

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
APRIL 25, 2011

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, April 25, 2011, beginning at 7:45 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Kevin Murphy presiding.

Directors present were Blakeney, Browne, Feuer, Flaks, Gordon, Greenberg, Kalner, Lam, Lapes, Lavoritano, Marmon, Murphy, Mudrick, Piltch, Quinn, Seiden and Wylonis.

Directors absent and excused were Bagley, Eisenberg, Ettelson, Fratis, Potok and Stevenson.

Other attendees included Walter Herman, Julie Kiene, Karla Moras and Jane Ryan.

The Meeting was called to order by President Murphy at 7:45 p.m. and the March minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report -- Treasurer Bob Marmon reported.

President's Report – President Murphy introduced the first speaker of the evening, Officer Sean Quinn of the Lower Merion Police Department, who began his report by saying that the police department is aware of the complaints about student parking on Raynham Road and along Latch's Lane where construction is going on. The next topic was about the many thefts in Merion and neighboring Wynnewood and Narberth, of copper downspouts from residences. An arrest has been made.

The police department has followed up on complaints about public drinking in the patch of woods on Latch's Lane. St. Joe's students were thought to be the offenders, but Officer Quinn said this was not substantiated, and there have been no complaints about St. Joe's students.

The warm weather is thought to be the reason for more burglaries in the neighborhood. Officer Quinn advised residents to lock their doors if they are working in their gardens to discourage house burglaries, and reminded the audience to call the police department if they notice any unusual activity in the neighborhood.

President Murphy spoke about the new Montgomery County Community Alert System administered by the PA Department of Public Safety: ReadyNotifyPA.com. The site offers real-time crime alerts, information about the weather, health notices, etc. Officer Quinn added that using this site has resulted in cost savings.

The second speaker was Rob Carovillano, president of the Union Fire House in Bala Cynwyd, which serves all of Wards 9 and 13, Narberth, most of Belmont Hills and 25% of Merion, including large residences, City Avenue, St. Joe's University, elementary schools, as well as commercial spaces, high rises at Lankenau, Oak Hill and Greenhill Apartments and the industrial properties near the Schuylkill River.

Mr. Carovillano spoke about the intensive, ongoing training of the firemen and the decline in the number of volunteers, which impacts the operations of the firehouse. The three fire trucks are called out to assist with fires, rescue, other company calls and to help ambulances. In general, there are fewer calls coming in to the fire house, but those calls that do come in are of a more serious nature.

The Union Fire Station faces the challenge of maintaining high quality service despite rising costs due to maintenance, the need for new equipment, and payroll costs associated with healthcare benefits. If the proposals for new development along City Avenue are realized, Mr. Carovillano warned that the manpower needed by the Union Fire Station to fight fires and respond to calamities will be inadequate. The Fire Station continues recruitment efforts at the high schools and universities nearby.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Arts and Education — Frances Quinn announced the two speakers for the Neighbor-to-Neighbor event on May 18 will be Patty Thompson, speaking on the pollution of the Delaware River and Mary Felley of the League of Women’s Voters, speaking on the Marcellus Shales energy issues. The Flag Day picnic and concert is scheduled for June 9.

Botanical — Judith Flaks announced the Botanical Park clean-up is scheduled for May 1 at 9:30 a.m. A Boy Scout troop under the guidance of Bill Early will be in the park the day before to assist with spreading mulch on the azalea beds.

Commissioner — Commissioner Brian Gordon reported there are new 10-minute parking meters along Montgomery Avenue in Bala Cynwyd, which stimulate more activity along the commercial strip. The Cynwyd Trail development continues. SEPTA has pulled out its funding of the Ardmore Project so the size of the parking lot will be scaled back to the smaller size favored by the community. The objections by Merion and Bala Cynwyd residents to the proposals for higher buildings along City Avenue are being noted by the Commissioners and Commissioner Gordon continues to press for a slower, more considered review and consideration of the proposed plans for development.

Walter Herman addressed the problem of having the plan for City Avenue go through without having the Comprehensive Plan in place. There is no legal recourse to this disconnect. A discussion followed about how to break the deadlock amongst the Commissioners regarding the plan. It was suggested that the civic associations, through the Federation of Civic Associations, be more vocal to better represent residents.

Marty Piltch pointed out that in the past the Comprehensive Plan “had no teeth,” so its recommendations did not materialize and he does not see this happening in the current climate of how development will unfold. Lauren Wylonis added that the election of Commissioner’s should reflect their commitment to representing the wishes of the electorate, and encouraged Merion residents to be more informed in their participation.

Michael Seiden, who, along with Karla Moras, attends many of the public meetings regarding future development, encouraged optimism about the effect activist groups can have on the process.

Community Action, Zoning & PR – Les Greenberg reported that the developer of the Palmer Seminary site is willing to wait until the zoning and historical preservation designations are in place and is of the opinion that development be allowed to start and at the same time have the zoning changes requests in process.

Federation of Civic Associations — President Murphy distributed the minutes of the Association. Highlights of the minutes include a description of how the Lower Merion Conservancy deals with conservation easements; projected effects of a zero percent tax rate

increase on the 2012 budget; the commissioners have voted to proceed with the full expansion of the Bala Cynwyd Library, which will be closed for up to 16 months, and considerations of the Commissioner's Building and Planning Committee regarding additions and new construction projects.

Finance – No report. Marty Piltch announced that the Finance Committee needs to meet to discuss reinvestment options of the Civic Association's assets.

History — Lauren Wylonis reported that the historic designation process is focusing on small scale meetings in the community and the outcome of the process will unfold either in favor of or against the designation.

Membership – Dolores Browne described her ideas for increasing membership, which include having a presence at the upcoming Barnes Community day, and distributed samples of the poster she has designed.

Newsletter — Marjorie Mudrick reported she has received most of the articles for the Newsletter and that they are being edited and are on schedule for the May publication.

School Board – Vivian Lapes reported the Webcam suit settlement was approved on Monday between the District and Lower Merion High School student Keron Williams, who will receive a settlement of \$10,000 from the District and another \$7,500 from the District insurer, Graphic Arts Mutual Insurance Company. The School District has hired design firm Depallo Design to study the flooding problem coming from the Bala Cynwyd Middle School. Rainwater runs onto Bryn Mawr Avenue and collects on the properties at the corner of Manayunk Road, where existing storm drains cannot keep up with the demand.

Social – No report.

Station and Grounds, Postal Affairs — Scott Feuer announced that Spring clean-up and planting day at the Merion Station is scheduled for May 1 at 9:30 a.m. Scott has written a letter to SEPTA about the excessive signage at the train station

Scott observed that SEPTA has erected excessive signage at the train station, directing riders to the inbound/outbound side, the ticket office and parking. There is a total of more than 18 new signs. The funds came from the federal stimulus package approved by President Obama. Scott would like to petition SEPTA to remove the signs that were installed in the flower beds.

Streets, Lights and Traffic – No report.

Website -- Michael Seiden continues to update the Civic Association website.

Barnes – Scott Feuer confirmed that June 5 is the Barnes Community Day for the first 450 neighbors, first come first served, to tour the arboretum and the galleries. A community-wide email announcement will be made to encourage participation and enjoyment of the day.

Walter Herman stated his opposition to the Civic Association's participation in the Barnes' activities while there is on-going legal action regarding the move of the art collection.

Community Watch — President Murphy distributed the minutes of the last meeting of the Lower Merion Community Watch Board, which included the treasurer's report, Community Watch signage, training of new recruits, design of the new decal and the National Night Out date of the first Tuesday in August.

Merion Community Coalition – No report.

Narberth Fire Company – No report.

St. Joe's – President Murphy reported that repeated attempts at re-engaging Patty Martin to resume attending Civic Association meetings have failed. He would like representation from the University to have a methodical, reasonable, problem-solving approach to engagement.

Old Business – None.

New Business – None.

There being no more new business, the meeting, on motion made and seconded, was unanimously adjourned at 10:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, May 24, 2011 at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary