

## **West Central Neighborhood Association**

*Meeting Minutes*

*August 18th, 2025, 7:00pm*

Attendance: \_\_ people

Joel Sauer (President) welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced board members, and reviewed the mission and vision of the WCNA:

*The vision of the West Central Neighborhood Association is to create a friendly environment that is rich in history, culture, diversity, and community that is valued by its residents, business owners, and visitors.*

### **Fort Wayne Community Schools: Washington Elementary**

- Guest speaker: Ann Escosa, Volunteer at Washington Elementary, member of FW Rotary Club
- Adopted the school for FWCS Study Connections, an after-school tutoring program
  - Mid-October to Mid-May, one hour weekly on Tuesday afternoon, 3:30 to 4:30pm
- Ann grew up in the neighborhood (Larry Wardlaw's house) and attended Washington Elementary School (so did her dad)
- Washington School is a Title I School, many of the students struggle with learning as well as home situations. Often the most stable part of the day is at school.
- Tutoring is fun, and perhaps the most satisfying volunteer job. The teachers prepare packets to use. (Off-script, the connection with the student is the most important part of the job. They need more of the encouragement and attentiveness than the reading practice)
- For any questions, contact Helen Tobo. Ann would be happy to host coffee at her home to talk to anyone interested or help develop strategies for helping with particular learning needs
- Q: Are there any requirements for tutors? A: Training is provided, and tutors must pass a background check
- Q: What about substitutes? A: There are subs available, and subs needed.
- They can only include as many students in the program as there are volunteers available!
- There is a service club that is having a food drive for the pantry. Fliers were passed out.

### **Yesterday in West Central: The Swinney Family**

- Presented by Tom Cain

- “Graceful Plutocracy” is a publication available at the Swinney House gift shop, which inspired this presentation
- Who were the Swinneys? Thomas was born in 1803, came to FW in 1818. He wanted to be a painter, but later made a living as a land trader. He met Lucy Taber in FW, married in 1827. She had a dowry of 240 acres. They had 8 children, but only 6 survived to adulthood. Minerva, Risa, Margaret, Francis, Caroline, William Paul (maybe adopted). In 1826 he built a log house on the Swinney property (not the one that is currently there) close to the river. They lived there until 1844. He got involved in politics and was named “Overseer of the Poor.”
- In 1844 he started building the brick home, 1.5 stories, 4 rooms on each floor. He supported the Wabash-Erie Canal, and hosted a party at the estate for 10-20,000 people (he had a lot of money). Was involved with a lot of civil lawsuits. He opposed the railroad, which eventually got the right of way, which cut him off from the south side of his property
- Died in 1875, wanted to leave a legacy, leave his homestead to the City as a public park, but wanted his children to be able to live the rest of their lives in the home. In 1886 his adult children extended the home to a full second floor plus an addition in the back.
- The Parks Department restored the house, researched and used historically accurate colors
- William died in 1886. The sisters continued living in the house. In 1892 the city approached to ask if they would sign a 30 year lease for the land to be used as a park. They said yes. The city wanted to build a statue to commemorate Thomas Swinney, but instead a statue of David Foster (still living) was built, which is still standing.
- The garage for their car was built in the 1910s, the last 2 sisters died in 1922.
- The house became the History Museum in 1926-1979
- The Settlers, Inc have managed since 1979
- National Register of Historic places in 1981

If anyone has a topic of interest for history presentations, let us know!

### **Neighborhood Promotion Update**

- We were awarded the Connected Neighborhoods Grant (\$1 million shared among 5 neighborhoods) Bloomingtondale, Hamilton, Nebraska, North Highlands, and West Central
- We have put our other plans on hold, so that we can coordinate with this project
- Jersey Barriers project on hold, we are considering options. The HPC asked we not put artwork on them, consider other options to make them less visible
- The inspiration behind all projects is neighborhood livability, concerns about speeding, noise, etc

- The grant application was focused on improving pedestrian and bike safety in our 5 neighborhoods
- The project is now in the Community Engagement phase. Check your mailboxes for a mailer survey about this! There will also be an online survey and town hall meetings
- There will be a booth at ArtsFest (during the Home Tour) to provide thoughts and feedback
- Plans will be announced in early 2026 at an all-neighborhoods Chili Cookoff

### **Committee Reports**

- Treasurer: George Taylor was not able to be here, but we still have money! Financials are still published on the website quarterly:  
<https://westcentralneighborhood.org/association-board-meetings/2025-minutes/>
- Memberships (Anita): 220 members. On October 15, anyone who joins will be joining for 2026. She is still delivering new neighbor welcome bags. Lots of new neighbors have become members!

### **Home & Garden Tour Updates (from Ryan)**

- The Tour is September 6th & 7th
- Thanks to all those who have already signed up to volunteer! We need about 30 more docents.
- We need a couple people for set up and tear down at ArtsFest (table, chairs, etc)
- Reach out to Ryan if you want to help with any needs that arise!
- Pre-Tour Party 5-7pm (for volunteers only)

### **August Gift Designation**

- Every month we give \$250 to a cause of the choosing of the membership. Last month we gave to our local PBS 39
- Ideas for gifts for August: Dolly Parton Imagination Library, 13th Step House, WBOI, Blessings in a Backpack (can invite to come to a meeting)
- Winner: 13th Step House
- For next month, consider Settlers, Inc at Swinney Homestead

### **Other Business:**

Question from neighbor: Washington Elementary parents drive too fast down the alley– is there anything talked about to be done about this? Suggestion: call 311, contact police liaison, or the desk sergeant

And any progress on speeding on Washington/Jefferson? There was an article in the JG about moves to lower speed limits. There is a lot of effort to address this right now. There are new temporary speed notification signs.

They will be installing the Amaryllis sculpture on August 27th, with a lane closure on Jefferson. There will be a dedication ceremony sometime in October.

Concluded: 8:10 pm