

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CITY BEAUTIFUL CORPORATION

MEETING MINUTES

November 9, 2022

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Brennan at 6:00 p.m.

Board Members present:	Michael Dylan Brennan	Michele Weiss
	Sheri Sax	Susan Drucker
	Geoff Englebrecht	Justin Gould
	Win Weizer	

Board Members absent:

Others Present: Deanna Bremer Fisher

II. Approval of Minutes

May 11, 2022

Mr. Brennan asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Weiss stated that she had a revision to the minutes on page 2, item 4, in bold: "...a motion to authorize the CIC to enter into a contract with the Community Research Institute at Baldwin Wallace University and for Mr. Gould to be given authorization to sign a contract on behalf of the CIC." Mr. Brennan stated that he would want to go back and listen to the recording before accepting the revision. Ms. Weiss stated that she had done so and that was what it says. Mr. Brennan moved to table the draft of the minutes of May 11, 2022; Mr. Englebrecht seconded it. A voice vote was taken and the ayes carried the vote.

III. Appointment of Secretary

Mr. Brennan stated that since the last meeting Ben Schaeffer had left the city and resigned all of his positions, including secretary. He made a motion to appoint Deanna Bremer Fisher as the new secretary for the organization. Ms. Drucker seconded. Ms. Fisher accepted the nomination. A voice vote was taken and the ayes have it.

IV. Financial Report (Dennis Kennedy)

Mr. Brennan reported that due to illness Mr. Kennedy is not able to be at the meeting. He stated that Mr. Kennedy had e-mailed a financial report to CIC members the previous day, but because he is not in attendance to present it, he suggested simply acknowledging that it had been sent and moving to the next agenda item.

V. New Legal Counsel

Mr. McConville is not present. This is an item that Ms. Weiss asked for. Ms. Weiss stated that she had spoken to him and that he said he would provide CIC members with the names of three potential attorneys and their resumes so that CIC members can then interview them and determine who they would like to hire as counsel. Mr. Brennan said that he had spoken with him and did not get the impression that he was going to do that. Ms. Weiss stated that he was going to reach out to them starting this week. Ms. Sax noted that because there is no legal counsel present at the meeting, she would motion to table any items requiring legal counsel.

VI. Knez Project Update (Susan Drucker)

In her update, Ms. Drucker stated that the excavator for the project is behind schedule. The City is sixth on the list for excavator. She has spoken to Knez to remind them that we are to notify residents and business owners regarding when construction will begin and its expected timing and duration.

VII. Receivership Report (Geoff Englebrecht)

Mr. Englebrecht reported on the status of receivership properties, referring to a color-coded printed report: Yellow are priority properties, Green have been found to be rentals, Blue should be removed from the list due either to completion of work that needed to be done or work that is in progress. There are about five properties coded Blue that will be removed. Another reason for removal would be transfer. He stated that the City has met with Mark Dottore, who is a receiver who has dealt with several receivership properties, and he said if the City works to file a case against rental properties that the City can move forward with receivership. Typically, with receivership properties, the house must be vacant. That is the case for the majority. Some of the rental properties are occupied without having a recent rental registration so they will be going to court. So there are quite a few properties on this list that will be going to court. We've already reached out to the Police Department to let them know that we need to identify the owners of the property before filing. Mr. McConville is ready to proceed upon receiving the file. The City will pursue priority properties first.

Ms. Weiss asked several questions regarding receivership: How does an occupied rental property get into receivership? Mr. Englebrecht answered that it would need a rental inspection—interior and exterior inspection—along with a motion. When the case is filed, often the court will see if there is a motion that has been made publicly and they will likely go with the city's filing. Ms. Weiss asked how the Green properties came to the city's attention? Mr. Englebrecht stated that they came through calls, drive-bys, mail boxes that are full, exterior inspections, and overall blight. Ms. Weiss asked if he had contacted the owners. Mr. Englebrecht stated that they have received notices from the city about the inspections that were done. Hypothetically, if they fix it, it can come off the list. At the end of the day, we are looking for compliance.

Ms. Weiss stated that, for the receivership to take place, it is possible that the Council can allocate more funds into the CIC to purchase some of them. Mr. Brennan stated that we are not handling receiverships through the CIC; we are

handling them through the city's housing department. Ms. Weiss stated that she thought it would be a good fit. Mr. Brennan said it would not really be necessary. Ms. Weiss said that she would like to discuss further as this would be a perfect example of what would fit into the CIC as opposed to the city.

Ms. Drucker asked questions about color-coding on the report. Mr. Englebrecht stated that the lighter Green doesn't mean anything; White means, "we need more information" and the city will send out an inspector to gather that information.

Ms. Weizer asked if these are the only vacant property issues, and Mr. Englebrecht answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Gould stated to the Vice Mayor that this would be an appropriate conversation to have in Council—perhaps with Ms. Blankfeld's committee—and that he would like to have that discussion.

VIII. Outstanding Public Records Request

Mr. Brennan noted for the record that in August he had made a public records request regarding certain documents that involved in the survey—he had asked for a copy of the signed contract—and that the request remains outstanding and has not yet been filled.

Ms. Weizer asked that, since we are in between lawyers, does Mr. McConnville know that the CIC is subject to public records requests? Mr. Brennan answered in the affirmative.

IX. Bylaws Discussion

Ms. Weiss, who had asked this item to be placed on the agenda, moved to table it as there was no law director present. Mr. Gould seconded the motion. The ayes have it.

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business

Ms. Weiss said that Mr. Rach mentioned the empty lot [northwest corner of Silsby and Fenwick] right next to Jodi Sourini's house, across from the park that is still empty and stated that the reason that Council never gave it to a developer was because it is really a gateway to the city and should be a really special house. She asked how the board felt about getting design bids for a house? Ms. Drucker stated that the intent was to get the lot developed and that generally developers wouldn't want to share their designs for free. Ms. Weiss inquired about the possibility about going out for bid. Ms. Drucker reminded her that the CIC was created so that it was not necessary to go out for bid, and added that she wouldn't cold call people about the site. It is usually the other way around. There had been interest in the lot prior to Covid; however, it was pulled it off the list

during Covid and no one has reached out to her. Ms. Weiss suggested that a good first step would be to move the property into the CIC. Ms. Drucker reminded her that the practice has been that the city holds the lot until there is a developer in hand. She stated that it is about getting the word out there that the City might be interested in developing this land. Ms. Weiss queried how to get the word out? Mr. Gould stated that the reason the City held onto it was because it was a special piece of property and wanted a better idea. Knez did present some drawings, but they were not well-received. Ms. Drucker stated that she doesn't want to be accused of steering business to someone in particular. Mr. Gould stated that that is one of the reasons why we have a CIC is so that we can have private conversations with people before the deal is done. Ms. Drucker said she would dig through her notes to see who had called her about the property.

Ms. Weiss stated that she was aware that someone was building a house on Lafayette and asked Ms. Drucker to report back about that property at the next meeting.

Mr. Brennan stated for the record that he does not support taking on any new real estate projects before resolving the structure of the organization and bylaws review. Ms. Sax asked that if it would be possible to establish parameters—like builders who have built houses in the city in the last five years—and then you go through that list and approach them. Would it be appropriate to post a sign on the property? Ms. Drucker said it was a possibility.

Mr. Gould asked about the status of the real estate market to which Ms. Drucker replied that people want to move to University Heights and Mr. Englebrecht said that it has slightly declined.

Ms. Sax commented that it was her belief that reviewing the bylaws should not preclude the CIC from doing business; the CIC should continue to move the city forward so as not to miss any opportunities.

Ms. Weizer stated that she is frustrated with how the CIC has been treated. It was a great idea when Council established it. It appeared to be embraced by the administration. There is a lot more that this CIC could be doing and maybe it is about time to start looking at those things. There is no reason why Council couldn't allocate some funds to look into hiring a part-time grant writer to look into potential opportunities to assist residents with improving their homes. She stated that she knew that there were a number of city programs but was not sure how effective they are because there is no outcome data. She continued to say that there are CICs throughout the county that are active, that are doing things that CICs are allowed to do, that benefit the community and help to move it forward. She wondered if the CIC could get a grant to hire somebody to act as the director of the CIC, instead of letting us go 5 months between meetings or 4 months between meetings, and acting like the CIC is a private play toy. This is a nonprofit, a 501(c)3, and it needs to get off its duff. It has very definite things it could do to help the city of University Heights. As the resident representative, she said thought it was appropriate that Council needs to start looking into those things because CIC is council-driven, not just administration-driven, and in terms

of getting a separate legal counsel those parameters will be laid out and hopefully lawyers will then acknowledge that other lawyers will know what they are talking about and we can begin to move forward; otherwise, you've done a lot of work with very little return.

Mr. Gould stated that it would be appropriate to address Council with that concern. The overall structure is set by ordinance so Council can restructure and change the leadership and executive structure. There could be an executive director. He stated that the CIC might be able to start doing some of those things, once there is independent legal counsel, which Council can fund.

XII. Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Drucker and seconded by Mr. Brennan. A voice vote was taken and the ayes carried the vote. Mr. Brennan declared the meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.