

Minutes from WECAN Board Meeting – March 16, 2016

Submitted by: Diana Dietvorst

In attendance:

Board Members: Alan Burch, Diana Dietvorst, Jim Dietvorst, Cindy Gallard, Dave Justice, Nadia Patrick, Josh Patrick, Leah Rounds

Visitors: Councilman Espinoza, District 1 and Councilman Lopez and Adrianna Magana, District 3

Topics Discussed:

- General Meeting – April 12, 2016
 - Discuss the Rose Panel findings – it came up with ten findings, but there is no funding attached to the findings. Each year they pick 3 cities and this year Denver is one. Nadia will present the findings if Chris Nevitt can't.
 - Tree Planting – we can only have one group plant trees unless another person wants to take the training. Jim asked for further information. Josh is going to submit for additional sustainability points for WECAN participants doing canvassing on Denver Digs behalf.
- Discussion with Councilman Lopez
 - Talked about the best practices for exchange of information between his office and WECAN Board. Per Paul, if WECAN would like Paul or his aide at a board or general meeting, let them know ahead of time and they will come. They are happy to do the same with WECAN.
 - Corky Gonzalez library is outperforming many of the Denver Public Libraries. Lopez predicts it will be the 2nd most used after the main library in the near future.
 - Lopez wants to pursue a small format grocery store for the neighborhood – some place like a Trader's Joes. He wants to float the idea, see what the response is, and then approach various corporations to see if they would be interested. He wants to make sure all residents have affordable and available food. Discussion of the proposed Co-op came up and Lopez confirmed his complete support for it, but he would also like to have a grocery store as well.
 - Lopez is continuing to look at how to make Colfax a more viable corridor. He would like to see the Colfax Bridge rebuilt or retrofitted and figure out how to connect Sun Valley in. He wants to bring the best of the neighborhoods out and celebrate their traditions.
 - As part of the Denver Health System, there is a southwest healthcare clinic opening up at Florida and Federal. This will take pressure off of the west-side clinic. Some staff at the west-side clinic may be lost due to recent changes, but will still provide excellent care. As the southwest clinic develops, they want to get community people involved. The biggest problem is parking. The clinic will have dental and mental health services as well.
 - Rezoning of Villa Park "orphan" parcels not contiguous to the Gulch. These parcels are currently designated "open space" not "park land" so they are not maintained by the City Parks & Rec. These occurred when a large amount of acreage in the Gulch was designated park land. The idea is to zone these parcels into the zoning grid that they are adjacent to and

- then to get them sold. Right now they are being used as dumping grounds. Lopez would like to see a RFP (request for proposal) for affordable housing options. The rezoning is coming up for a vote in June and Lopez wanted to know if WECAN would put together a letter in support. Lopez's office will keep us abreast of the flow and dates of the process. Members of the Board explained we are trying to stay away from contentious topics, especially when not in our direct neighborhood. WECAN is rebranding to be more community-focused rather than issue-oriented as it turns people off.
- Gentrification – this is a difficult topic, especially since there is a lot of discrimination still. Lopez shared his experience of being a member of a community that tended to be discriminated against by the financial institutions. These communities are often predominately blue collar and minority populated. With gentrification, property values rise and the poorer residents can end up in debt with taxes rising and predatory lending. Nadia shared her experience of minority profiling and she would like to have discussions concerning that as well as gentrification.
 - Discussion with Councilman Espinoza
 - Talked about the best practices for exchange of information between his office and WECAN Board. Discussion from both WECAN and Espinoza of difficulties in meeting respective expectations of the timing of the receipt of requests and information to be presented at general meetings. Outcome was that both sides will try to accommodate each other as best as possible. The councilman is always welcome to attend meetings and make pertinent announcements and reports that are of direct interest to WECAN residents. If the councilman would like to reserve time at a meeting for a particular topic, his office will strive to meet the 30 days notice needed to request time at the meeting and to publicize the topic through the newsletter and webpage.
 - Espinoza would like to be kept in the loop as WECAN completes its bylaws rewrite. He is worried about developers co-opting RNO meetings for RNOs who allow voting privileges for people who work in the neighborhood. He has seen where a commercial property owner has stacked a RNO vote with employees to the detriment of the residents. Jefferson Park rewrote their bylaws to address this and Rafael will get us a copy. Nadia explained the bylaw rewrite is to make them more readable and to help make sure that our votes represent the neighborhood. WECAN will continue to vote on issues the Board feels are pertinent to our members and ones that generate enough interest so we can get a representative vote. If there are not enough people at a vote, then the Board feels it is better for individuals to represent themselves on the issue.
 - Espinoza is researching how gentrification can be done in a fair way. It is hard to find resources and solutions for this problem. The Board agrees and is trying to address this by finding grassroots projects that the neighborhood needs. We are currently working on streetlights, tree plantings and neighborhood clean-up days. Espinoza is frustrated that Public Works is currently sitting on a LED project for existing lights. He said we should ask for LEDs for the new lights and apply pressure to get this project moving forward.
 - Espinoza will be attending a retreat and one of the topics will be on developer impact fees. The fee will help pay for the loss of affordable housing. He wants to take the proposal

- further so that people are not just displaced, but they can find affordable housing in the neighborhood.
- Discussions on section 8 housing inspection problems (email Amanda in his office), issues with roads and sidewalks (call 311 and be VERY specific), the work Espinoza is doing on streamlining the sidewalk permit process, Denver crime rates and our new community resource officer (contact Commander Pazen)
 - Board business
 - Leah will send the newsletter out to be reviewed
 - On off-months, will print 100 copies of the newsletter for distribution in public areas
 - Econolot Cease & Desist Order – Alan Burch & Maria Todd
 - Econolot has proven to be a problem neighbor and has received numerous violations. City finally issued a Cease & Desist Order. The hearing is on May 10 at 11:00 AM. The owner of Econolot is not the owner of the property but he is going to ask for a zoning variance. Concern is that the variance then stays with the property beyond Econolot's tenure and it creates precedence. More information on the hearing is forthcoming and will be put in the newsletter.