

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION

April 23, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

Directors present were, Browne, Feuer, Flaks, Fratis, Gordon, Greenberg, Kalner, Lam, Murphy, Quinn, Rutzel, and Seiden.

Directors absent and excused were Bagley, Blakeney, Eisenberg, Ettelson, Hill, Lavoritano, Marmon and Potok.

In addition, about 25 Merion residents were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. On motion by Kevin Murphy and seconded by Les Greenberg, the revised March 2013 minutes were approved unanimously.

President Kalner introduced the first speaker of the evening, Lindsay Taylor, Director of Lower Merion Township Department of Parks & Recreation, to discuss the ongoing development of the master plan for the Merion Botanical Park. Lindsay's update described a long term plan of maintenance at the 4 parks in the area, including the Merion Botanical Garden, which specifically includes irrigation lines, maintaining the stepping stones crossing the creek, determining where the sewer lines are, maintenance of the gravel paths at the areas closest to the train tracks, attention to the park on the far side of the creek, and maintenance of specimen plants. There are no plans to make major changes; instead, the park will get close attention. The overall plan will rely on public participation, starting with this evening's meeting. A questionnaire had been mailed out to the community by the Township to elicit feedback, which has been positive. Key stakeholders will meet and represent the community. Further public participation will be solicited at a meeting on April 30 at the Tribute House, open to the community, during which the overall plan will be presented in more detail. Maps will be distributed to attendees where they can mark with the areas and activities they think are most important to the revitalization and maintenance of the park.

The second scheduled speaker was Superintendent Michael McGrath of Lower Merion Township Police Department who was invited to address the recent crime reports and the 9-1-1 emergency response system. Officer Tamaro of the Lower Merion Township Police Department spoke prior to Superintendent McGrath's arrival. She gave some details about the recent burglaries, 39 in all between February 1 and April 23. The Department is looking at different groups, the burglaries are on-going, and if residents wish to have their houses inspected, officers are happy to come out and suggest further steps that can be taken to burglar-proof the premises.

Superintendent McGrath took questions from the audience regarding the new 9-1-1 dispatching system, explaining some of the weaknesses and speaking to the successes. The new centralized Montgomery County call-in system for 9-1-1 directly instead of the local Township dispatcher makes the Police Department part of a national system recently implemented.

Mr. McGrath also spoke about the terrorist readiness of the Township Police Department, of which he is confident. He traveled with other police superintendents to Israel to learn more about how that country has prepared itself for terrorist attacks. He also discussed new communications technology which is available and which could be used to update our local policing effectiveness.

Treasurer's Report – Bob Marmon was not present, so Dave Rutzel, chairman of the Finance Committee presented the Treasurer's report for March, 2013.

President's Report – President Kalner began his report with an update of the Merion Civic Association Centennial celebration events, which are meant to build awareness of the group, raise its profile and attract newmembers, so that the Association will have more clout in the decision-making process in the Township and thus be more representative of the Merion community.

Posters have been printed and posted around the community announcing all Centennial events, the first of which is the Craft Beer fest scheduled for the evening of May 17 at the Tribute House which will also serve as a fundraiser for the Merion/Cynwyd business district. The \$40 tax deductible cost will defray the cost of the company providing the varieties of beer and rental of the Tribute House for the evening. Food donations are being solicited from area restaurants. Volunteers are needed to help out and a sign-up sheet was passed around. The Centennial Celebration, incorporating the traditional annual Flag Day concert on June 13, is the second event and will feature speeches by Commissioner Brian Gordon, State Senator Daylin Leach and Congressman Chaka Fattah. The third event will be an outing to a Phillies game on July 8. The final event is a house and garden tour on September 22, organized by the Lower Merion Conservancy. Sites are being selected and the ticket cost has not yet been determined. Advertising for the events will be covered by posters, emails, press releases, and word of mouth. President Kalner will be interviewed by a reporter for the Main Line Times and events will be further highlighted in the article.

President Kalner gave an update on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Committee, of which he is a member. The meeting scheduled for April 22 was postponed because the committee was not satisfied with the draft report that the staff has produced. Two workshops are scheduled in May to work on the recommendations for the institutional land use component. A better framework has to be developed, with details and supporting documents.

President Kalner stated that there is concern that other civic associations are considering hiring lawyers to respond to Comprehensive Plan, but he stated that the work of the staff is not legislative and association money could be better spent on developing the plan.

President Kalner spoke about the Merion/Cynwyd business district and his efforts to encourage interest in the shopping area by improving its identity through banners and landscaping and he hopes that the Centennial Celebration events will be a way of developing a long term relationship with the district. He is working on collaboration with the Merion Park Civic and the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd and the Township as well as the local business owners to begin the work on improvements.

Commissioner -- Commissioner Gordon began his report by announcing that there are Township Board of Commissioner Committee meetings the first two Wednesdays of each month. Merion residents are welcome to attend all meetings, become familiar with the Commissioners and participate in order to stay current with the Township activities.

Commissioner Gordon met with the Rector of St. Charles Seminary, Bishop Senior, to discuss the sale of the land, the purpose of which is to create an endowment to sustain the work of the Seminary, and he hopes to keep the plans of the Seminary in focus and get the community involved in them.

Commissioner Gordon reported that the Commissioners had tabled the liquor license transfer to Iron Hill Brewery restaurant as issues with the adjacent neighborhood are worked out with the developer. The new Whole Foods will occupy several parcels of land, buildings containing several small businesses will be demolished to accommodate the 45,000 square foot store being planned. The renovated Bala Cynwyd Library will have its grand reopening on May 19. The Gladwyne community is split on plans for an elevator at the Gladwyne Library. The Ardmore Library renovation continues, with an elevator to be installed on the outside of the building.

The Bala Avenue business district has been renovated with new lights, painted brick crosswalks, new sidewalks. No trees have been planted and there is a loss of some parking spots. There is divided opinion on the esthetics of the renovations -- the lights are very bright.

The Narberth station circle needs to be redesigned, new lights installed, and debate continues about a traffic light installation at the Wynnewood Rd. tunnel.

Federation of Civic Associations – Topics covered at the last Federation meeting include the lighting on athletic fields, the noise ordinance and Comprehensive Plan information. Also discussed was the idea of retaining a lawyer to look after issues to counter what is perceived to be undue influence by the institutions in the Township.

Newsletter – The spring issue of the newsletter will go out in May and be posted to the civic association website.

Community Action, Zoning & PR – Les Greenberg reported that the restaurant proposed for the old Wynnewood post office location next to the Giant supermarket was approved but Federal Realty has gone to court because it did not like the restrictions imposed on the hours of operation and outdoor music

Narberth Fire Company/Union Fire Company – Kevin Murphy reported 27 calls were received in March by the Union company and 26 by the Narberth company, with 19 of those calls coming from Lower Merion. Topics covered at the meeting of the companies included discussion of the purchase of new radios at a cost of \$7,000 each; there was acknowledgment of the heroic rescue of firemen at one of the calls.

Community Watch -- Kevin Murphy reported that 10,000 pieces of mail were sent out to recruit new members, with a response from 200 residents, a good return. Training is available to citizens on what to look for in the way of reportable events/sightings.

Old Business – None

New Business – President Kalner announced that Frances Quinn has decided to resign her position on the Social Committee to make way for a younger member to assume the role. She was thanked for her many years of outstanding service to the Merion Civic Association in so many capacities.

There being no more new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, May 28, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Guy, Secretary