Willo Neighborhood Association

Monthly Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2021

Board members attending in person: Bob Cannon (President), Brad Brauer (Vice President), Linda Doescher (Treasurer), Aaron Montaño Searles, Sandra Lefcovich Moreno, Patrice Wappel and Charlene Gum

Board members attending via Zoom: Jeremy Schachter, Ann Bommersbach, Opal Wagner (Secretary)

Absent: James Varela, Erika Gagnon, Kush Govani

Approval of Minutes: Opal Wagner made a motion to approve the November 11, 2021, Willo Neighborhood Association meeting minutes previously provided to the Board. Ann Bommersbach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Treasurer’s Report: Linda Doescher reviewed the Treasurer’s report previously sent to the Board. We are bringing in Home Tour revenue from vendors, ticket sales and ad sales. We are ending 2021 in the red, as we do almost every year, because our main source of income is the Willo Home Tour in Feb. We currently have $137,000 in assets, which is down from the previous year due to not having a Home Tour in 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our cash on hand is $16,739.54. The Edward Jones account balance is $97,767.88. Brad Brauer made a motion to approve the Treasurer’s report. Patrice Wappel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Willo Kids Club: Valerie Gentz presented a thank-you card to the Willo NA Board from the kids on Lewis and thanked the Board for its support this past year. Events coming up: WKC will be partnering with the Luminarias bike ride. Santa will be here on Dec. 23rd at 5:30pm for an hour before the bike ride starts at 6:30 p.m. On Jan. 29th a fire safety event will be held in conjunction with Phoenix Fire Station #4, followed by the Kids Club winter event with snow activities, etc.

Luminarias: Chris Norton reported that 16 blocks are dark. He is working on filling those blocks and is seeking the Board’s help in filling them. Chris said this year’s grant request is a little more sizeable than what we had last year, but it will ultimately reduce overall costs by phasing out the LED tealights that burn 24/7 in favor of newer ones that run on a timer. Using the tealights with timers should also ensure the luminarias are just as bright on night 3 as they are on night 1. The Energizer batteries we are investing in will run multiple years, resulting in overall savings in the future.

Willo Social Committee: Nikki Armstrong reported that she and Al are hosting the Dec. 10th Willo Happy Hour Dec. 10th at their home at 544 W. Granada from 5:30-7:30 p.m. for ages 21 and older. She is looking for a volunteer to host in January. Guests should not bring food to share for now, due to the pandemic. Phoenix Spokespeople will have their Willo luminaria ride on December 23rd after a hiatus last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Willo Home Tour: Teresa Fontana reported that a Home Tour meeting was held Weds. The Home Tour Committee is well ahead on ticket sales compared to other years. Inside Willo magazine has boosted sales, as well as an Event Brite blast by Andrea Meury. Three hundred tickets have already been sold. David Roth-Gonzalez and Eric Sells have been getting ad sales and sponsorships. The brochure now has $6100 committed and counting. APS’ sponsorship amount is $1000, plus trashcans secured by Jamie Cowgill. Jamie is doing the Home Tour brochure in-house to save expenses. Sandra has provided a lot of support with Inside Willo. For December, we are focusing on asking neighbors to buy tickets. In January we will have a push for volunteers to sign up. Bob and Diana Herman almost doubled the number of vendors. We are up to 75 now. David has put together a plan for us to go to farmers’ markets to sell tickets, and we are getting free tables at those. Things are tracking well. We welcome your input. Andrea Katsenes has radio ads, etc. coming out. Brent Kleinman suggested co-marketing with Encanto-Palmcroft. Teresa said she would put him in contact with her marketing team. Bob Cannon requested we get David authorization to post directly to all Willo social media as part of a broader discussion of Willo’s communication strategy.

Inside Willo Magazine: Sandra Lefcovich Moreno reported we have a great issue coming up in Jan. The content will be mostly focused on Home Tour. Tomorrow, Dec. 10th, is the deadline for January submissions. Sandra requested the Board’s approval of the advertiser guidelines she previously provided and posted for Inside Willo that also covers multi-media – Willo’s website, Facebook, etc. A motion was made by Linda Doescher to approve the advertiser guidelines. Charlene Gum seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Social Media: Jeremy Schachter reiterated that Board members should be admins on Willo’s social media accounts. We are growing our audience. Jeremy reported that last year we had a food drive sponsored by Brokers Hub Realty via Brad Brauer that served 5000 families and we would like to do 15,000 this year. This will be promoted on Willo’s Facebook page. It is not self-promotion but helping the community at large. The food drive is very well organized. Bags will be put on each doorstep in Willo and are going to be picked up. Everyone hopefully can support this. There’s a lot of people hurting this year and it’s a good opportunity to help those in need.

Willo Photo Book. Diana Herman reported she had signed off on the final version of the book yesterday, and 200 copies are spoken for/pre-sold. The book is now at the printers. Now we’re moving onto marketing. We plan to have a booth at Home Tour. We have an ad in the Home Tour brochure as well, and we’re exploring other media possibilities. Diana will have a reveal party at her house. People that purchased the book will be invited. We’ll set the date as soon as we know for sure when the books will arrive. We ordered 300, so we have 100 left to sell.

3rd and 5th Avenues Streets and Traffic Safety Committee: Opal Wagner reported we are waiting on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) update from the City of Phoenix Streets Transportation Department and a date for the January community meeting for the 90% design presentation.

Willo Blockwatch: Brad Brauer reported Officer Harris was unable to attend. Brad reiterated that several blocks need Block Watch captains. His vision is that block captains will coordinate communication re crime, luminarias, Home Tour, etc. with residents of their block. Linda Doescher said we need to strengthen our Blockwatch program. It’s important if we want to continue receiving Block Watch grant funds. Jeremy suggested we have a revamping of Blockwatch after the Home Tour in March or April, kicking it off with a neighborhood party. Linda said we will know in June or July whether our grant application has been approved.

Willo Parks: Thanks to Erika Gagnon and Teresa Fontana for decorating Walton Park. Poinsettias are coming on Saturday. Money was requested for new decorations for Lewis Park.

Willo Zoning Committee: Tom Doescher reported the appeal of the HP Hearing Officer’s approval of a 2-story garage/outbuilding at 309 W. Monte Vista was denied by the HP commission by a close 5-4 vote. The next process is an appeal to the Phoenix City Council. Tom said the WZC met after the very close HP Commission vote and decided to appeal that decision based on the Willo Conservation Plan and the City’s HP Guidelines. The Committee has asked for a continuance of the Dec. 15th City Council Appeal to permit time for the Willo Board to vote on the appeal and perhaps seek legal advice. Bob Cannon expressed concern that we have to fight the HP Commission when they should be our partner in preserving the Willo Historic District. Bob said he recommended to the committee that we hire an attorney to consult on next steps. Tom said some of the HP Commissioners brought up “Why aren’t we following the guidelines?” This decision is precedent-setting. Tom requested that the Board entertain a motion to support the appeal of the HP Commission decision and authorize the expenditure of up to $3000 for legal consultation on this issue for the purposes of determining how best to proceed with City Council appeal. A motion was made by Aaron Montaño Searles that the Willo Board authorize appeal of the Historic Preservation Commission’s decision on 309 W. Monte Vista and the expenditure of up to $3,000.00 for legal consultation with regard to the appeal to the Phoenix City Council. Linda Doescher seconded the motion. Opal Wagner requested there be a hard cap of $3000.00 imposed for attorneys’ fees on this matter and that we obtain a scope from the attorneys specifying what services they will provide. The motion passed unanimously. Bob Cannon will contact the Rose Law Firm.

Bob Cannon clarified for the record that he is not allowed to discuss or have engagement with our Councilwoman’s office on this issue.

Tom Doescher reported that today (Dec. 9, 2021) the Zoning Adjustment Hearing Officer had approved an application to construct and install a 5-foot pool fence in the front yard at 78 W. Cypress. The home is deemed an “alley house” because it sits so far back on the property. The homeowner reported at the Zoning Adjustment Hearing that the Historic Preservation Office told him if he got a variance for the pool fence, they (HP Office) would approve it as a Certificate of No Effect (CNE) - meaning there will be no HP hearing required. Tom said the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance forbids front-yard pools and he believes they are an attractive nuisance. The Zoning Adjustment Hearing Officer’s decision did not consider the Willo Conservation Plan and is in contravention to the City’s ordinances that front-yard walls be 3 feet or less in height. The HP Ordinance also regulates front-yard walls so they do not obstruct the views of historic homes. Bob Cannon said it was a bad precedent for the City to greenlight this front-yard fence. Ann Bommersbach said the Hearing Officer did not recite any of the conditions for a variance. They should have to recite those conditions and make sure they’re met. Tom Doescher said he thinks we need legal advice on this case. Tom requested the Board authorize up to $3000 for legal consultation and possible legal action on the ZAHO decision on 78 W. Cypress. Bob Cannon agreed, stating, “The City’s process needs to be checked”. Opal Wagner made the following motion: I propose to allow the Willo President, Bob Cannon, to authorize expenditure of up to a maximum of $3000.00 at his discretion for legal advice pertaining to an appeal of the Zoning Adjustment Hearing Officer’s decision at 78 W. Cypress. Jeremy Schachter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Jeremy Schachter suggested we invite the Historic Preservation Officer to our meetings. Bob Cannon said Michelle Dodds has announced her retirement, and said, “The process is broken, and this is not what we should be spending all our time and money on.” Brad Brauer suggested following up with the Phoenix City Manager, as he is in control of these departments. Aaron Montaño Searles suggested inviting the City Manager to the March or April 2022 Board meeting.

Adjournment: Brad Brauer made a motion to adjourn. Patrice Wappel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.