

WAMM CIVIC ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY MEETING

October 28, 2021

Annunciation Orthodox School

MINUTES

Lane Llewellyn, First Vice-President and Acting President, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Board members present: Lane Llewellyn, First Vice President and Acting President; Diane Baker, Second Vice President, and Maria Morandi, Treasurer/Secretary.

1. Introduction of Officers

Lane introduced herself, Diane Baker, and Maria Morandi.

2. Acknowledgement and Recognition of the Host for the Meeting

Lane recognized and thanked the Annunciation Orthodox School (AOS) and Ms. Isabelle Dom, Director of Communications, for providing the facilities to hold the meeting. Both Ms. Dom and Ms Heather Haas, Head of Middle School, were present at the meeting.

3. Introduction of Guest Speakers and other Guests

Lane Llewellyn introduced the guest speaker, Mr. Lance Gilliam, current Chief of Staff for Council Member for District C Abbie Kamin's office, and indicated there would be a question and answer period after his presentation. Except for the invited speaker, no other guests were present.

4. Presentation – Mr. Lance Gilliam

Mr. Gilliam explained that he had taken the position of Chief of Staff only three weeks earlier, so he was still becoming familiar with the breath of issues in District C. He had spoken with Ms. Julia Retta, his predecessor who moved to the private sector, about the issues that concern us, and the information helped him prepare for his presentation.

Mr. Gilliam is a native Texan. He is familiar with our area. He attended the University of St. Thomas and resided for some time at Graustark and W Alabama. This is his first position with the City having previously worked for Harris County, including as advisor to Judge Lina Hidalgo and Commissioner Rodney Ellis.

Mr. Gilliam emphasized that he has a focus on resolving problems, and advised to call the District Office if any issues arise or are not resolved in a timely manner. He

proceeded to address concerns of WAMM residents, starting with delays in solid waste pick up. Delays are city-wide, as a result of labor, staffing, and truck maintenance problems. Solid Waste Management immediate action has been moving staff to regular solid waste collection, and moving other drivers to recyclables collection.

As regards sidewalk repairs, City Council has approved a program of a couple of million dollars for sidewalk repairs to improve walkability and to comply with mobility standards, especially near schools. Other initiatives are ditch maintenance (short of capital improvements) mainly directed at vegetation cleanup, and improvements in street drainage in the context of flood control. Mr. Gilliam emphasized that much of the poor state of local roads results from the city's aging infrastructure. He again reminded the attendees to call his office regarding specific problems.

Mary Alice Carpenter asked about the lack of enforcement of curb side heavy trash disposal ordinances, mentioning the specific case of the apartment complex at 1424 Marshal. There was some discussion to the effect that the trash had been picked up after several months, at least in part due to a letter sent to the apartment complex owners by the WAMM Board. Mr. Gilliam responded that he will inquire about this case.

Eddy Stanton remarked about the dismal state of some local streets such as Marshall and Graustark. Jerry Baiamonte inquired about the old plan for local street repair, in which our area was listed with an 8-10 year wait, and asked about the current position of WAMM in that list. Eddy Stanton raise the issue of impaired traffic mobility due to the number of vehicles parked on both sides local streets, which has worsened as more high rises are being built. He asked whether mitigating measures such as alternative street parking could be adopted. Jerry mentioned that the situation is particularly bad on Harold St. between Yoakum and Montrose.

Diane Baker mentioned the severe flooding at Hawthorne (1100 block) and Mt. Vernon St. She and Lane pointed out that it has become worse after a property owner received a permit and built a new driveway to his property.

Eddy Stanton asked if there is any news on the Kroger site development.

Mr. Gillian advised to communicate with his office about all these issues. He did not know the status of the Kroger site or Skanska's new development. City Council tries to get together with developers but it is difficult. He is aware that Covenant house is in the process of moving temporarily for 2 years while their property is being renovated.

Jerry Baiamonte raised the issue of landscape and yard maintenance companies not bagging leaves, which accumulate on curbs and block storm drains thus contributing to flooding. Jerry suggested that local patrolman issuing fines for parking violations could be deputized to fine these companies. Mr. Gilliam responded that we should take notice and report curb and gutter debris, and flood events.

Maria Morandi raised the issue of the increasing numbers of Airbnb conversions, including old apartment buildings, and asked whether the City requires specific permits and licenses.

In answer to the previous questions, Mr. Gilliam responded that we should file 311 reports or ask 311 whether operators have appropriate licenses in the case of Airbnbs. The Department of Neighborhoods could take up to 6 months in responding to reports or complaints. To expedite, we should call or send him an email after filing the report with 311.

Gustavo Nechar raised the issue of continuing low overflights of commercial airliners. Lane and Maria responded to call and send emails as described in the WAMM Gazette for the last few months.

Mr. Gilliam concluded his presentation by thanking all attendees and reminding everybody to call his office or email when specific problems arise. Lane thanked him for coming and for addressing the concerns of our neighborhood.

4. Order of Business

4.a. The future of Lovett Triangle

Lane reminded the attendees that Council Member for District C Abbie Kamin was very supportive of our efforts to stop the takeover of Lovett Blvd. by the Charity Guild. WAMM needs to move forward with planning for the uses of this space that meet our neighborhood's needs. She indicated that we could propose developing a pocket park/dog park in the area of the Lovett Triangle and esplanade, and that the city would support this effort. WAMM is eligible to apply for a matching grant that could help with partial funding. WAMM needs to develop a plan, with the design of the park as the first step.

Jerry Baiamonte asked whether the City would help with the design. Lane responded that she can raise the money but we need to find an architect/landscape designer to develop the design. Two potential options were suggested: Dillon Kyle Architects on W Alabama, and McIntyre & Rabinowitz.

Lane asked for volunteers to form a committee to develop a plan and a proposal. The following attendees volunteered: Mary Alice Martin, Gustavo Nechar, Kathy Conti, Diane Baker, Maria Morandi, and Lane Llewellyn. The kickoff meeting was scheduled for Thursday November 4 at Diane's home.

4.b. WAMM meeting in December

Lane talked about combining the December meeting with a social event, and explained she is exploring potential venues. The election of the new slate of officers will take place at this meeting. Maria Morandi informed that we need more nominations. The list of nominations to date included:

- President – Lane Llewellyn
- First Vice President – no nominations
- Second Vice President – no nominations
- Third Vice President – Kathy Conti
- Treasurer – Diane Baker
- Secretary – Maria Morandi

Lane explained that volunteers are needed to serve for a couple of years to learn before moving up to higher positions. She served as VP for two years when Marcus Duffel was president.

4.c. Membership

Maria Morandi indicated that we have 64 dues-paying members in 2021. Gustavo Nechar asked for the number of homes in WAMM. Diane responded that there 200+. Gustavo opine that we should have more paid members with that many homes. There was a brief discussion about efforts through the years to increase membership. Gustavo, Kathy Conti, and Diane Baker volunteered to distribute flyers as part of a membership campaign. Lane suggested that Alle could design the flyer if she is told what we want. Maria will contact Alle and will run the list of current home owners in WAMM.

5. New Business

5.a. Constable Patrol

Gustavo Nechar raised the issue of reinstating the Constable Patrol. Lane explained the history of the Constable Patrol, particularly the difficulty in raising sufficient funds (\$80,000/year at the time), and that we had to partner with other neighborhoods for this reason. Winlow, Mandell and Cherryhurst were the first to have a Constable Patrol but they were not interested in us joining with them, so we established ours with Audubon Place, Westmoreland and East Montrose. Lane explained that East Montrose had recently reached to us to find out whether we would be interested in reinstating the Patrol.

After some discussion, it was agreed that Audubon Place and Westmorland were a good match for us geographically.

Mary Alice Martin will contact the President of Willow Place to explore whether they would be interested in us joining them this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm