



Minutes
Westcott Neighborhood Association
August 12, 2024

Board members in attendance: Meredith Dodd, Sam Gruber, Carol Johnson, Susannah Park, Heila Martin-Person, Kevin Montgomery,

Other attendees: Gabriel Calloway, Ryla Daley, Heid Hart-Gorman, Andy Leahy, Judy Jerome, Angela Robinson, Dorcas Rodriguez, Sharon Sherman, Charles Tremper, Marilyn Zaleon

By Zoom: Aretha Brown, Rowan Leshy

Welcome

Sam Gruber opened the meeting, and attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of June Minutes

Carol moved to accept the June minutes, Heila seconded, the minutes were approved.

Financial Report

Kevin Montgomery reported that it has been a slow year because our PayPal account wasn't working for online donations. We did get grant money for CNYArts - \$3500 the Westcott Words and Music events. Kevin thanked Sharon Sherman and WACC, who are the fiscal sponsors for CNYArts grant.

We have received a grant from TNT to redo the kiosk on Harvard and Westcott - that work is moving ahead with the goal to finish by time of Fair. We have gotten information from TNT / City on how to get materials with the grant money. We can submit receipts directly to the city for payment or submit receipts for reimbursement.

Ryla asked if there were ways to get donations by having businesses round-up purchase amount. This was discussed, and that business owners theoretically supportive of WNA but have not donated money. "Rounding up" is mostly done by big business with the means and the technology to do it. In general, it was discussed that we should continue our efforts to engage with the business owners.

Ryla proposed an effort to decorate Westcott Street for the winter holidays. Sam explained some of the reasons there have not been decorations in recent years – some good, and some not. Sharon explained that the city and insurance companies will do posters, but all banners must be down by 11/15 because of wind and rain. Decorations that cross streets are no longer allowed.

It was agreed to include discussion of decorations in the business district on the agenda for the September meeting.

Committees: Executive

Sam welcomed Meredith Dodd, the newest board member. He reminded the Board that the position of secretary needs to be filled. Until then, we would rotate the taking of meeting notes. Meredith volunteered to take the minutes for this meeting. Sam reminded the Board that the date of the November meeting needs to be changed, because the library is closed on Veterans' Day. He reminded the Board that we need to be recruiting new Board members, especially since in the future due to term limits a number of members will have to leave the Board at the same time.

Committees: Membership / Communications

Kevin reported that income from paid members is \$290. Sam said that with such a large neighborhood, our aspirational number of members should be 500. People might ask, "What are you going to do with the money?" We need to pay for website, zoom connection, refreshments for events, table at fair, and many other administrative expenses.

Sharon noted that WNA has not sent out annual membership notices. The Board agreed that we need to do this in the fall - sometime after the Fair.

It was mentioned that we might move away from using Mailchimp, but Heila has mastered this and we should be able to renew regular "newsletter" mailing, meeting updates, etc to those whose register with their email.

Most membership comes from the fair and annual meeting, but it should be easy from online. Carol reported that there used to be a button for PayPal but this was lost – but now it is back. There is a Mailchimp button to sign up for updates for anyone, but now only current members from the last three years after getting notices. One aspect of Mailchimp is that to get an email address, the recipient needs to give consent.

It was decided that we need a flyer for the fair that lists all the things that we've done, with a QR Code and information on how to pay for dues, etc. The Communications Committee will work on this.

Adam remarked that WNA should have a presence on Instagram and that right now social media has been our best tool for getting word out about events.

Committees: Beautification

Andy announced the upcoming Saturday clean up. He noted that the new trash can program seems to be leading to less litter. New blue recycling bins are coming in the fall.

Sam reported that Zeke Leonard is working on the Harvard place "kiosk" for which we have been awarded a TNT grant.

It was noted that the Common Council has allocated up to 25,000 dollars towards a community Garden in Eastwood. The eastside has community gardens at Ed Smith and on Harvard (TNT

gave a grant for that last year). Any chance funds might be available to help? It was remarked that Eastwood probably got funds through advocacy Councilor Jimmy Monto.

Andy opined that if more community garden space was available then demand would fill that space. We should look at where other gardening space is possible.

Sam commented that it is not clear who is responsible for excess Eastside green spaces. Are these publicly or privately owned? There are a number of examples including where Westmoreland and Houston come together. He suggested WNA inventory these spaces.

Events (WNA)

Westcott Words & Music Poetry Event

The first two poetry events successful, next one is scheduled for Sunday, September 8th (same date as Gustav Stickley house clean up). ...

The Westcott Street Cultural Fair is September 22 and WNA has booked a table on Victoria Place. This is the biggest day for the organization and neighborhood. Sharon Sherman gave an update on the Fair planning, and reviewed street closings, and WACC is looking for volunteers to help man the barricades. WACC is looking to hire a new PT consultant for work on the fair from March through October. The number of hours will vary according to month. WACC would like to find someone in the neighborhood. The job pays \$8000.

Sam noted we need volunteers for the WNA table, too.

The Halloween Dog Parade is Oct 26. – Kim and Susie wrote to Summit Bank to confirm their sponsorship to make sure their logo is on the poster this time. The poster ll be ready for Westcott street fair. There is still time to expand our request for sponsorship. Should we take donations for a raffle again? Should WNA members sponsor? Any money we take in can be used for anything...To note - Helping Hounds has a similar event on October 5.

Sam reported there may still be funds available for pop up musical events in fall and winter with modest honoraria – in the \$50 – 100 range.

Old Business Con't

There is growing interest in Neighborhood Watch. – there was a good turnout at the July virtual meeting. The group meets on Zoom the third Thursday every other month. 20 people attended. Capt. Bowering presented the crime report. Councilpor Cory Williams reported that the spate of smash and grabs on the 400 and 500 blocks of Westcott continues. Capt Bowering and chiefs and the deputy mayor met with some merchants in the Business District. The crimes are being committed by juveniles, which creates problems because of their age. More cameras for WEestcott Street have been discussed, though cameras don't catch everything all the time. The city will find funds to add a camera to the 400 block of Westcott. All city cameras cover 360 degrees.

Corey reported that when a young person is caught, he/she receives a summons to family court. There is no immediate impact on person who commits crime. 12 is cut off age through the criminal legal system and family court, and it appears that Family Court not effective tool for this situation. The Deputy Mayor wants to be creative, possibly to hold families and parents accountable. When you look at crime citywide, what is happening in Westcott is not the worst, but certainly not what we want. We need to let SPD hear that we don't accept this level of crime in the neighborhood. Where there is a crime, people should call 911 – at least to have it recorded and documented. This impacts the allocation of resources. Anecdotes are well and good but don't serve as data - getting a call in provides the data used to justify the changing their coverage.

Discussion on this topic continued for 10 minutes. Sam noted that while we do not regularly address crime and safety issues in WNA monthly meetings, it appears this is now of general concern and is impacting neighborhood self-image, and how others perceive us. He proposed we reach out to city officials and schedule a special neighborhood meeting on this topic.

The motion to hold a meeting public meeting only about public safety, to be sponsored or co-sponsored by WNA, was passed.

The Westcott Leadership Roundtable meeting is scheduled on September 28th, and we will see if other groups want to join us.

New Business

It was announced that Pam Hunter has directed funding for outdoor music on Thursday in September – to be held at the Rise and Shine parking lot at Westcott and Dell.

Sam announced that the Protected Site Designation for 727 Comstock was meant to be voted on today (Aug 12) but was postponed. It will be discussed in the Common Council committee meeting on Thursday.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.