Wagener Terrace Neighborhood Association

October 17, 2022

Minutes

[Hybrid Meeting at 45 Moultrie St. and via Google Meet]

WTNA website address: www.wagenerterrace.org

The October meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by President Petar Lemajic. He noted that this meeting had the best attendance in 3 years. Several new attendees introduced themselves, including David Brennan from Ashley Avenue, Rick and Sharon Robinson from West Poplar Street, and Ramsey and Ainsley Hodge from Rutledge Avenue near Mt. Pleasant Street. President Lemajic welcomed all attendees.

MINUTES: The previous month's minutes are posted on the WTNA website in a zip document that includes additional relevant meeting documents. Treasurer Gail Thomas moved to approve the minutes from the September 2022 meeting as posted on the website. VP Jarett Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were approved.

FINANCIALS: Treasurer Thomas reported that there is $8,103.91 in Checking and $22,508.64 in Savings, $17,500 of which is set aside for the oyster roast. She thanked Lowndes Grove for their recent $5,000 donation.

PRESENTATION: President Lemajic asked Councilman Sakran to introduce the presentation by Clayton McCaffery from Asbury Birch and Jack Buck from Free Market Ventures. Cm Sakran represents both the Wagener Terrace and North Central neighborhoods, and he noted that Mr. McCaffery presented at the North Central meeting two Saturdays prior to this meeting and will be presenting their project at the Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday, October 19. He urged everyone to be respectful of the speakers, and he said he is present to make sure that residents have an opportunity to share their concerns. He has concerns about the project but also thinks there are positive elements that it could bring to the neighborhood. He noted that the owner of the property is also the owner of the restaurants, so the restaurants are not being "booted," as the decision to sell is their own. He also mentioned that while he recognizes that people are upset about losing special local establishments, both he and the North Central Neighborhood Association have also received a lot of noise complaints about the current occupants, particularly regarding the Container Bar.

Clayton McCaffery thanked everyone for coming and introduced his investment partner, Jack Buck. They are the contract purchasers of the land, which is the entire block from Rutledge Avenue to I-26 and between Mt. Pleasant Street and Weaver Street. It includes the current locations of both Rutledge Cab Company and Container Bar. Mr. McCaffery said they have been doing their due diligence over the

summer and have spent time looking at the price of construction, the price of land, and the ability to create a viable asset. They have had meetings with the City of Charleston Planning, led by Planning Manager Christopher Morgan, and including representatives from Stormwater, the Fire Department, etc. He noted that the City of Charleston has a very specific process that this project will need to follow, including getting approvals from the Design Review Board (DRB) and the Technical Review Committee (TRC). Those two Board processes cover everything from flooding, shadows, a traffic study, stormwater retention, setbacks, etc. He said that what they are presenting today is their best interpretation of what the City has said they want, while incorporating elements from the Charleston City Plan and considering what would be viable in that location.

Mr. McCaffery showed their proposed building design and emphasized that they plan to stair-step the building so that the Rutledge Avenue corner is low density with a retail corner that is the same square footage of the existing restaurant, and then it will progress to higher density by I-26. He said this design will act as a visual and sound buffer to the highway. What they have also done, in part due to the City's request, is step the property back from the existing lines. The current curb line today is where they will be adding in street parking and a turn lane on Mt. Pleasant Street. They have made their property smaller in an effort to give more of a street buffer. The property is currently zoned as General Business (GB), and there is a designation with GB that is MU1, which is what they are applying for. They intend to build a multi-family building of 150 total units, with 20% of the units designated as Workforce Housing, which is intended for firemen, teachers, police officers, etc. The Workforce Housing is a 30-year commitment, and it is a program administered by the City, so the City controls the rental rates, which are adjusted annually based on an equation factoring a percentage of the annual median income for the area..

Mr. McCaffery said he thought he made a mistake at the North Central meeting by showing the rendering first because it produced a lot of discussion about whether the style fit, which is not the issue currently up for discussion. They first have to go through a zoning change with the Planning Commission and City Council, and once they are approved for use and density, then they will move on to working with the DRB and TRC on what the building will look like and what kind of architectural style will be appropriate and sensitive to the neighborhood. He emphasized that the pictures they are showing are inspirational images to help show the scale of what they are talking about. He noted that this corner of Rutledge Avenue has been 3 different gas stations, a convenience store, and then a restaurant for the last 8 years. The owner has received other offers, but he chose them because he thought their plan best fit the area. Mr. McCaffery is hoping that by talking to us, listening to the Councilmen, and working with the City that we can come up with something that will benefit everyone, including providing more workforce housing units. He emphasized that they are committed to not buying out of the Workforce Housing requirement.

Mr. McCaffery noted that the project they are proposing is not huge, especially when compared to other recent developments. At 150 units, they foresee a multi-family unit having 1 or 2 visits per day. He knows from their research that between Container Bar and Rutledge Cab Company, the site currently sees between 700-1000 average visits daily. He says in a way this is a de-densification of the site

because it is a quieter use. The corner retail space will be 2100-2500 square feet, which is similar in size to the current Rutledge Cab Company building. Tyler Hueter noted that in talking about the number of daily visits, he is not incorporating the potential number of visits to the retail space. Mr. McCaffery said that he cannot speak to that yet because they have not done a traffic study, and the City does not require them to provide parking for the retail space. The retail space would have street parking only.

Within the project, there will be 135 spaces within the parking structure and 18 street parking spaces. The zoning code as is written only requires the 135 spaces within the garage. Only 1 parking space is required per regular unit, and only .5 spaces are required per workforce unit. There will be parking tag requirements for the renters. Mr. McCaffery said that one of the most difficult things over the summer was evaluating the different kinds of product on the market. He said that a lot of what has been built recently has been 2-3 bedroom units. Their market study is pointing towards a more mature renter, particularly given the convenient location and the nature of the surrounding neighborhoods. As a developer, he is trying to find a way to understand what the nuance of the neighborhood is, and at this point he considers the most viable market to be an older profile, rather than a younger group of people who are renting together. He wants to build what will be consistently occupied the most and longest. It is a moving target based on the market, but he currently believes it is likely to be 90% one-bedroom units.

James Bishop asked for clarification on the parking. He noted that if the property stayed zoned as GB, then they would be required to have 1.5 parking spaces per unit. Mr. McCaffery responded that in that situation there would be no Workforce Housing requirement, which is something the City wants. VP Nicholson asked about maintaining the current zoning, which would only allow 43 units. Mr. McCaffery said that they have to consider the economic viability. Their original plan was to build 220 units, but the City said that was too much, and the parking garage that would have been required was not economically viable, so they de-densified it. He said the limiting factor is that there is no parking garage, and it is too costly. Cm Sakran said he feels like 150 units is adequate and that when they require places to include parking, it drives up the cost.

One meeting attendee expressed concern about stormwater runoff and asked what kind of surfaces they plan to have and whether they will be permeable. Mr. McCaffery responded that, as part of the DRB and TRC processes, they will be required to keep all stormwater on site and then slowly release it into the stormwater system. He noted that the site is currently crowned in every direction and much of the stormater has root intrusion. As part of this plan, they will have to put in all new storm drains, gutters, and curbs, as well as a stormwater retention system that will be designed and reviewed through committee. No runoff will be allowed, so they will have to hold it on site in a cistern, and they will be responsible for managing it. Cm Sakran said that there is no current stormwater plan, so this project will actually improve the stormwater situation.

Another meeting attendee said she does not think this project fits in with the neighborhood, which is mostly houses and families, and that there is not enough parking. Mr. McCaffery rebutted that there is a

1:1 ratio of parking for the residential units, and it is located within .25 miles of rapid transit. He said they have a designated bicycle room which is currently designed to be at the corner of the building closest to the upcoming Lowline. Savannah Brennan, Director of Programming at Charleston Moves said that while this location is within walking distance of rapid transit and the Lowline, it is also within walking distance of very dangerous intersections. She asked that the developers meet with Charleston Moves and related nonprofits to include them in the discussion about how to ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety as it relates to this project. Cm Sakran said that the TRC is what handles most of the parking and traffic studies, so they have not gotten as far as figuring out walkability. Cm Sakran mentioned that US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttegieg has pledged support for Charleston transit issues, which will hopefully lead to improvements going forward.

Another meeting attendee expressed concern about how they would be handling parking for their residents. Mr. Buck said that tenants would likely have an assigned parking spot for an additional rent charge. This brought up concern about residents instead parking in the neighborhood to avoid having to pay the parking fee. Mr. McCaffery said a parking garage needs to be cleaned and cared for, and the balance is figuring out whether to incorporate that cost into rent or add it as an additional fee. In reference to concerns about street parking within the neighborhood, he said that it is also a balancing act between bringing back a commercial space that people want versus addressing the concern over parking.

Mr. McCaffery said if the zoning change is approved, It would likely be a year before they start site work, and then it will be 18 months to 2 years of construction. President Lemajic thanked Mr. McCaffery and Mr. Buck for attending and said he would like them to come back and update us in the future.

CITY COUNCIL: Cm Sakran said he met with Lowndes Grove management, including Amber Cote and Stephen, the building manager, about the speeding and vehicle volume issues discussed at a previous WTNA meeting. Cm Sakran thinks they are doing the best they can under the circumstances and that they are doing everything they can to mitigate late-night issues. They are also working with vendors and making sure people on staff are obeying rules about arrival/departure. Mr. Bishop asked that they look into adding another speed bump, and Cm Sakran reminded us that adding a speed bump will require legwork and a 6-8 month turnaround time.

Cm Sakran explained that the City of Charleston redistricts every 10 years. There has been a lot of population growth in West Ashley and Johns Island, and while the peninsula has also increased in population, it has not grown at the same rate. At last week's City Council meeting, they discussed various alternatives for redistricting, and he did not think that most of the options made sense. Therefore, he will finish his term in the next year, but then he will give up his seat as part of the redistricting. He thinks this decision is smart because it makes the districts more compact. Councilman Gregorie will then cover basically just the peninsula. Cm Sakran said this was a tough decision, but he thinks it will be good for the city.

Liz Bronneberg put in a plug for new attendees to consider joining WTNA as members. It is a $10/person annual fee, payable by Zelle, cash, or check.

Mr. Bishop moved to end the meeting, and VP Nicholson seconded. There was a unanimous vote to close the meeting. Meeting closed at 8:01 pm.

The next WTNA Meeting will be November 21, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Handy Contacts:

Wagenerterrace@wagenerterrace.org

Police Dispatch (non-emergency) 843-743-7200 www.crimeweb.net

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, Gail Thomas, Jeanie Knowlton, Tyler Hueter, Susan Cale, Nancy Wilson, and Anna Turner

Completed: October 29, 2022