

**WCA General Meeting
September 21, 2010
7:00 P.M.
Westwood Town Hall**

Attendance

Present: Bach, Baumann, Boyd, Gweyn, Hollan, Kimmet, Kuhl, Lee, Lewis, McConn, McNulty, Neeld, Sess, Weber

Excused:

Absent: Henke

Recording Secretary

Mitch Neeld

Picnic

A General Membership picnic was held prior to the meeting. The fried chicken and soft drinks were donated by Kroger, other dishes were provided by WCA Board Members. Turnout was good.

Gertrude Dixon

Ms. Dixon is the City of Cincinnati "Blight Prosecutor". She was present to answer questions and left forms to report blight.

Fire Department

Engine Company 35 Firefighter (Scott) reported on activity at the firehouse. There were 34 advance life support runs and 138 basic life support runs. They are handing out smoke detectors. They will pick a street and go door-to-door.

Homeless Shelter on Diehl Rd

Sess talked to Todd Portune. It has been taken over by Talbert House. Everyone agrees that it's a bad location. They are looking for an alternate location.

Cincinnati Police

Officer Matt Thompson reported on 2618 Harrison Ave. It was abandoned. There were a "ton" of runs. There were no windows. He was impressed by the building inspectors – Scott Ryan. They had a 10-day grace period on the work orders that resulted from the inspection. The owner followed through and boarded and painted the windows and locks have been ordered. There has been an increase in beggars on the street corners in Westwood. They are moving up from Short Vine. He is looking for a better way to say "move on" (i.e. legal standing). Sess reported that there is an ordinance for no soliciting from cars. Capt Neville reported that he would put Officer Thompson on covert operation from an unmarked car. Officer Thompson reported on the spray painting behind Western Hills Plaza – it has been re-painted. A member reported that there is one spot behind Bed, Bath & Beyond that still looks awful. Officer Thompson noted that it is intentionally not yet fixed due to a larger renovation that is scheduled. Officer

Thompson reported on a breaking and entering of a vacant house to steal copper. They caught the bad guy coming out. The neighbor testified. The judge threw it out because the owner could not prove that the property came from the house. He mentioned copper downspouts being stolen. They are easy to take down. A common theme is an adult guy with a backpack riding a bicycle looking for odd job work. He is a convicted sex-offender. He recommended simply telling these people “no”. Someone asked about the recent increase of shoes in the street. He noted that this may be synonymous with drug sales. Someone asked his opinion on why is there an increase in “bums” in Westwood. Officer Thompson noted that it had to do with home ownership being down and a permissive culture (i.e. we allow and support it). Officer Thompson reported that Officer Rich Minella and a “slew” of building inspectors visited the apartments on Stathem Ave. They are mostly unoccupied. They found a pit bull. The owner was on parole and was worried about being violated. The dog was destroyed. Someone mentioned that there is another one now – bigger, meaner.

United Dairy Farm

UDF now has a camera. Bobby Theetge of UDF is in the process of removing the pay phone. Officer Thompson ran everyone who used the pay phone. They all have a drug history.

Homicides

Sess reported that homicides are up this year. He suggested that CIRV was not making a difference and that it was too costly.

Liquor Hearings

Liquor permits were being considered for Vitor’s Bistro and the Sports Mall. WCA will file no objection.

Capt Neville

Capt Neville commended everyone on efforts regarding 2111 Harrison Ave. - in particular Becky Weber. The building has been vacated. This would not have happened without the Westwood community being involved. He noted that it takes pressure from the community. He appreciates it. Hopefully it will be torn down. There was a question about the status of the Imperial House. It is vacant and it is not in compliance with it’s VBML. Sess mentioned that Capt Neville should give the “troops” a thank you from WCA at the next roll call.

Keep Cincinnati Beautiful

Sess mentioned the Just Desserts Awards for someone who is making a difference. He asked if someone from the Board would like to take this on to nominate someone from Westwood. The awards ceremony is being held in October. Application is due by October 1. John will re-send the email.

Zoning Code Changes

City Council is considering a change to the code regarding zoning to make it easier to obtain variances from the zoning law. They are trying to make it a “one stop shop”. It is going before City Council. Weber noted that at the Livable Communities Meeting yesterday, the neighborhoods were against it.

MOTION by Kimmert to write letter to zoning board to oppose change

SECOND by Lewis

DISCUSSION – Lewis noted that the proposed change would no longer allow input from the neighborhood. Kuhl asked what the source of the change was (i.e. where did this come from). Weber thought it came from Planning and

Development – to streamline. Kimmert suggested that if writing a letter doesn’t work that maybe some of us should speak on its behalf. Weber suggested addressing the letter to Roxanne Qualls – Livable Communities Committee.

PASSED unanimously

Bethany House

This is a 24 unit low-income housing complex on Yearling Ct. They borrowed \$425,000 when they built it due in 2011. They have made no payments and now owe \$920,000 and are requesting to have the debt forgiven. City Council is ready to forgive the debt. It was supposed to go to committee today. Sess asked how the City in good conscience entertain forgiving this debt and noted that there is too much subsidized housing in Westwood already. Gweyn noted that Bethany House is receiving \$2,000,000 for developments downtown.

MOTION by Kimmert to write letter vehemently opposing the debt forgiveness for Bethany House

SECOND by Lee

DISCUSSION – Kuhl noted that Council Member Berding has held it up and wonders where other Council Members stand on the issue. McNulty noted that in 1993, the City could not grant the money and could only loan the money – now they want to convert it to a grant. He considers that fraudulent. McNulty noted that the funds will not go to the City, but to HUD. McNulty noted that in 1993, WCA got the City/Bethany House to agree that they can only ever put 24 units (a covenant) and that we should keep that provision in there even if the loan is forgiven.

PASSED unanimously

Recycling

Louise Sharrow spoke about the new recycling program being implemented by the City. Residents will receive new wheeled carts – 64 or 96 gallons. Everyone in the City will be getting them. The program will be implemented in four phases. Phase 1 will deliver carts Sept 1 and start collection on Oct 1. Phase 2 will deliver carts Oct 1 and start collection on Nov 1. Phase 3 will deliver carts on Nov 1 and start collection on Dec 1. Phase 4 will deliver carts on Dec 1 and start collection on Feb 1. Westwood residents are included in phases 2, 3 and 4. Collection service will be every other week. They are also implementing a rewards program based on weight of recycling from entire recycling route. Discounts from and gift certificates to local and national business will be awarded. Sharon Lewis asked

what the cost of the program was. The whole cost is \$3,800,000 tied to federal money (community block grant). Operational costs will be reduced by \$700,000 per year. Kuhl asked what becomes of the current cart. Resident can keep it or they will take them back. Member asked whether the program was being implemented only in the City. Yes, but may go county-wide later. Lewis asked how trash vs. recycling is determined. Recycling workers will monitor and flag trash in carts. Sharon Lewis noted that Montgomery has a similar program.

Strategic Plan

Liz Kissel noted that the Westwood Strategic Plan has been approved by City Council. Sess noted that Council Member Ghiz referred to it by name.

Kuhl asked if the Abundant Ministries representative was present. No response. Someone noted that he may attend the next meeting.

Attorney General's Office

Chris Wagner – the Managing Attorney with the Ohio Attorney General's office spoke on the subject of fraud. For every reported fraud, 100 to 150 victims are still out there. They had 30,000 complaints last year. They are working with the Federal Trade Commission and the FBI to bring lawsuits. When approached by a "scammer", make sure you contact the Ohio AG office. They have the power to help remediate issues. Can file complaint on-line at OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov or call (800) 282-0515. Member asked if the office was interested in items of suspicion. Yes. Gweyn asked if the office goes after non-profit organizations. Yes, but through a different process. Sess mentioned that we would put a link on the WCA website for "fraud alert" and link to the Ohio AG's office.

Westwood Art Show

Sess noted that the recent Art Show was very successful. The vendors did fairly well and want to come back. There were 31 vendors last year and 46 vendors this year. The vendors were "tickled" that we (Sess, Baumann, Kuhl, Weber) helped them load up after the show. The YMCA let us use four of their picnic tables. We need a canopy for the musical performances. It was noted that the bathrooms need to be opened earlier. Marlene mentioned that her staff needs to be paid by the Art Show. Kimmet noted that NSP funds might be used for purchasing the canopy and paying the staff. Weber suggested recruiting LaSalle HS students to help the vendors unload and load – they could earn service hours. Sess suggested contacting the owners of the parking lots used for permission. Kuhl suggested making the signs ahead of time.

Harvest Home Fair

A few members marched in the parade. Valerie Baumann's father's T-Bird was driven in the parade.

West Side Summit

Sess reminded the membership of the upcoming Westside Summit. It will include neighborhoods from District 3, Northside and Mount Airy. Catherine Keough-Jurs with the City? will be in attendance and provide maps for the neighborhood boundaries discussions. There will also be discussion regarding the Chronic Nuisance Ordinance. This may result in a louder voice for City Council. The meeting is being held Oct 5. Sess is sending out reminders this week, next week and the following week.

MOTION by McNulty to fund up to \$35 to Karen Strasser for the printing of Block Watch flyers to send home with the kids of Dater Montessori

SECOND by Kimmet

DISCUSSION - Sharon Lewis suggested that Staples may donate the materials and printing. Members suggested that the flyers should also be distributed at St Catherine's and Westwood Elementary (at Gamble).

PASSED unanimously

Weber

Becky reported on 2400 Harrison Ave. There were nine calls in June, 12 in July and 12 in August – even though there has been a police detail there. They are going to start the billing again. There was a shooting a month ago.

Kuhl

Mary reminded the membership that Kroger on Ferguson donated the chicken and soda for the picnic held before the meeting. Weber will send a thank you letter. There is activity at the Gamble Estate. People are not optimistic about saving the house. They are disassembling it as we speak. There is an Oct 21 shareholder's meeting at P&G. Kimmet suggested attending these higher level meetings and showing the Kissel PowerPoint presentation. Kuhl noted that they have talked to the higher-ups at P&G to no avail.

Mike Robison

Mike is running for State Representative of 31st District.

State Senator Eric Kearney

Senator Kearney was in attendance and was recognized.

MOTION by McNulty to ask Michael Cervay and Margret Wuerstle to proceed with our down-zoning survey for Westwood

SECOND by Kimmet

DISCUSSION – McNulty noted that now that our Strategic Plan is official it would be opportune. Zone changes from SF6 to SF10 and multi-family to single-family. This would result in bigger lots, more single family residences, and make businesses more pedestrian friendly. Sess asked if this was part of our Strategic Plan.

PASSED unanimously

MOTION by McNulty to contact the City and the State to have them start notify our neighborhood of OFA projects in Westwood and adjoining neighborhoods
SECOND by Gweyn

DISCUSSION – McNulty noted that we are learning about these projects way too late. Kuhl asked why we were not already being notified. Senator Kearney noted that OFA has a newsletter list with this information.

PASSED unanimously

MOTION by McNulty that the Department of Community Development notify WCA whenever a building enters the hazard abatement program

SECOND by Baumann

DISCUSSION – McNulty noted that they are required by law to notify social service agencies. Sess asked what the benefit would be. McNulty responded that we would know when they are notifying all of the social service agencies.

PASSED unanimously

Lee

Brian is the Republican Ward Chair for Ward 26 (Westwood) and is looking for workers for the polling booths.

Lewis

Trent recognized a house at Ferguson and Werk for their work on a wrought iron and stone fence and nominated them for a welcome basket. Kuhl does not have time to support the welcome baskets and needs help.

McNulty

Jim stressed that we need to do more than just oppose the debt forgiveness for the Bethany House. We need to be involved in the planning process for that project. Sess suggested that we go to the City Council meeting. Kuhl noted that the Bethan project belongs under the purview of the Outreach Committee.

MOTION by Kuhl to adjourn

SECOND by Gweyn

DISCUSSION none

PASSED unanimously