



November 14th, 2022, 6:30 pm, virtual Board meeting minutes

NEXT MEETING: Monthly meeting, Dec. 12th, 2022

WNA Board members attending: Charles Temper, Kimberly McCoy, Carol Johnson, Marilyn Zaleon, Susanna Park, Andrea Buckvold, Gayln Murphy-Stanley, Kate Palermo, Adam Felleman, Sam Gruber

Attendees: Matt Oja, Paul Harvey, Kat Robinson, Ashley Kennard, Holly Grant, Karen Cordano, Andy Leahy, Katherine Saufley

1. Welcome/Introductions:
2. Financial Report
3. Committee & Liaison Report
 - a. Executive
 - i. WNA organization – iConsult Update
 - ii. Need nominating committee for new board members
 - b. Membership/Finance
 - i. Need for year-end mailing
 - c. Communication
 - i. Welcome to Westcott packet/Website resource update
 1. The Website is slowly being updated.
 - d. Beautification
 - i. Community Garden update
 1. Westcott Community Garden had a mandatory meeting.
 - a. Working on re-writing by-laws.
 - b. Scheduled a truck rental to pick up large waste and wood.
 - c. Planning a re-organization of group to be more accessible.
 - ii. Beautification
 1. Mural painted over on Mom's Diner.
 2. Litter clean-up group will work on removing some other litter.
 3. Trash pick-up 9AM on Nov. 19th.
 - e. Events
 - i. Halloween Dog Parade
 1. Approximately 40-50 dogs, approx. 100 people.
 2. Looking to repeat next year with a bigger push for membership/WNA event.
 3. Grateful to Library for help with treats and set-up

- ii. Winter Events –
 - 1. Yeti is interested in hosting.
 - a. Possible ideas – concerts, debates (consult list from last year.)
 - b. Possible partnership with WAC.
 - f. Neighborhood Watch
 - i. Some smash and grab break-ins happening to Westcott Businesses. Was previously happening to Eastwood.
 - ii. Camera footage is showing young people.
 - iii. Working to create a business communication group for sharing news.
 - iv. Police Dept. numbers are down – not full staff.
 - v. Often the same kids (13-14 year olds) – going after “low-hanging fruit”
 - vi. Communicate with others in the neighborhood to be aware and use preventative techniques.
 - vii. No evidence of kids being armed.
 - viii. Crime rates higher since covid.
4. Old Business
 - a. Westcott Remembers
 - i. Bricks ordered.
 - b. Award updates – need to complete certificates for Andrew Besemer and Kathy Hochul “Honorary Membership”
 - c. Question – how to get streets/places named for citizens.
 - i. There is a formal process – starts by sending a letter to the Common Council. Then they will meet about it, then hold a public meeting.
 - ii. Easier to name sections of parks than whole parks.
5. New Business
 - a. Discussion with Matt Oja (Commissioner of Assessment) and Karen Cordano (Board of Education)
 - i. Oja – Assessment
 - 1. Lays the foundation of property tax
 - 2. Touches on all types of real estate – purchases, assessments, exemptions
 - 3. 31,000 residential
 - 4. Administer 12 different types of exemptions
 - 5. Interface between state and the city
 - 6. 2nd busiest department for walk-in traffic.
 - 7. Question – is there a difference for tax rate for owner-occupied and rental property.
 - a. Homes valued by sales comparison
 - b. Rentals – income generated and/or sales comparison
 - 8. Question – Rental properties not listed as commercial
 - a. NYS has various 3 digit codes for types of income generating properties.

9. Question – Can rental properties drive up prices for owner-occupied properties in the neighborhood so everyone ends up paying a higher property tax?
 10. Question – How are they checking on properties?
 - a. Some constraints on assessment.
 - b. Some properties are under-assessed (esp. near Eastside that might become valuable.)
 11. Difference between properties and condo assessments –
 - a. Dept. looking into finding a better system
 12. Matt Oja – “trying to keep people in their homes.”
- ii. Karen Cordano – SCSD
1. Amount of property tax goes to city – approx. \$10 out of \$1000, amount goes to school district \$17 out of \$1000, county also receives \$13.
 - a. Property tax funds less than 20% of budget (which is nearing a \$1billion dollar budget.)
 - b. Most comes from state – constraints on spending applied (unlike suburban schools where more comes from property tax.)
 - c. SCSD had a drop in student enrollment during Covid, currently under 20,000
 - d. Part of the “Big 5” in the state. Budget rules for the Big 5 are different than for other districts.
 2. Question – How is the recovery act money being spent?
 - a. Some construction projects – getting buildings up to code, not vanity projects.
 - b. Money is mostly reimbursed by state
 - c. Some money spent on Intervention instruction (Math and Reading intervention, Math and Reading coaches) also additional school counselors
 3. Yes, performance has fallen since Covid. Next board meeting, SCSD will present a plan for improving performance.
 - a. Emerging readers show lower gains,
 - b. All math learners went down.
 - c. Pre-covid proficiency rates were still unacceptable.
 - d. 30% on grade level reading in the country.
 4. If 4 or more board members ask a question, SCSD has to respond.
 - a. Concern about cultural relevancy in the curriculum.
 - b. Level 1 interventions need to improve
 5. CFO Suzanne Slack just retired – she had a good relationship with the state and was the reason SCSD was often funded for what they requested. SCSD needs to show financial responsibility.
 6. Some federal money will be phasing out.
 7. Spending per student is approx. \$20,000.

8. All presentations to the Board on posted on SCSD website.
9. Hiring Low/ Higher need – SCSD is less than fully staffed, including bus drivers.
10. More than 20% of students have an IEP (Intervention Education Plan)
11. Teaching Assistance shortages.
12. SCSD is providing incentives and paths for teaching certification.
13. Many students are not coming ready to learn and SCSD is expected to provide wrap-around services.
14. Interim Superintendent is focused on violence in schools are a top priority.
15. Sam G. noted much less kids in the neighborhood than in previous years – question of how to engage families.
16. Question of Levy Building –
 - a. SCSD will need it as swing space for several more years. STEAM at Dr. King is expected to move there during I-81 construction.