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MINUTES

WRAC Meeting of the Board of Directors

October 18th 2021 – 6:00pm

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85804559642>
Or Dial 888 475 4499 (Toll Free) Webinar ID 858 0455 9642

ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT
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Items on the Agenda may be taken in any order at the discretion of the Chair

1. **Welcome/Introductions:** Chair Wersinger called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.
 - a. **Representatives present:** Matt Wersinger (WRAC Chair) (DRNC), Christina Spitz (WRAC Vice-Chair) (PPCC), Robin Greenberg (WRAC Secretary) (BABCNC), Kathryn Wheeler (MVCC), Jane Wishon (WNC), James Murez (VNC), Michael Lynn (SORONC), Larry Watts (BCC) & Stephen Resnick (WWNC)
 - b. **Nonvoting Alternates present:** Barbara Broide (WNC) & Ravi Sankaran, (DRNC)
 - c. **Also present:** Raquel Beltrán, General Manager, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), Janet Turner Representative of Congressman Ted Lieu, Veronica De La Cruz, LA City Neighborhood Prosecutor & Deborah Hong, Senior PR Representative of the LADWP
 - d. **Chair Updates:**
 - e. **Upcoming Guests** – LA County District Attorney George Gascon (confirmed but month is pending), LAUSD Board Member Nick Melvoin (TBD), CA Senator Ben Allen (TBD)
 - f. **Special Guest (Added while awaiting Raquel Beltrán) Doug Epperhart**

Mr. Epperhart noted that LANCC adopted a motion in May or June of this year to set up a group intended to perhaps ease the friction between the DONE Staff, the City Clerk staff, and other bureaucrats we might interact with and the NCs. He was asked to chair this group, as he has many years with the NC system, as a board member, president, commissioner. He noted that there are now 15-20 people at this point, to first talk to as many NC people as possible to get their take on what it's like to deal with bureaucrats, and see if we could come up with common themes or complaints... He welcomed anyone interested in joining. A couple of things that have been of major concern to pretty much everybody, includes the NEAs, the first point of contact between NCs and the bureaucracy, as they have tended to be very inconsistent. One of the complaints he has heard is that they don't respond in a timely manner, that one NEA says something and a new NEA the next month says something different or they have incorrect information. The main question is, why we don't get consistent answers from NEAs. He looks forward to synthesizing the info and coming to them. He thinks we can do better as a system.

Mr. Epperhart noted that the possibility exists to look at the City Charter. Someone on his group would like a NC Board Members Bill of Rights. He attended a one-hour Code of Conduct workshop at the Congress and understands that in the eyes of DONE, we are essentially unpaid employees and serve at their will. He knows we will have a new Mayor, and knows some of the candidates. He thinks this will present an opportunity for NCs to potentially talk about some charter changes for the future.

Member Murez (VNC) raised the issue of Section 907 of the Charter, regarding NCs being notified in ample time to be able to participate in the process, noting that the Dept. of City Planning does send their weekly email. Mr. Epperhart noted that his NC adopted, as a policy, automatically asking for a minimum of 90 days (*notice*) on everything.

2. Government Reports -

- a. **DONE General Manager, Raquel Beltrán** arrived and spoke following the conclusion of all board business. She gave updates on DONE's policy work, the budget due for FY 22/23, an election year, and trainings. Some comments were noted as follows:

Policies: They submitted the final draft of the **Digital Communication Policy** and made substantial amendments after having heard from over 260 people who have attended workshops and 21 NCs that submitted CISs. The Commission is recirculating this to NCs with expectation that a final decision might be made before the end of the calendar year. See all three versions of the policy on the Commission's website in a digital folder of Policies under Consideration, which includes the original draft from September of last year, the current draft submitted to the Commission today, and a redline version of the September policy, along with comments and presentation at the workshops. They also prepared a comparison chart, to clarify misconceptions, and how it benefits NCs.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12YF4sRe5i5cmMmheUwviOvAs7o8XLD0J>

The **Code of Conduct (CoC)** policy is still circulating, last workshop tomorrow. They'll provide a summary report to the Commission with comments from the NCs and CISs, as well as letters and public testimony from the workshops. They're organizing comments in a spreadsheet and will have a chart to show what it does & doesn't do and how it benefits the NC system. Ms. Beltrán expressed appreciation for our submission on this.

Two Additional Training Sessions Now on Cornerstone:

Anti-bias training required by City Clerk is now available; they've provided a 90-day period for NCs to take that training. There is now a Spanish language version of that training.

Planning 101 is available on Cornerstone. They took the Planning Department's product & made it available to Cornerstone. They need a list of your Planning Committee Members to add to their roster. If a NC doesn't have a land use committee, it defaults to the Board. Ms. Beltrán noted that they are pushing to find a better way to offer these trainings to you; she is highly unsatisfied with Cornerstone. They have discussed this with their IT people. Cornerstone just houses trainings and DONE is not set up for all that needs to be done there.

Proposed Budget: Ms. Beltrán noted that the Mayor’s budget is to have a net-zero increase for the proposed budget; she is not in a position to ask for money for Cornerstone or NC elections. The City Clerk’s office has put together their budget for the elections but DONE has not. DONE will engage in conversations with the Mayor’s office to get the same consideration as the City Clerk as to the proposed budget, so they can ask for what they would support for NCs.

Two Surveys: **Empower LA Listening Survey**, part of the effort to allow you to tell DONE thoughts about the work they do – to create a perpetual feedback loop so they can communicate back to you as to what you communicate. A second iteration will allow you to rate them better. **The NC Awareness & Engagement Survey** went out to a large audience, first in the history of the NC, to survey residents to find out what they think about the NC system and councils.

There followed a Q&A with questions from the Chair and Board, beginning with Chair Wersinger asking where she thinks NCs stand in relation to DONE: Is DONE here to serve NCs or vice versa, and are board members employees of the City or elected officials representing their stakeholders. Ms. Beltrán noted that the City is close to adopting a **Workplace Equity Policy (WEP)** which is referenced in the draft CoC. The Commission wants to update the CoC and, parallel to that, the City was working on the Workplace Equity Policy. She noticed almost a year ago, as part of the GM’s review, reference of NCs being required to comply with the policy, under the section related to volunteers. So NC board members are not considered employees of the of the City and there is no reference to that in the Workplace Equity Policy but it does suggest that NC board members are volunteers to the City. She noted that you are elected locally to an advisory board that provides reports and provides advice to the City in an advisory capacity... The charter lists who the public officials are. The NCs are not listed there. The charter also explains who is subject to recall provisions. NCs are not subject to recall provisions because you have to be on the list of public officials... The City is saying in its WEP is that it is setting a standard. *[Vice Chair Spitz had to leave at this point.]*

Ms. Beltrán noted that the department understands NCs are not employees, and that even as volunteers you occupy a different space; that DONE internally says you are “Volunteers Plus”... She noted that the Mayor is going to be releasing an Executive Directive about the workplace policy – there are a couple of negotiations pending with one of the labor unions – hopefully before year’s end. She considered it prudent to let NCs know as soon as she could what the Workplace Equity Policy says... (It will be incorporated with the CoC.)

Chair Wersinger related this board’s position which is in opposition to the CoC based on the fact that it is a unilateral choice by Ms. Beltrán with no right to appeal, which he noted does not sit well with our members. He noted that there has to be a mechanism of fairness to our members, which we have made clear in our vote. Ms. Beltrán responded that is important to know that everything that comes to DONE is an allegation and they have a process for reviewing what they cover in the CoC workshops... and that people will still come to DONE to complain and present issues. She noted that it is a matter of the “suspension” piece. DONE already has a process for

investigating allegations and will modify the process to be more closely aligned to how the City plans to implement the WEP.

Ms. Beltrán related that DONE refers people to MyVoiceLA. The Grievance Ordinance is very clear about what is available to you: five grievances are in place with NC board members using that tool. She noted that it is there for you. DONE tries to ask the board or complainant questions before leaning in. The issue of suspension is a step down from what the department has, which would be a removal policy. Ms. Beltrán noted that, as it stands now, without this amendment, we can go to the Commission, following a specific procedure that is outlined in the removal policy and present a request to the Commission to vacate a board seat. The suspension piece is actually a step down from this. She recommended taking a look at the removal policy.

Chair Wersinger noted he has not found someone at DONE to answer questions regarding staffing, Brown Act Guidance, and Roberts Rules, and asked if there is a Brown Act expert, noting that there is only a part-time City Attorney for the department. He asked how we make sure that our basic needs are met with existing staffing or retailoring what you have

Ms. Beltrán responded that it is the City Attorney's office that makes decisions about the Brown Act, which is why the grievance portal is not an option for NCs if they have a Brown Act violation. They always go to the City Attorney's office for interpretation. She noted that DONE is working to build a better capacity of the NEAs to be more knowledgeable... more than they are, and they are about to hire five NEAs. DONE will encourage the existing Neighborhood NEAs to participate in the onboarding process. They have written some new guidelines for the NEAs to follow, to be speaking in the same voice, answering the same questions the same way, and bringing the City Attorney more frequently to weekly meetings. She noted that it has been a big problem in the NC system for a very very long time. The expectation is for the directors to ensure that the NEAs are responding the same way. She noted that they vet this, and sometimes have to go back to the NCs to admit when incorrect and apologize. She noted that they try to have internal conversations early and meet weekly with the City Attorney's office. She noted that what Chair Wersinger is talking about doesn't require more staff but requires them to do a better job internally, bringing consistency and structure to all of that. When the new website gets up and running, she hopes in December, they will try to centralize some of that guidance on their updated website, so you can be self-empowered, all using the same definition of terms, etc.

Member Murez (VNC) thanked Ms. Beltrán for coming and related, as to the Brown Act, that he would suggest they start a Google-searchable database of knowledge every time these questions come up. He noted, as to the need for transparency of information from the City, per the City Charter, Section 907 states that the City is supposed to provide NCs information in a timely manner... in order that they may respond to the issues... He noted that the City has provided us a "list server" from every branch of City government. Each NC has to go to the various lists, more than 100 publications a week, and sift through the material to see what pertains to their NC. He opined that having to go and fetch information is a violation of the

charter. He explained that there is a huge difference between “Push- and Pull-Technology.” He has to subscribe and pull the information from the City. He noted that the only department that complies is City Planning, with the City Planning Early Notification System to the City’s Neighborhood Councils weekly reports. He asked what Ms. Beltrán will do to get the rest of the departments to do the same, e.g., Public Works, Transportation, DMV, Rec & Parks, etc. as they all have things coming out that we don’t get notified about unless we dig it out.

Ms. Beltrán responded that the way they function now is not in violation of the charter. The way the system worked in 1999, when the charter was passed that created the NC system, there was no early notification system... She agreed with the rest of his comments, noting that the expectation when that system was created was that you run your boards, you know what issues are important to you, and this “list serve,” this early notification system (ENS), provides you the opportunity to choose what information is of interest to you, so you can sign up for it and theoretically get it in a timely manner. She agreed it is not enough.

Ms. Beltrán noted that she wants to do “engagement” “not outreach,” noting the difference is that outreach is a pass-through, a flyer that gets forwarded. She wants to engage NCs, regarding some things, for example that Mayor Garcetti needs feedback on, such as how communities want to use budgeted funds. She wants to engage NCs with greater intentionality, and does not want to pass a flyer. She wants to bring them to the table to not only engage them but measure how they got engaged and what the feedback was. That’s what the department is supposed to do to support the work that you do.

Member Murez related that the charter in no place says that the information is going to be provided to us at a point in time. He noted that he was involved in Charter Reform, and was involved in the Department of Planning with an MOU written between the NC of Venice and the City Planning Department that created the ENS and knows what was written into that MOU at the time, and noted it was us that went out of our way to get Planning to agree... He explained to Ms. Beltrán that it would make sense for all the departments to do the same, and that we need her help as NCs to act as our representative to these other departments to get them to be on board. He noted that the departments have scheduling information in their systems, and it is a question of her helping us pull that information and letting them provide it to us.

Member Wishon (WNC) thanked Ms. Beltrán for coming and asked what she sees as the role of NCs going forward in the overall approach to neighborhood engagement. Ms. Beltrán asked for specifics, and noted that DONE wants to support NCs, which is why they’re doing the Awareness & Engagement survey... She noted that there is a lot of opportunity with that data for all of us together to go to City Council and to the Mayor and say this is what the public wants from the NC system, these are the issues. She related that 74% of the respondents identify homelessness as their top priority... She noted that this group already knows because we are working with our communities but asked us isn’t it great that we will have data available to back up what we ask from our City Council offices? She noted that DONE is doing that to make it easier for us.

She noted that DONE thinks that the data is important to help us create the story that to use; that we should be the experts on our communities. She noted that the data literacy program is helping us build our story with City Council for advocacy purposes. She sees their role as providing support to do the things you'd like to do. Ms. Beltrán related that DONE doesn't pass judgment on what we want to do, just wants to give support. She is interested in NCs, from a governance and advocacy perspective, to be as autonomous as possible, which is part of their five-year/10-year vision. There are some things they have to do internally to get there. She noted that next year we should be seeing improvements along the lines of what President Wersinger is talking about. She acknowledged that DONE should be providing us that kind of support.

Ms. Beltrán related that they have one public information officer in the department and the admin is now down three people. She discussed the shortage of personnel in the department, and that keeping the wheels turning so we can do what we can do to move forward is how they see their support. Getting City departments to try to engage the people early on in the process is part of that. She noted that they got NCs in on redistricting early on, in the first two weeks of their public hearings, and they want to be like that for us all the time.

Member Wheeler (MVCC) thanked her for being here and taking time. She asked if the 15 City Council members take the exact same training as board members including the PLU training, to which Ms. Beltrán related that the requirements are different because they are more expansive, particularly as regards ethics. She doesn't know if they have to take the Planning training. Member Wheeler noted that we are also elected and to save some money, her NC & stakeholders would love to see that funds go back to the NCs to do it... Member Wheeler related that as volunteers, we have a workplace, but we don't have offices, real email addresses or city phone numbers. She noted that when you read the City Charter it was for representation, to try to remove the top-down policy that was coming from the City. She has been observing that it started out as a bottom up, but now with the rules and regulations, it is becoming again a top-down organization again. Member Wheeler noted that many people who have been in the NC system longer than she has are wondering what is going on. She noted that we are elected officials and in many respects are being treated as employees, told what to do and not to do... Now, especially with the election being done by the City Clerk... Member Wheeler thinks they need to rethink things and look back to its origins in her future work. Ms. Beltrán responded that she raised some good points and that Member Wheeler would also benefit from looking back. She provided some thoughts, noting that we are unique; we have defined our own boundaries and bylaws; decide who serves on our boards. Member Wheeler related that we were recently told that bylaws will be forced upon us in addition to the Code of Conduct. She would consider it great news if we could vote them down, but everybody from DONE says nope, they'll be forced in whether we like it or not. Member Wheeler referred to the bylaws changes on youth rep age.

Ms. Beltrán noted that when we got elected we understood and accepted terms of getting elected to an advisory board to the City. She noted that there is a tentacle there, that it was never

intended for us to be autonomous. She noted that for that to happen there would have to be a charter change. She continued that one of the things that made the big difference was that we started to see regulations when NCs started to receive funding. The funding was originally to support our administration, to purchase equipment, rent space for offices, etc., which became necessary because we became subject to the Brown Act, because you were receiving funding. As soon as funding became available to the NCs, the regulatory process had to be in place. She offered a historical perspective, noting that she is not saying that it is the right level of regulation.

Ms. Beltrán noted that there are individuals who were involved in the process in the very beginning who did not believe that NCs should be releasing NPGs, a belief that it was never intended originally. She noted that they have had these conversations with NCs, that they are to decide how much they want to spend for administration, or don't. She noted that DONE has NCs who do not have their minutes current, who come to DONE and have a problem, and are told that they need to hire a minutes taker; they have the money to do that in order to be in compliance; they have the resources to manage the administrative functions of a NC and that was what the money was originally for, to support volunteers elected locally. She noted that the Brown Act obligation is very difficult. She noted that the City Council has the City Attorney and a City Clerk to manage those pieces; we don't have that; we have to rely on ourselves to do all of that which is an awful lot.

Member Wheeler thanked her and noted that Ms. Beltrán used the word "autonomous" and agreed with her that we have the money and should run our own elections, as it originally was; however, it is coming from the top down, being forced upon us.

Member Broide (WNC) noted, regarding being volunteer vs. elected, it seems the charter made an omission by not including us with specific language. She wondered if there was any effort in seeking an amendment to the charter as not anyone can volunteer to be a board member... She noted that the notion of "Volunteer Plus" doesn't really represent the responsibility that we bear and that we should be looking at all the rules and requirements. Member Broide opined if the CoC is a step down from the removal policy, it would suggest to her that the removal policy is possibly inappropriate, and puts NC members at a vulnerable point that is not appropriate. When it comes to making charges against NC members... the City Council is the subject of many gadflies and critics with their own axes to grind and Member Broide wonders if it could be made more formal, in terms of filing grievances and claims against boards or individuals, e.g., making them be under oath and subject to perjury. She noted that NCs go to tremendous work to answer these grievances, and there are some NCs that are subject to these that are very disruptive.

Member Broide continued, as to Member Murez's comments, that NCs have to ferret out issues of interest, she spends an inordinate number of hours preparing summaries of legislation related to land use, and shares them beyond our NC with Plan Check and this group, but doesn't think this should be her job. She noted that other NCs never see that work and spend their time doing it or not being informed... and suddenly are informed of a City Council action that will greatly

affect their community and they have no voice. She thinks there should be a way to do better legislative tracking at the DONE- or City-Hall level that not only identifies those issues like planning... specific to the larger communities. Member Broide noted that it is so time consuming, and we rarely receive the respect of the Council, in terms of notifying us in advance when issues of great importance to our communities are being heard; we don't get time to agendize them. That is a grave injustice, and would like to know how we can improve that. They have rules, we have rules, but they don't follow those rules, so this is very troubling.

Ms. Beltrán agreed that there should be a good look at the charter language – noting that most of the language that is there was written in relation to setting up the NC system. She noted by the way that there are not only elected members in NCs... She noted that the grievance process that was all designed around NCs first resolving the issues themselves. The new CoC talks about the boards and individuals on the boards being the first point of responsibility for upholding the CoC... She noted that the changes being made are not “top down” but are responding to the things that NC board members and individuals have said. She noted that there is a lot of interest in the department solving these problems, weighing in and stopping things at an early phase, so she thinks these policies will be very helpful for that.

Member Resnick (WWNC) thanked Chair Wersinger and Ms. Beltrán. He noted that we don't see an Assistant GM at the department and asked what Julien Antelin's role is. Ms. Beltrán related that the department has never had an Assistant GM. Julien Antelin is a Director. They have four Directors, Mike Wong, Tom Soong, Julien Antelin and Vanessa Serrano, and the person a step down from her is the Director of Administrative Services, Armando Ruiz.

Chair Wersinger thanked Ms. Beltrán for coming, to which she expressed appreciation and hope that we continue these conversations, which is very helpful for her, and she hopes it yields improvement as we move forward. (The meeting was adjourned at this point.)

b. Mayor's Office TBD: There is no new representative yet.

c. Council Reports TBD:

d. Additional Government Reports – Angel Izard, CD5 Representative to WRAC for Councilmember Paul Koretz reintroduced herself, noting that she was appointed to her own NC, Hollywood United. She had no report this evening.

[Larry Watts (BCC) arrived and quorum was met.]

3. Board Member Updates –

- Member Murez (VNC) noted there will be a triathlon shutting down intersections on Venice... playing with traffic, interrupting north- & southbound freeways on Sunday morning, October 24th.
- Member Broide noted that she prepared a land use report with a summary of the pending legislation for Plan Check, which she will send to President Wersinger to share with the others.
- Chair Wersinger is waiting for the Homeless Committee to meet regarding the motion last month on homeless cleanups. Del Rey passed a version of that, which he'll let go through the committee.

4. **Committee Reports** – Selena Inouye, Co-Chair of the WRAC Mobility & Transportation Committee noted that we have the cool asphalt motion on the agenda. They didn't meet in September, will meet on October 20th. She noted that Co-Chair, Nancy Matson has resigned her position in September and was sorry to see her go; thanked her for all the work she did to get this committee up and running as of February of this year and encouraged us to send thanks to her for all her hard work.

5. **Public Comment:** None

6. **Approval of Minutes** —

- a. **Motion (Matt Wersinger)** – Approval of September 2021 meeting minutes: **Moved** by Chair Wersinger (DRNC); **seconded** by Vice Chair Spitz (PPCC); **passed**, with Wheeler abstaining.

7. **New Business**

- a. **Motion (WRAC Transportation)** – The Westside Regional Alliance of Councils supports the StreetsLA proposal for street cooling, including the Bureau of Engineering coating roads and sidewalks with “cool asphalt”, and requests that:

1. The Council Districts allocate discretionary funding to StreetsLA to expanding coating with cool asphalt in their areas.
2. The City expand implementation of the program by funding the program.
3. The City publicize the streets on the list to be coated.
4. The City consider streets with Farmers Markets as pilot programs.
5. The City prioritize implementation based on high heat and low tree cover.
6. The City study the feasibility and the cost of producing, installing and maintaining its own cool asphalt product.

Moved/Sponsored by Vice Chair Spitz (in lieu of Member Lewis' absence and as her council's representative to the MTC supports this); **seconded** by Chair Wersinger. Background information is on Google Drive. Selena Inouye gave background on this, following which discussion was held.

New Motion: Send it back to committee **moved** by Vice Chair Spitz; **seconded** by Member Wheeler. Further discussion was held. Safety and efficacy concerns were raised by Member Wheeler. Send back to the committee to find out the benefits and have questions answered.

Passed by unanimous consent **9-0-0**

- b. **Motion (Matt Wersinger)** – Motion possible nominating a new Co-Chair to the Transportation Committee. **Deferred**

8. **Old Business**

- a. **21-07 Abate and Correct Unsafe and Unhealthy Conditions In Homeless Encampments** – April 19, 2021 (*passage deadline October 2021*); 8 councils adopted: BABCNC, BCC, NCWP, PPCC,* WLASNC, WNC, WWNC*, NCWPDR (**modified version*) **Passed**
- b. **21-11 City Attorney Opinion re Financial Interest of Developer** – May 17, 2021 (*passage deadline October 2021*); 5 councils adopted: BABCNC, PNC, WLASNC, WNC, and WWNC Needs three more votes; at least Venice has it on the agenda. **Extended this evening**

- c. **21-16 Oppose Misuse of Specific Plan Process** – June 21, 2021 (*passage deadline October 2021*); 5 councils adopted: BABCNC, NCWP, WLASNC,* WNC, WWNC (**modified version*) **Extended this evening**
- d. **21-17 Support for ACA 7** – June 21, 2021 (*passage deadline October 2021*); 6 councils adopted: BABCNC, NCWP, PPCC, WLASNC, WNC, WWNC **Extended this evening**

Motion: To extend b, c, and d above for one month: **Moved** by Spitz/Wheeler; **passed** by **9-0-0**

- e. **21.19 Support for CF 21-0929 (Buscaino/Koretz)** – Sept. 20, 2021 (*passage deadline December 2021*); 5 councils adopted: BCC, NCWP, PPCC, WNC, WWNC
- f. **21.20 Request for CMs to cooperate with Member Councils re designation of sites under 41.18** – Sept. 20, 2021 (*passage deadline December 2021*); 3 councils adopted: BCC,* PPCC, WNC (**modified version*)
- g. **21.21 Request for revision of proposed amendments to DONE Code of Conduct** – Sept. 20, 2021 (*passage deadline December 2021*); 8 councils adopted: BABCNC,* DRNC, NCWP, PalmsNC,* PPCC,* SORONC,* WNC, WWNC* (**modified version*) – **passed**

Prior adopted motions (passed before this week/since the Sept. WRAC meeting):

Enforcement of Crimes In or Near Homeless Encampments – April 19, 2021; 8 councils adopted: BABCNC, BCC, NCWP, PPCC, VNC,* WLASNC, WNC, WWNC (**modified version*)

Enforce Laws Prohibiting Blockage of Public Right of Way – April 19, 2021; 8 councils adopted: BABCNC, BCC, MVCC,* NCWP, PPCC, WLASNC, WNC,* WWNC (**modified version*)

Clarification regarding Cloud/Ghost Kitchens – May 17, 2021; 9 councils adopted: BABCNC, BCC, NCWP, PPCC, PalmsNC, VNC, WLASNC,* WNC, WWNC (**modified version*)

- 9. **Adjourn:** **Moved** by Wersinger/Wheeler and the meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Next meeting will be held on November 15th 2021 at 6pm.