the City come to talk to us. I talked to Martha Kelly and she would like to come. Charles Graves is going to also be invited. Sister Ann Rene said that she would like to see this going by spring.

(Jenkins) This conversation illustrates many things. We do need to have City officials come to a meeting and we need to have all of the right people involved in the conversation. Everything that you are saying is very fair. We need to engineer this process so that we are fully informed.

(J. McNulty) We want to get as many people involved as possible with the plans for Westwood Square. Everyone needs an opportunity to get involved and be excited. I am supportive of going big, going public and getting everyone excited about this.

There are some additional people who would like to be on the Westwood Square committee.

(D. Hanks) I would like to be kept informed on the Westwood Square project.

(Kuhl) Westwood Civic needs to take the lead on this. Martha Kelly is very interested in coming to a WCA meeting. Martha suggested Charles Graves attend as well.

M. Kuhl will invite Charles Graves and Martha Kelly on Feb. 19th

**Motion to adjourn by J. Sess
Seconded by M. Jenkins**

