

West Side Voices Forum Notes - October 8, 2019

Dinner 6:00 to 6:30pm

Meeting begins at 6:31pm

- Welcome - Introduction of guests- Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL), Local Painters union, Local Carpenters union. Elected officials represented: Mitra Nelson (in person), Carlos Mariani (in person), Dai Thao (staffer present), Jane Prince (staffer present).
- Community agreements are reviewed
- Voting is Explained ([Fist to Five](#), <https://agileforall.com/learning-with-fist-of-five-voting/>)
 - West Side residents 16 years or older who attend 3 consecutive meetings are voting members

Introduction to West Side Equitable Development Scorecard

- [Scorecard Video](#) is played - <https://youtu.be/9jr8IUkc1cQ>

Labor violations and Reuter Walton developer

Background on Reuter Walton and WSCO

- Reuter Walton came to WSCO via the West Side Voices Forum (May 14, 2019) for a letter of support regarding variances for a development they are pursuing on the West Side at 84 Water Street. West Side Voices voted to submit a letter of support for the variances.
- Information was brought to the attention of the WSCO board by the Carpenters Union that labor and human rights violations were taking place at Reuter Walton worksites.
- The WSCO board voted to rescind the letter of support.
- WSCO negotiated with Reuter Walton and produced a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), including language around labor standards and no longer working with certain sub-contractors, which was signed by both groups.
- WSCO sent a revised letter of support including the CBA
- KSTP reported that a subcontractor being prosecuted for violations was still working at a Reuter Walton Job Site (after the CBA was signed). <https://kstp.com/news/labor-trafficking-suspect-spotted-on-developer-job-site-weeks-before-trial-batres-reuter-walton/5498878/>

People who have worked as laborers at Reuter Walton sites tell their personal stories of trauma stemming from human rights and labor rights violations at Reuter Walton Job Sites.

- The stories are not included here for privacy reasons. They involve wage theft, safety violations, personal threats, and worker intimidation.

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A representative from the Carpenters Union explains the relationship between developers and subcontractors.

- Developers hire specialty subcontractors to do work on their sites (such as dry-wallers or painters).
- Subcontractors bid for work with “not to exceed” numbers, meaning they promise to do the work for a certain amount of money in a certain amount of time.
- Some Subcontractors then do the work in the cheapest and fastest way possible
- If subcontractors do unethical labor methods the developer claims they are not involved, even though they hired them. Developers make more profit working with unethical subcontractors.

The Co-Director of CTUL Speaks

- Need to hold developers accountable for their choices to use unethical labor.
- The union standard exists
- Reuter Walton has had labor violation problems last year and again this year. More will come unless they are held accountable. There needs to be accountability to the City of Saint Paul.

Break - everyone reflects and discusses with neighbors

The group comes back together

A voting member of West Side Voices suggest a vote to rescind previous letter of support for the Reuter Walton 84 Water Street developments and for the West Side Voices group to call for a public meeting with Saint Paul City Council and Reuter Walton.

- Rescind previous letter of support
 - Members Voting- 15: Scores - all 5s **Passes**
- West Side Voices as an entity will call a public hearing with Reuter Walton and Saint Paul City Council-
 - Members Voting -15: Scores - 13 5s, 2 4s **Passes**

Elected officials or their staffers respond

- Mitra Nelson
 - We need to hold developers accountable and stop violations
 - Will speak to the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to see what can be done there
 - Will bring this to the attention of the Minnesota Attorney General

- Dai Thao representative-

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- Dai is currently in China, but he cares about labor
- We need to follow through on our end of the city
- We've created a labor standards committee in partnership with CTUL.

- Jane Prince representative
 - Public hearing will be a great opportunity to find out why the Community Benefits Agreement didn't work and what the levers are.

- Carlos Marini
 - I voted for one of the strongest wage theft laws in the country. But it falls at the local level to enforce those laws. What are the loopholes, where people who are smart enough to get away with it are slipping through. I will stand with my city council members, be a physical presence and a strategist.

Closing and thank you

Meeting ends at 7:32