



## WAMM CIVIC ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY MEETING

September 13, 2022

Bering Church of Christ

### MINUTES

Lane Llewellyn, President, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Board members present: Lane Llewellyn, President; Mary Alice Martin, First Vice-President; Kathy Conti, Second Vice President; Diane Baker, Treasurer, and Maria Morandi, Secretary.

#### 1. Introduction of Officers

Lane introduced herself, Mary Alice Martin (First Vice-President), Kathy Conti (Second Vice-President, Diane Baker (Treasurer), and Maria Morandi (Secretary).

#### 2. Introduction of Guest Speakers and other Guests

Lane Llewellyn introduced the following invited speakers:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Speaker: Sharon L. Fletcher, Deputy Chief of Staff, Houston City Council District C, Office of Councilmember Abbie Kamin.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker: Jarrad Mears, Bureau of Animal Regulation and Control (BARC) Animal Shelter and Adoptions, and Animal Enforcement Division Manager, City of Houston, Animal Regulation and Care. Accompanied by Chris Dunn and Chris Glasser, Animal Control Supervisors and enforcement managers.

Guests included:

- Jeff Rushing, Co-Chair of the 2022 Greek Festival, Anunciation Orthodox Cathedral.

### ORDER OF BUSSINESS

#### 3. Ongoing Infrastructure for WAMM

Lane Llewellyn indicated that she was calling this the summer from hell. Street reconstruction, specially along Hawthorne St. has been nightmarish because of the poor decision (supposedly by Miranda Construction) to scrape the road down to the "Gumbo



Soil” layer, which is essentially clay, and then came back and add a rock layer and fix holes. These activities generated a lot of dust before the actual resurfacing of the street. She reminded the attendees that the TIRZ plan was to upgrade infrastructure one block at a time but, in her opinion, it was a disappointment. She thanked all the WAMM neighbors that called and complained to 311 and the respective construction companies. It did make a difference and the City of Houston (COH) responded to most complaints, although the response from the Department of Neighborhoods with respect to graffiti and abandoned buildings was slacking. She asked to email Maria Morandi if additional support from WAMM is needed when filing a complaint. As she said at the June meeting, the WAMM neighborhood had been in need of the upgrades and maintenance for a long time; it will be great when everybody will be able to ride, bike and walk on Hawthorne St again. The WAMM Gazette publishes the contact numbers and names of the construction companies working in our area.

#### **4. Presentations**

##### 4.a. Sharon Fletcher

Mrs. Fletcher thanked WAMM for the invitation to speak at the association’s quarterly meeting. She then addressed a list of issues WAMM had submitted in advance:

- Her replacement of Lance Gilliam as Chief of Staff in the District C office.
- Status of Lovett Triangle Park - She shared the preliminary drawings for the Lovett Triangle Park with the Park and Receptions Department to get a date for a meeting. The expectation is that Park and Receptions can develop a proposal listing what they can do of what WAMM is asking for. This department is having staffing issues, so they may take sometime in setting a date for the meeting.
- Issues related to the TIRZ Hawthorne St Project - Lance Gilliam had been active in communicating with respect to the complaints about the TIRZ project. He will be holding a meeting on Thursday to get clarification.
- Need for speed bumps along Hawthorne St. – Lane Llewellyn explained that application for speed bumps had been submitted years earlier but fell through after a change in the administration and asked what could be done at the present time. Mrs. Fletcher answered that there is an opportunity to have an assessor review traffic along the street as part of the City’s Major Thoroughfare & Freeway Plan (MTFP). However, no funds are available for street bumps at the present time. Mrs. Fletcher indicated she will look at the application that have been submitted. She also suggested the Department of Neighborhoods grant program. Lane Llewellyn responded that WAMM is familiar with this program, but it is been considered as a potential funding source for part of The Lovett Triangle Park. Mrs. Fletcher suggested also to contact Engage Houston and also District C.



Lane Llewellyn asked what new issues will be coming up in 2023 that our association could help with. Mrs. Fletcher responded to check the District C webpage for rain barrel distribution, the gun safety tours in schools, and the Pickleball Court at Memorial Park.

Lane Llewellyn asked about the status of the work along Kipling St., which is not passable at this time. Mrs. Fletcher responded that this is Phase 2 of the 72-inch water line replacement.

Eddie Stanton asked about an update on commercial development in our area. Mrs. Fletcher responded that Lance Gilliam would be better able to provide information on this issue and to send her an email that she will share with Lance.

There was a question about a poorly managed and maintained apartment complex at 1424 Marshall St., about which WAMM has complained about repeatedly, and what could be do about it. Mrs. Fletcher responded to call HPD when there is a problem, which Lane Llewellyn emphasized. Mrs. Fletcher also indicated to report to 311 so a history of cases can be established. Eddie Stanton asked whether the Department of Neighborhoods is alerted of the calls. Mrs. Fletcher responded that they do not get the case number automatically. If the call to 311 is non-responsive, then the case should be reported to the Department of Neighborhoods which will escalate the case and take action. Lane showed a letter that WAMM had sent to the owners of the property and to various COH offices.

There was another question about mowing the grass along the esplanade. Mrs. Fletcher responded to call 311 and send her an email.

Deborah Quintero asked about the move of the Free Library to its new location. Mrs. Fletcher responded to send her an email and she will enquire.

Eddie Cruz asked about the status of the old River Oaks Movie Theater. Mrs. Fletcher did not know the status but requested to send it to her email.

Lane Llewellyn thanked Mrs. Fletcher for being a speaker at the meeting. WAMM will compile that list of questions that could not be answered at the meeting and will email them to her.

#### 4.b. Jarrad Mears

Mr. Mears gave a brief introduction of himself, Mr. Dunn, and Mr. Glasser. He described BARC's main responsibilities in terms of keeping the safety and health of the animal population (which also helps protect safety and health of the human population), which includes addressing reports of animal cruelty, and efforts such as trap-neuter-release (TNR) program. At this time, they need more help with trapping. The city will neuter trapped animals for free, and then return them to the same neighborhood. The TNR program supports Colony Managers (i.e., citizens who feed stray cats in their own property when certain conditions are met).



Deborah Quintero indicated that strays are a big problem in certain areas such as Acres Homes. Mr. Maers suggested that BARC should be able to do an education program as some of these problems are related to cultural issues.

Mr. Mears indicated that they handle 25,000 – 27,000 animals/year. They get approximately 55,000 animal-related calls per year. Most of the animals they see are not wild. The number dropped during the COVID epidemic, but they also lost staff. The number increased after COVID because people who adopted animals during that time are now dumping them (over 800 additional pets were dumped in the month of August alone), and the city does not have sufficient staff to pick them up.

BARC covers the whole COH. City ordinances require that each animal be held for 48-hours before disposition. They contact shelters that can receive them. Some are euthanized, with approximately 84% released alive. The shelter cuts off acceptances when they are full.

COH is grossly underfunded for addressing animal welfare in a city the size of Houston. Dallas, a smaller city, has approximately 3 times the personnel (90) of the COH (35). Lane Llewellyn indicated that we should let the city know that more help is needed. Mr. Mears suggested to email the Major and City Council members and said the Major is planning to present a bond for increased funding (47 million dollars) in November's election, and that Council Member for District C Kamin is very supportive of the bond issue.

Deborah Quintero asked about funds from animal registration fees. Mr. Mears responded that compliance with animal registration in the COH is only 3%, and if everyone complied with the registration ordinance, BARC would be fully funded. He would like to have all pets chipped. Apparently, veterinarians were reticent to request registration in their practices, so they do not require it. Mrs. Fletcher indicated that this issue may come up again for consideration in the next Council meeting.

There was a question whether the 47 million bond, if approved, will be dedicated exclusively for BARC or rolled on with other petitions. The response was that it will be dedicated to BARC.

Mr. Mears also described that they deal with wild animals, sometimes large ones, such as a tiger they trapped the previous week.

Lane Llewellyn thanked the BARC officers for the instructive presentation.

#### 4.c. Jeff Rushing – Greek Festival

Mr. Rushing indicated that this is the second year after COVID for the Greek Festival. They have been preparing since June. The city will place no parking signs on the Wednesday before the start of the festival. All complaints about parking should be made to 311. There will be an area for designated Uber drivers. There will be 14-20 police officers patrolling the streets (they can use this time as service hours).



This year, there will be new iconography in display at the Cathedral, which will be open to see but still a work in progress.

Eddie Stanton asked about the level of attendance to the festival. It is in the order of 20,000 to 30,000. Peak attendance occurred in 2015, when 35,000 people came to the festival.

Deborah Quintero indicated that Parking is the big issue with the festival. She said the market (former Kroger site) has a paid system. Therese Perez indicated that there have been some issues in years past, such a torn area along Harold St. Deborah Quintero also indicated that there are problems with drop off and pick up at residences when the set up for the festival starts the previous Monday, and when Yoakum is closed on Thursday.

Jeff Rushing gave a set of Festival entry tickets for distribution to WAMM members. Lane Llewellyn thanked him for the support that the Cathedral has given WAMM for so many years.

## **5. Other Business**

### **5.a. Membership**

Lane Llewellyn reminded all that Kathy Conti is coordinating Block Captains, and to please volunteer. CC Connor, Deborah Quintero, Diane Baker, and Dale Klintze indicated interest. Eddie Stanton indicated that he would try to reach the management of La Colombe D'Or for support.

Deborah Quintero emphasized the problem with a nearby Airbnb that is advertising accommodations for forty guests.

## **6. New Business**

Lane Llewellyn indicated that she was trying to have a fall festival at Bering United, which would be co-sponsored by WAMM. She will also reach to Mandell Place for co-sponsorship a social in fall or holiday season.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm