



WA Business Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 9, 2016
Wesley Andrews, 111 E 26th St
4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Attendees:	Andy Cohen	The Bad Waitress, <i>Chair of Business Association</i>
	Jared Thompson	Wesley Andrews Coffee
	Emma Thompson	Wesley Andrews Coffee
	Paul Jablonsky	Nicollet Car Wash
	Araceli Perez	Marissa's
	Sue Yotharak	Krungthep Thai
	Mark Severtsgaard	Mint Properties
	Emily Turner	All Square
	Martha Nemesi	LIS
	Geri Burns	AAUW/Gale Mansion
	Lauren & Joel Gryniewski	Greater Goods
	Peter Kempainen	Krusthop / Khunnai
	Lori Walz	MEFE High School and Middle School
	Francis Freeman	MEFE High School and Middle School
	Randy Schmidt	MN Adult and Teen Challenge
WA Staff:	Ricardo McCurley, Scott Melamed, Joey Whitesman	

Introductions/Call to Order - Andy Cohen

Andy asks for people to introduce themselves. Joey W. speaks on Whittier Wheels, asks for business participation. Agenda and previous meeting minutes are approved.

Spotlight on New Business - Wesley Andrews - Jared Thompson

Jared speaks about new business. Opening 11/18, a Friday. Soft open next week. Congratulations are given. He is asked about food service (yes, minimal). Jared explains "conversation complements" - it's the heart and vision behind it, bringing people together. Small space, large meeting table in the back, people will be close to each other.

20th Anniversary of Eat Street Celebration - Ricardo McCurley

Ricardo gives some background: the Eat Street name was coined in a news article twenty years ago, and Whittier took it on. Two major things are planned so far: oral history project, which has been approved. Discussion with TPT about videotaped interviews. First bits of interview and data in the early Spring, it would be finished by late summer.

The second thing underway: a taskforce to plan an event. The task force met a few weeks ago and discussed planning for an event in late May, early June. Start at 24th Street, go to 26th Street. We are looking at how to run it -- Open Streets style, with vendors on the streets, perhaps. May be outside vendors, and stages for music in parking lots. Tap into the wide variety of cuisines on Eat Street, do a variety of music as well.

Starting to interview event coordinators. Keep an eye out for next meeting, it will be at the beginning of the year. December 2, there will be a holiday meeting - a mixer for the Business Association. 12/2 will be volunteer appreciation, with the BA.

Old and New Business

Peter Kempainen of Krungthep Thai. Here with business partner. Wife is retiring this month, going to close down on 11/20. Closed for two weeks, re-opening as different corporation, Khunnai. Pete, wife's retiring, I've been there for five years, decided to stay, sign a five year lease, keep improving it. Re-applying for a beer and liquor license. We will do the same thing but keep on improving. 12/15 is the estimate for approval of the liquor license.

Looking to expand place of beer/liquor in the business. Pete, we're looking to do a facade improvement. Ricardo explains WA facade improvement grants.

Andy puts forward motion to support the new license. Passes. A strong voicing of approval.

Hiring Local speakers

Martha Nemesi - Learning in Style

Introduces herself, gives a background on LIS. Paints a picture of the skills the students develop.

She speaks about issues of employment -- that the students have skills to transfer, but lack confidence. They have cleaned, done childcare, cooked, know finances, they can organize. They are willing to do new things. Many could share a job.

Martha presents a form that she created for the students to fill out and give to a potential employer when they are looking for work. "Something like a calling card." Someone suggests that the form includes a spot for listing available hours, list language fluency.

Of 200 students, how many get close to fluency? Martha answers, people are at different levels. Someone asks about computer skills? Yes.

Randy Schmidt - MN Adult and Teen Challenge

Explains his job, gives background on the organization. He characterizes the program the people in recovery go through to be prepared for getting back to life.

Randy says he is here to make a case for these people, the ones in the recovery program, and that people consider hiring them, giving them a chance. Andy asks, how would we contact you/them? Randy, there are generally leadership classes in the morning, and they look for jobs in the afternoon. "Email me," he says.

Ricardo asks, are there any risks that come with hiring someone with addiction issues? Randy, there is always a risk of relapse. But once they are clean past a certain point, and when they do what they do in this program, the rate of success is much higher. The teens go through a year long program before release. They are trained in life skills and emotional skills. Emma says, they also have a support system in the org. once they are out - they are not just alone.

Andy, are people fairly open about their history? "You can't ask if someone has been convicted." Randy says, we teach them to own up to it, acknowledge, and how to change.

Emily Turner - All Square

Emily introduces herself and explains her restaurant concept.

Ricardo asks, does it matter if someone has served time? Emily, that is a fair question, since we ask about credit, we might as well ask. "It's the game-over policy that is the problem." Don't give people a chance to explain themselves, what happened.

Emily, they say the first 72 hours out of prison are the hardest. "We should let people start over." Paul J., do you have a team? Yes. Mark at Mint Properties discusses the place of this question within his world. "There needs to be more nuance in who we hire and who we allow in homes," he says. Says it needs to be an industry-wide effort, though.

Ricardo, Whittier is diverse, people with full spectrum of backgrounds. "What does it look like when businesses hire locally?"

Ricardo, how can we help make these connections between these orgs and our businesses beyond facilitating? Is there something more? Someone suggests putting something on our website.

Meeting adjourns at 5:36 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Scott Melamed.