

**Minutes of the
Walnut Grove Homes Association, Inc.
Annual Meeting
January 26, 2022 7:00 pm
(via Zoom)**

Due to the continuing pandemic, the annual meeting of Walnut Grove Homes Association, Inc., was conducted by Zoom for the second year in a row. Doug Hyant was a host and the moderator of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by President Liz Fenster. Mr. Hyant explained the procedures to be followed in the meeting, including the on-line poll voting method for motions introduced in the meeting.

Attendees:

Board Attendees: Liz Fenster, Doug Hyant, Molly Hyant, Kim Grimmer, Charlie Morgan, Jeff Vanderpool, Danielle Bashirullah, and Paige Hawkins. Eileen Goode and Hayden McCann were traveling and provided proxies to the Board.

Homeowner Attendees: There were 56 WGHA homeowners/participants present for the Zoom meeting, with one attending by phone.

22 proxies were presented and recognized for voting purposes.

- 17 proxies were given to the WGHA Board
- 3 proxies were given to Kim Grimmer
- 1 proxy was given to Liz Fenster
- 1 proxy was given to Danielle Bashirullah.

A quorum was declared under the Association's 2020 By-laws, with 78 homeowners present in person or by proxy.

The Board members introduced themselves.

Agenda for Meeting:

Ms. Fenster screen shared the PowerPoint presentation and agenda.

Approval of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes

Ms. Fenster screen shared the January 2021 Annual Meeting minutes for approval. Davie Phillips moved to approve the minutes, and Jennifer Braico seconded his motion. The motion passed on a vote of 71 to 1, including proxies. See, Appendix A, below, for totals of votes in person and by proxy on all motions made in this meeting.

Presentation by District 9 Alder Nikki Conklin

Ms. Fenster introduced our new City Council District 9 Alder, Nikki Conklin, who made a brief presentation on her efforts to get acclimated to her new role. Ms. Conklin is working to communicate with her constituents through her blog on the City of Madison website: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/council/district9/blog>. (Check the archive section of her blog for posts earlier than the current week.) Ms. Conklin encouraged our homeowners to subscribe to her email updates, which can be done on her blog page. She has lived in the district for 11 years and spends considerable time at the Lussier Center. She is eager to help connect any constituent with the right individuals at the City to address a concern or solve a problem. She spoke briefly about the Westside Conversation meetings that are starting up again next month. These meetings typically involve Captain Tim Patton of the Madison Police Department's West District. Access to these meetings is available by link on her blog. She is quite involved in the new CARES team. A resident expressed concern about recent spates of gun violence. Ms. Conklin said that Police Chief Barnes' blog is a good source for the most recent information and data on gun violence and other crimes: [Blog - Chief's Office - Madison Police Department - City of Madison, Wisconsin](#).

District 9 Alder Nikki Conklin's contact information:

Website: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/council/district9/>

Phone: 608-616-5059

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2021 Recap presented by Ms. Fenster

- In 2021, based on the new Association Covenants passing in 2020, we were able to establish a Legacy Fund for the long-term maintenance of our Greenways and paths.
- We have signage repair and beautification underway with our two large neighborhood signs and the Greenway D Restoration sign. Ms. Fenster thanked Ron Wynne, a neighborhood member, for repairs to the cracked neighborhood sign at Walnut Grove Park and the 2005 Greenway D Restoration sign. Natasha Soglin has graciously agreed to repaint the neighborhood signs along with Paige Hawkins and Charlie Morgan. Ms. Fenster shared a picture of Ms. Soglin's new brighter paint scheme for the two neighborhood signs.



- A number of neighbors have raised concerns over pedestrian safety in the neighborhood, notably at the intersection of Westfield and Farmington and along Walnut Grove Park. A City traffic study was completed to see if the Farmington and Westfield intersection would qualify for four way stop signs. We did not qualify for this remedy according to the standards. We are still in discussions with City Traffic Engineering to see what other mitigation efforts might be available to us. We've asked the Traffic Engineering department to consider additional crosswalk signs, high visibility painting in the crosswalks and perhaps a traffic island at Farmington similar to the one at Colony and Westfield. Derek Pavelec and Megan Johnson have been taking the lead on this communication with the city. Ms. Conklin then asked to speak to this issue and said that Yang Tao, a City Traffic Engineer had shared with Ms. Conklin a letter to the mayor written by a Crestwood student from the neighborhood and Yang's response, about traffic safety along Westfield. The response said that the City was proposing a safety improvement project for that stretch of Westfield including lowering the speed limit to 25 from 30 MPH, installing speed humps to slow down traffic, and adding a concrete island at Farmington and Westfield. Apart from enhanced painting in the crosswalks, these were three of the four requests the neighborhood had made. This project is still pending approval by the Transportation Commission.

Plans for 2022

- We want to stress maintenance of trees and Greenways in the coming year.
- We are going to be creating a Pathway Replacement and Repair subcommittee to investigate and report on potential options for replacement and repair of the Greenway asphalt paths.
- We would like to increase neighborhood participation in committees and subcommittees of the Association; particularly on the Greenways committee, the ACC, the social committee and now on the new Pathways Replacement and Repair Committee.
- We want to publish and distribute a 2022 printed directory, using advertisement revenue to defray the entire costs. This will be the first printed directory since 2019.
- Remaining fiscally responsible, including increasing the Legacy Fund to provide for the upkeep of the greenways and pathways.

Review of the April 2021 Neighborhood Survey

You can find highlights of the survey on the Association website in the 2022 Annual Meeting Presentation found here: <https://walnutgrovemadison.org/archive-of-board-meeting-minutes>

- The survey's purpose was to get input from the neighbors on what the WGHA Board should be prioritizing going forward.
- There were 172 total responses out of 314 households. (Emails soliciting responses to the survey went out to all registered email addresses in the neighborhood and as a result there were a very few multiple responses from individual residences.)
- Survey Highlights:
 - Kind and friendly neighbors was the principal aspect of the neighborhood valued by the respondents.
 - Greenways, paths and open spaces came in a very close second.
 - Demographics of the neighborhood

- Respondents were asked for a scaled 1-5 ranking of aspects of the neighborhood and the Association activities.
 - Greenways and paths was most important.
 - The neighborhood directory, circles, ACC guidelines and social activities followed in descending order of importance to members.
- Vast majority of respondents favor email for Association communications. Only fifteen members still require paper communications from the Association which requires added costs.
- Out of eight proposed types of social activities, the social activities that were favored, in descending order, are adult socials, “family- focused” activities, block parties and neighborhood garage sales. There was solid interest in garden club and book club activities.

Committee Chair Reports

- **Architectural Control Committee (ACC) Report** - Jeff Vanderpool, outgoing ACC chair, reviewed the ACC effort last year to update the ACC guidelines, Application Form and the Appeal process. He stressed the importance of the new appendices attached to the ACC Guidelines as a way for a homeowner to focus in more laser-like on the standards and information required for specific types of building projects. The ACC Guidelines and Appendices are on the WGHA website under the [“WGHA Rules” tab](#). Mr. Vanderpool briefly reviewed the applications filed and inquiries made with the ACC in 2021, and stressed the utility of making informal contact with the ACC chair about a contemplated building project before starting the application process to determine if an application is even required. A question was asked about requirements for solar panels on condominium units. Approval from the condominium board is required as a prerequisite to get started on an ACC application. Ms. Fenster thanked Mr. Vanderpool for his exceptional service as ACC chair, particularly regarding revamping the ACC Guidelines, developing the new on-line application for ACC review, and instituting the Appeals process for homeowners whose applications are denied or approved with conditions.
- **Social Committee Report** – Charlie Morgan reported on the 2021 events, including the Fourth of July event at the Park, the Sunday Fun Day collaboration at Haen Park sponsored by the Madison Community Policing Foundation, Garlic Mustard Pulling at the Park, and acquisition of sandwich board signage to get information out on social and Association events. In 2022 events will depend on the status of the pandemic. His hope is to add the Greenway Crawl to the 2022 social events, use volunteer work days to increase social engagement and solicit and add ideas for socializing, such as organizing evening volleyball at Haen Park. He is always looking for volunteers to help out with events.
- **Greenway Committee Report** – Ms. Fenster reported on the Greenways. The size of the greenways and paths comprise 6.7 acres of common area owned by the neighborhood. A map of the lighted paths and greenways is in the directory. Greenways makes up some eighty percent of the operating budget of the Association each year. They are the key reason for the existence of the Association. In addition to mowing, fertilizing and invasives control of the grass, we do tree maintenance. In 2021, because of the dues increase, the WGHA was in a position to take over maintenance of the trees in the circles throughout the neighborhood. There is a plan in place in 2022 to reorganize the composition and leadership of the Greenways committee by dividing it into Co-chairs for (a) Pathway Repair and Replacement (doing research and soliciting bids initially), (b) Contracting of tree and grass maintenance, and (c) organizing volunteer workdays. There will also be a subcommittee for following up on sign improvements and

gardening around the signage for the neighborhood. See, again, “2021 Recap” above, on sign improvements. WGHA will continue handling advance email notification to neighbors about herbicide applications. Homeowners wanting to be notified about pesticide applications on neighboring property can register for advanced notice on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture’s registry [here](#). The Association budgets for three \$500 circle grants each year to be used for circle beautification. In addition, there is reimbursement for up to \$50.00 per circle per year for smaller improvement projects on the circles. These are to be submitted through the block captain for the circle. Lights out on the greenways can be reported to the Greenway chair, at greenways@walnutgrovemadison.org, and Pat Delaney, a neighbor, graciously volunteers his time to replace bulbs and fix sensors. Please just report the lamp number and approximate location.

A homeowner asked about what Emerald Ash Bore mitigation was going on in the neighborhood. Ms. Fenster responded that the Association has a plan in place for rotational emerald ash bore treatment of trees we are attempting to preserve. This should be handled going forward by our new arborist Eco.

- **Block Captains** – Danielle Bashirullah reported on the activities and services by the block captains. New neighbor welcome packages went out to 18 new homeowners in 2021. New communication is frequently handled by the block captains, e.g. handing out the directory and paper copies of communications for folks not using email communications, getting word out to circles about tree maintenance, organizing block parties and circle mowing schedules. The list of block captains is [here](#).

Treasurer’s Report on 2021 Finances and the proposed 2022 Budget

Charlie Morgan reported on the 2021 revenue and expenditure and presented the proposed 2022 Budget. See Appendix B, annexed hereto, for the spreadsheet used for his report. Expenses for 2021 were about \$14,500 less than we had budgeted, primarily due to underspending in circles and greenway maintenance and improvements, spending on social events, and legal and other administrative expenses. In addition, some of the greenway maintenance completed in 2021 was actually paid for in 2020, with the 2021 excess budgeted amount rolled over in 2022. In the Board’s 2022 budget recommendation there are substantial increase for woodland management and greenway and circle improvements compared to prior years’ budgets and actual expenditures for 2021. In 2022, homeowners should notice a significant increase in the maintenance being done on greenways and tree management, as this is a priority for the Board. The proposed budget does not seek any increase in assessments over 2021. The 2022 budget will commit an additional \$15,000 to the Greenways Legacy Fund, bringing the fund to \$30,000 at the end of 2022. The budget is projected to end with a modest balance of some \$4300 after the 2022 Legacy Fund investment. The 2022 assessment notices will be sent out within the next few weeks after this meeting. We would hope assessment payments will be received within six weeks of the assessments being sent out. If you don’t see an email with the assessment notice in the next few weeks, please check your spam folder.

A homeowner asked if there was a goal for the annual cushion in the year- end balance for the operating (non-Legacy fund) portion of the budget. The homeowner wondered if there would be a cushion reached at some point in time that might lead to an actual decrease in the annual assessments for homeowners. Mr. Morgan said he felt the budget was fairly conservative, not

intended to continue building up a large year-end cushion over time, but was intended to address the budget being impacted by costs like tree removal after an unforeseen storm event. The homeowner then asked if we were looking to eventually build up a 50% or 100% cushion for unforeseen expenses? The response was that if there was some completely unforeseen costs for tree removal after a major storm, or emergency pathway repair, it was likely the Legacy Fund would be accessed. If some unforeseen operating expenses outside of the greenways and tree maintenance arose (e.g., unexpected legal fees) a special meeting of homeowners would be held to get agreement of the homeowners to access the Legacy Fund to deal with it. With this in mind the Board was satisfied leaving the Year-End cushion at a level of about ten percent of the operating budget.

Another homeowner asked about the \$1700 in legal fees. Kim Grimmer reported that these were charged by a Madison law firm hired to assist us in enforcing a covenant against homeowners thought to have violated the covenant. The matter was eventually resolved informally and amicably, without commencement of any legal action. The fees charged were, in Mr. Grimmer's opinion, very reasonable for the level of services provided.

Another homeowner followed up on the issue of a cushion on the operating portion of the annual budgets. He suggested, based on budgeting experience in the utilities field, that it made sense to let the operating cushion build up over a couple of years to as much as 25 to 50% of the actual budgeted amount for annual operating expenses.

Adoption of the 2022 Budget and the assessments of homeowners proposed in the budget

There being no further discussion of the 2022 budget, Laurie Howard moved adoption of the 2022 Budget and the assessments called for under it (being the same assessments as 2021). Her motion was seconded by Chris Delamarter. The motion passed by a vote of 71 to 1, including proxies.

Election of New and Retained Board Members

Ms. Fenster reviewed that under the By-laws we have five Board members elected in even-number years for two-year terms and four elected in odd-numbered years for two-year terms. Board members whose terms are not expiring at the end of 2021 are Liz Fenster, Paige Hawkins, Hayden McCann and Danielle Bashirullah. Four of the five board members whose terms would expire at the end of this meeting and are running for re-election are Charlie Morgan, Molly/Doug Hyant (as one vote), Eileen Goode and Kim Grimmer. Jeff Vanderpool has chosen not to run for reelection and, again, we thank him for his dedication to the board and his exceptional service to the ACC as chair. Nick Brown, 7306 Whitacre Rd., has agreed to be nominated to serve on the board. Mr. Brown introduced himself. Mr. Brown is married to Elaine Brown and they have two children, a seven year-old daughter, who goes to Crestwood, and a five year-old son. They will have lived in the neighborhood for three years in June. His family moved to Madison just before moving into Walnut Grove. He works in corporate finance at Thermo-Fisher.

Ms. Fenster opened up the floor to nominations from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor.

Consistent with past practice, Ms. Fenster then invited a motion from the floor to elect the five even-year board members, including Mr. Brown, as a slate rather than voting one by one. Pat

Delaney moved to elect the incoming board members as a slate. Jon Jenson and Tony and Ashley Sheridan seconded the motion. The motion was passed on a vote of 68 to 1, including proxies.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm

The next regular board meeting will be on Monday, February 7, 2022, 6:30 pm (via Zoom) to organize and elect officers for the 2022 WGHA Board. Mr. Grimmer will send out the Zoom link by February 1st.

**Minutes respectfully submitted
by Kim Grimmer, Secretary**

Appendix A to the January 26, 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

All Board members present voted in favor of all three motions presented during the meeting, hence the seventeen (17) Board proxies were voted in favor of all motions in this tally. There were three proxies given to Kim Grimmer, one proxy given to Liz Fenster and one proxy given to Danielle Bashirullah and all these proxies were voted in favor of all motions in this tally.

Vote #1 - Shall the minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting be adopted? Adopted.

With all votes (including Zoom host and proxy votes) - 71 to 1

Without proxies and Zoom hosts- 46 to 1

Vote #2 - Shall the 2022 Budget and assessments proposed by the Board be adopted? Passed.

With all votes (including Zoom host and proxy votes) - 71 to 1

Without proxy and Zoom hosts- 46 to 1

Vote #3 - Shall the slate of incoming officer proposed by the Board be elected? Elected.

With all votes (including Zoom host and proxy votes) - 68 to 1

Without proxy and Zoom hosts- 43 to 1

Appendix B

WGHA 2022 Budget for Annual Meeting

	2021			2022	
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	To Approve	Variance to 2021
OPENING BALANCES					
Checking Account		7,766		3,317	-4,450
Money Market Account		10,325		30,999	20,674
Savings Account		5		5	0
Total -- Summit Credit Union		18,097		34,321	16,225
Prior Year Spending, Paid in Current Year		-7,429		-2,389	5,040
Greenways Legacy Fund Commitments to Date				-15,000	-15,000
Total Carryover Amounts for Current Year Expenses	11,712	10,668		16,932	36,264
REVENUE					
Dues Payments	45,300	45,242	-58	45,300	58
Interest on Bank Balances		14	14	0	-14
Revenue from Directory Advertisers	1,300	0	-1,300	1,300	1,300
Total Revenues	46,600	45,256	-1,344	46,600	1,358
Household Dues Assessment (House/Condo)		\$150/\$75		\$150/\$75	
EXPENDITURES					
	2021			2022	
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	To Approve	Variance to 2021
Water and Sewer	5,520	5,167	-353	5,500	333
Electricity (Madison Gas and Electric)	2,300	1,983	-317	2,300	317
Mowing	6,000	6,885	885	7,000	115
Weed Control and Fertilizer	1,200	1,170	-30	1,200	30
Woodland Management, Invasive Control, Replanting	8,500	1,170	-7,330	12,700	11,530
Pathway Maintenance	5,000	0	-5,000	5,000	5,000
Lamp Post Maintenance	600	0	-600	600	600
Circle Grants (\$500) and Circle Reimbursements (\$50)	1,500	690	-810	2,150	1,460
Greenways and Circles, Misc.*	150	382	232	600	218
Greenways and Circles Expenses Subtotal	30,770	17,446	-13,324	37,050	19,604
Bank Charges	50	25	-25	50	25
Taxes and Fees	60	10	-50	50	40
Insurance (Liability/Board)	1,229	1,260	31	1,300	40
Dues Collections Mailings (Printing and Postage)	350	66	-284	100	34
Newsletters and Notices	300	0	-300	200	200
Annual Meeting	100	0	-100	0	0
Directory	1,300	0	-1,300	1,300	1,300
Website	160	156	-4	200	44
Social	1,000	696	-304	1,500	804
Legal Fees	3,000	1,775	-1,225	2,000	225
Misc. (Supplies, Postage, P.O. Box)	220	169	-51	500	331
Administrative Expenses Subtotal	7,769	4,156	-3,613	7,200	3,044
TOTAL EXPENSES	38,539	21,602	-16,937	44,250	22,648
Greenways and Circles Legacy Fund					
Legacy Fund Deposits	15,000	15,000		15,000	0
LEGACY FUND BALANCE		15,000		30,000	
BALANCE (Available + Revenues -Expenditures-Legacy Fund)		19,321		4,282	
Bills for Expenses Incurred in 2021, Paid in 2022		2,389			
Net Carryover Available for 2022		16,932			

* Work Budgeted in 2021 will be completed in 2022. Rolled over 2021 remaining budget.

**Budget Line used for pathway repairs. Sub-committee will be established for 2022.

***Rollover 2021 remaining budget to allow 3+ circle grants for 2022.

****Directory will be sponsored by advertisers (see revenue).