

Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association

June 19, 2023

Minutes

[Hybrid Meeting at Mark Clark Hall and via Google Meet]

WTNA website address: www.wagenerterrace.org

The June meeting was called to order at 7 pm by President Petar Lemajic. Lynne and Rich Schwarz reintroduced themselves. They came to us previously for BAR support after buying 35 Dunneman, and they are now officially living in the neighborhood.

MINUTES: The previous month's minutes are posted on the WTNA website. Liz Bronneberg moved to approve the minutes from the May meeting as posted on the website. Susan Cale seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were approved.

FINANCIALS: Treasurer Gail Thomas reported that we currently have \$5,832.85 in Checking and \$22,510 in Savings, \$17,500 of which is allotted for the next Oyster Roast. Since last month, we donated \$500 to the Lowcountry Food Bank, and we paid an unexpected \$539.48 tax bill on the alcohol from this year's Oyster Roast. Thank you to VP Jarett Nicholson for handling this surprise tax issue.

CITY COUNCIL/POLICE/CITADEL: No representatives were present. President Lemajic gave his condolences on the death of Chief Reynolds.

PRESENTATION:

Dr. Blake Scott is hoping to collaborate with the neighborhood to make this a better place to live for all species. He said there is a small environmental group called the MARSH Project, which is also known as the Marsh Appreciation and Restoration Society for Happiness. He said the group is currently focused on WT, and while he has self-interest since he lives in this neighborhood and has kids, there are other locals interested in working in WT. Joel Caldwell was present from North Central. He owns a 1-acre parcel in WT but lives on Magnolia by Peachtree. He said the MARSH Project is about connecting people to the ecosystem that we live in and to the salt marsh. The focus of the MARSH Project has been Halsey Creek, which is one of the last unfilled creeks in downtown Charleston. The group has been picking up trash, thus far leading 5 or 6 clean ups, and has been mobilizing students from the College of Charleston. They have been doing storytelling events about why the salt marsh is interesting and about why it is one of the most dynamic and productive ecosystems in the world. Mr. Caldwell said there is a cool opportunity by the entrance to Lowndes Grove, at 5th Avenue and St. Margaret Street, where there is erosion from cars pulling off. They are interested in planting native plants and returning it to a place that is good for the community. They want to make it a spot for neighbors to gather and enjoy the natural marsh vista and sunsets.

Mr. Caldwell said Sharleen Johnson recently started Native Plants to the People and has greenhouses where she grows an enormous amount of plants that she sells. He said that with relatively little effort, we can return native plants to the area. There is a little prep work but then the plants take off and thrive on their own. They flower from the spring until the first frost without much help or maintenance. Dr. Scott noted that they have already donated 180 plants to private property owners in the neighborhood, and they are looking for more property owners who want to plant natives in their yards. If you volunteer your property, they will help plant.

Dr. Scott said the MARSH Project has different activities, including native planting, clean-ups, and even a book club. He introduced Lily Porter, who is the Volunteer Coordinator for the MARSH project. She welcomes suggestions, questions, and comments and can be reached at Lilyporter2001@gmail.com. She said their book club is currently reading Nature's Best Hope by Douglas Tallamy, which is about reintroducing native species to your backyard and urban rewilding simplified. If you order the book through Roots and Shoots, you get a 20% discount on native plants they sell. The first meetup is July 15 at Huriyali's. She is receptive to hearing what people want to see in the neighborhood and noted they have a lot of young, enthusiastic volunteers. Another neighbor introduced herself as Amanda Bagdonas and said she is with the Charleston Literary Festival and is interested in a partner event.

Dr. Scott said he and James Bishop met with the City and Patrick Properties Hospitality Group about the dirt area by Lowndes Grove, and they want to collaborate. They would like a WTNA representative to be involved in the discussion also. The City would have to give an encroachment permit, either to PPHG or to partners working on it together. The City is waiting on PPHG to submit the necessary paperwork. Initially PPHG thought the City had to make the first move, but now they know they have to decide what they want to do and then initiate action. VP Nicholson will try to get Amber with PPHG to come to the next WTNA meeting to talk it out. The MARSH Project may ask for a letter of support once they get farther in the process.

Treasurer Thomas asked about the area at 9th Avenue and Gordon Street and asked whether they were planning to try to do anything in that area. Dr. Scott said he spoke with Eric Olivier, who is the most adjacent neighbor, and he was going to take the lead on it. Mr. Olivier reached out to Dale Morris, who is the City's Chief Resilience Officer, but was waiting to hear back. There is no update yet.

Greg Smith asked about the little peninsula out from Grove Street. Dr. Scott said they call it "Raccoon Point," and it is public. Lyn Smith noted that there are several areas along the river that are public that homeowners have attempted to take over as their own. Dr. Scott said that it would be nice to plant more native plants in those areas, but the City wants an encroachment permit even to plant, and it involves the Public Works, Engineering, and Parks Departments.

VP Nicholson asked about the resolution to Dr. Scott's neighbors wanting to build a fence on Wagener, and Dr. Scott said they withdrew their request for the encroachment permit after seeing the neighborhood's opposition. He said they moved their beehives right by the right of way and also added a "smile, you're on camera" surveillance sign on public land, which made it appear that the area was private even though there is a 60-foot public right of way to view the marsh. He said Becca Hopkins with Neighborhood Services had the sign removed. The nearby owners do have a camera pointed towards the right of way. Dr. Scott is pursuing being able to plant some native plants on that corner but has not yet received an answer from the City.

LOCAL ISSUES

1. There is a Downtown traffic survey intended for anyone who lives, works, or visits downtown and is being used to gauge transit needs for our area. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CARTA-DCTS>
2. The Union Pier development has been paused for a year.

COMMITTEES

1. Yard of the Month – It has not been finalized yet. Ms. Bronneberg has an idea but wants to talk to Treasurer Thomas about the list of past winners.
2. Sunshine – Nothing to report.
3. Environment – Nothing to report.
4. Publicity/Membership – Nothing to report.
5. Zoning – The Connelly family presented their request last month for a nonconforming variance. We gave a letter of support. Their architect, Mary Mac Wilson, then came back and said they are now being asked to get support for a parking variance. Even though the driveway parking spot is currently too small to fit a car, they still have to get a variance for removing a parking space. Mrs. Smith said she lives next door and can confirm that no one has ever parked in their driveway, so removing the parking space will not be a meaningful change. Treasurer Thomas moved to write a letter of support for the parking variance. Nancy Wilson seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Josh Dickerson at 52 Clemson said he has an existing shed that is sinking and floods but is over 50 years old. He wants to rebuild it. Both abutting neighbors are fine with it. He said there will be no ADU or STR. The new shed will be approximately the same footprint but will be on a slab, and they are adding a second level. The second level will be used as a work-from-home office, and the shed will not have a bathroom. He said there are other 2-story sheds on the street. He said there will be a one-foot widening which you will not be able to see from the street and does not relate to the setback. The shed abuts the neighbor's shed and privacy fence, about a foot off the property line where the setback is supposed to be 3 feet. He said there is one neighboring property that is an empty lot, which was recently sold to an LLC, and he has not been able to track down the owner, but he has received support from the other neighbors. Treasurer Thomas moved to write a letter of support for the shed demolition and rebuild. Mrs. Cale seconded. All were in favor.

ONGOING BUSINESS

President Lemajic said it was time to vote on new officers. Treasurer Thomas made a motion for a slate of officers – Petar Lemajic for President, Jarett Nicholson for Vice President, Nancy Wilson for Secretary,

and DonnaMarie Patten for Treasurer. President Lemajic noted that anyone could make additional nominations, and the only requirement is that the nominees attended 7 of 11 meetings in the last year. No one else made any nominations. Since there was only one name nominated for each position, the slate presented was elected by acclamation for a 2-year term.

NEW CONCERNS

Jared Ross, who lives in Longborough, said that he would like to do work to his shed also. The roof was built out of a board that was not meant to be exposed to the humidity here, so it is rotting. They need to replace the roof, but at the same time they would like to expand it by 5 feet to better fit their bikes. They were going to have a handyman extend the cement footprint and then build out. Amanda Gurski said they need to go to the City to talk to them about permitting, and they will let him know if it needs to be approved by a Board. She said the existing shed would be grandfathered in, but a new structure extending the footprint may require an exception. She said if you ask for a permit, they will tell you what to do based on your plat. Treasurer Thomas said he should first look at the Longborough HOA guidelines since they can be restrictive.

Ms. Bronneberg moved to close the meeting, and former Treasurer Thomas seconded. There was a unanimous vote to close the meeting. Meeting closed at 7:46 pm.

The next WTNA Meeting will be July 17, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

Handy Contacts:

Wagenerterrace@wagenerterrace.org

Police Dispatch (non-emergency) 843-743-7200

Lowndes Grove MOD 843-708-4314

Code/Livability 843-805-3226

Councilman Gregorie: 843-327-7900 (Mona Lisa), personal #: 843-819-6619

Councilman Sakran (District 3) 843-819-0507

City of Charleston Citizen Services Desk 843-724-7311

BOD: Petar Lemajic, Jarrett Nicholson, DonnaMarie Patten, Jeanie Knowlton, Tyler Hueter, Susan Cale, Nancy Wilson, and Anna Turner