

## **WAMM MINUTES MEETING SEPTEMBER 16, 2014**

Lane Llewellyn, President, called the meeting to start at 6:40 (giving persons caught in the rain to make it). She introduced the officers and their reports if they had a report.

Kevin Begnaud gave a membership report. WAMM now has 53 members up 39% from the previous year.

Andy Weaver, treasurer, gave the financial report as follows:

Opening Balance	\$3,882.54
Total Receipts	\$1,249.00
Total Payments	\$ -395.12
Present Balance	\$4,736.42

He said the only expenses WAMM has paid this year were for new signage announcing meetings and office supplies. All expenses for our Membership Wine and Cheese party were donated.

Diane Baker stated minutes could be found on the web site. June minutes are not yet posted as they were taken by Jerry Baiamonte and he has been out of the country for the summer.

Lane introduced our speaker, Councilwoman Ellen Cohen. Ms. Cohen gave a brief overview of City Council. There are 16 members plus the mayor. There are 11 districts and 5 at large. Our district C has 215,000 persons, is 15 miles long reaching from Meyerland to Pinemont and HWY 290. Our district is very neighborhood and residential minded. There are 80+ civic organizations as opposed to 25+ in the nearest district to C, even though the 200,000 persons may be close in numbers.

Councilwoman Cohen is Chair of the Quality of Life committee, and sits on at least four other committees. Among items she touched on were that the Mayor of Houston has more power than any other Mayor in the states. The Mayor is the only person or group that can put items on the agenda for Council to vote on. Houston has passed a no smoking ban on any city owned property, i.e., parks and golf courses. She mentioned that there is a group trying to take over the Gus Wortham city golf course to turn it into a Botanical Garden for the city. The city has a 5.2 billion dollar budget and is scheduled to go into a deficit in the summer of 2015. She let us know there is not garbage fee, Houston is of the only major cities that does not have a fee for garbage collection. A \$4.00 fee has been discussed, but not brought up to Council for vote. Councilwoman Cohen touched on several other minor items the city was involved in and also the major items of Rebuild Houston. The monies are being set aside to fund the refurbishing of the infrastructure of Houston. This will take years and will not begin for several years while funds are building.

The last thing Ms. Cohen asked that WAMM appoint a person to be on her CAP committee. Cohen Ambassador Program is a group of civic association members who will meet twice a year to discuss what is going on in their perspective neighborhoods. The first meeting will be September. Lane appointed Dennis Pow as WAMM's Ambassador. Dennis could not make the first meeting so Diane Baker volunteered to be the alternate.

A couple of members of WAMM had comments. Comment was why do we have a deficit? One reason is pensions set up when city could not afford to keep up salary wise with other cities so they promised pensions that included using overtime pay. One was that no one at city hall was not getting anything done. Ms. Cohen said be patient, it takes time to fund all projects that need to be done. Ms. Cohen confirmed the tax base was growing due to the thousands of new residents in the city, but expenses are also increasing. She mentioned the cap that was put on many items that cannot be raised.

Lane introduced Chris Pappas, representing Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church to discuss the expansion plans the Church is considering. Mr. Pappas also brought the architect on the project in the event WAMM had questions for him. The plan's variances have been approved by the city. The church will now present to their board and membership to get approval to raise the funds to fund the expansion.

Lane then introduced Helena Johnson chair of the Greek Festival. Helena let everyone know that the church was trying to get an additional off site parking place to bus people in to the festival. She also gave out 2 free tickets to the festival to all in attendance at the meeting.

Lane then reminded members of our National Night out October 7, 2014. Keep posted in the newsletter for details. She also asked for food donations for the Neighborhood Night out and asked if anyone knew of a restaurant that might donate food. Lane also asked for suggestions for speakers for the 2015 meetings.

Carolyn Garrard of the Covenant House passed out a flyer for the 24th annual Candlelight Vigil and Rally for Homeless Youths and encouraged all to attend.

Lane asked if members would rather have a social (Holiday Party) in December in lieu of a business meeting. All agreed they would. Watch the newsletter for details.

A member living close to Mandel asked if anyone had received the notice that the Menil was trying to have a parking district on a couple of streets near the Menil that fall into WAMM. The board had not seen the notice so they could not comment. Lane asked the member to do the research on the parking district and she would be happy to present for those affected in our WAMM district.

Bering Church had a flyer announcing their pancake breakfast this Saturday, Sept 20, 2014, at the Church.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20