

2016 WAMM CIVIC ASSOCIATION MINUTES - DECEMBER 13, 2016.

The meeting was called to order at 18:37pm at Bering Methodist Church.

Introduction of WAMM officers.

Lane Llewellyn, President, open the meeting by introducing herself. She informed the attendees that no other officers could attend due to out-of-town travel, prior commitments, or health issues. Lane introduced Maria Morandi who will be taking the minutes of the meeting and presenting the status of WAMM and Constable Patrol memberships.

Introduction of guest speaker.

Lane introduced the guest speaker, Al Amado, who will describe the mission and activities of Tony's Place and address questions and concerns about the impact of the facility on WAMM.

Mr. Amado first introduced Tony's Place staff also attending the meeting: Rachel Broussard, Program Coordinator and Director, and Officer Michelle Harris, Director of Security. Mr. Amado is a member of the Board of Tony's Place. He mentioned his leadership role in helping set up the Mandell/Winlow/Cherryhurst Constable Patrol. He described Tony's Place as a daytime drop-in center for homeless, 13-24 year old youth. It is located at 3611 Montrose Boulevard, just north of West Alabama, and started operations in October 2016. Its mission is to provide basic services such as showers, meals, clothing, access to computers, referrals to health providers, etc., for this homeless population during the daytime from 10am to 5pm. The center was named in honor of the recently deceased Tony Carroll, a well-regarded therapist recognized for his work with the male gay community. Mr. Amado became a member of the Board in part because of his prior work with youth in Latin America. He is the liaison between the Tony's Place and the surrounding community.

Mr. Amado invited Ms. Broussard and Officer Harris to describe what the center does in order to keep security in the surrounding neighborhood. They explained that youth attending the center are required to adhere to house rules while they are at Tony's Place. There is a distance buffer around the facility where no loitering is allowed. The center also hires off-duty police officers to maintain security in the area. Officer Harris and Mr. Amado emphasized that if residents observe a problem with one or more youths, who may be attending the facility, they should call the center and describe the individual(s) physically together with specifics about what they are doing.

Lane expressed that while she is very positive about the program and that residents of WAMM choose to live in this area do so in part because of its broad diversity. However, there are have been several incidents, including at least one event that led to a police report, and concerns about the young people who sleep overnight on Catholic Charity property (with permission from the Charity). An important concern for local residents is what happens after 5pm when the youth attending Tony's Place are discharged for the day.

Ms. Carolyn Garrard with community relationships at Covenant House, also attending the meeting as guest, indicated that some of the youth go to Covenant House to spend the night.

Ms. Broussard explained that many of these kids are critically at risk. She does not believe that the center is a magnet for youth because they are overflow from other organizations, or may have been discharged from other places. Tony's Place tries to obtain alternative housing for them. The center can accommodate up to 50 youth. The typical attendance is 40-50 kids every day. Of these, about half have mental and/or substance abuse problems. The center adheres to established protocols that they have to follow when working with 13-18 year old children. Covenant House only accepts youth older than 18 years of age.

Ms. Garrard clarified that Covenant House is licensed to accept younger youth but they lack the separate facility required to accept them. Covenant House is in the process of acquiring an additional facility for this purpose.

In response to questions about funding sources, Mr. Amado indicated that Tony's House has been funded to date through private donations, and that they are trying to partner with other organizations to develop grant application and expand their funding. Donations were used for startup funds and for renting the current location. They have a 1-year lease at 3611 Montrose with an option for a second year. They are planning to move to a residential facility in the future.

Lane again expressed her appreciation for Tony's Place efforts at helping at risk youth and their willingness to collaborate with the local residents in maintaining security in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Ms. Broussard emphasized that kids and young people attending the center cannot loiter within an established radius around the facility. Neighborhood residents should call the center if they observed an incident. Callers should be ready to provide a description of the individual(s) and what they are doing.

Mr. Amado offered to provide a brief write-up about Tony's Place for inclusion in WAMM's gazette. Ms. Broussard provided Tony's Place business cards with contact information. Phone numbers are 713-588-0263 (cell) and 713-678-0733. Tony's Place website is www.TonysPlace.org. Ms. Broussard can be contacted by e-mail at RachelBroussard@TonysPlace.org.

Once Mr. Amado, Ms. Broussard, and Officer Harris left the meeting, there was follow-up discussion about incidents related to Tony's Place. A WAMM member described an incident involving a young woman who rang her doorbell after dark asking for a blanket because hers had been stolen. Another member described theft of packages that had been delivered to her and other neighbors. This last incident was reported to the police.

Lane proceeded with the order of business for the meeting.

Constable Patrol.

Lane announced that WAMM has officially partnered with Audubon Place and is on track for a March 1, 2017, signing of the contract with Harris County, Texas. There is also interest from Westmoreland and WAMM's own Tremont Tower.

Maria presented the status of Constable Patrol membership. To date, there were 109 members, including 79 in WAMM, 26 in Audubon Place, and 2 in Roseland States, and 2 in Westmoreland. There are also two sponsors.

Lane thanked the property owners for their efforts and support to establish WAMM's own Constable Patrol. She challenged each of the attendees to help recruit two additional Constable Patrol members. If this were to happen, existing members may not need to pay an additional \$100-\$200 per year. Lane reported that Michael Salinas, fund raising chair, has been working diligently with businesses in WAMM to gain Constable Patrol sponsorships. If anybody is interested in helping, Lane will provide a handout regarding sponsorship.

2016 WAMM membership.

Maria presented the 2016 membership statistics for WAMM. Sixty-seven residents have paid 2016 WAMM dues. Compared to 2015 (45 members) this represents a 45% increase in membership year-over-year.

Impact of Constable Patrol

Lane reminded attendees that donations for Constable Patrol are maintained in a dedicated escrow account used only for Constable Patrol. She presented the Mandell/Winlow/Cherryhurst statistics on crime incidents before and after they established a Constable Patrol, as described in their newsletter. All crime incidents decreased significantly after implementation of the Constable Patrol. She solicited questions from attendees. None was forthcoming.

Announcements

Lane announced that a joint meeting with Audubon Place that is tentatively scheduled for January 10, 2017, focusing on Constable Patrol. Details will be forthcoming in the January newsletter. She also indicated that 2017 WAMM memberships would be due in January. Lane requested items for submission to the WAMM gazette. On a lighter note, she also reported on an article in the WST about the unusual amount of oak tree acorns that have been experienced this year in Houston and elsewhere.

Additional discussions ensue about recent nuisance from door-to-door magazine sellers. Questions about inclusion of Westmoreland in the Constable Patrol were postponed to the next meeting. An attendee reported that the number of young people sleeping overnight in the Charity Guild property has increased, with an estimated 30-40 currently. The WAMM member that experienced theft of packages described the incident in more detail, including the accumulation of "stored" items that had been left in the back of her property that could be accessed through an unsecured gate. Local police officers assisted with removal of the items and their placement at the curb. The items were removed overnight. The stolen items were not found, only the empty packages.

Lane emphasized that the community will be pro-active to help solve incidents and prevent future ones. Constable Patrol will be a big help in the near future.

The meeting was adjourned at 19:45pm.

