

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MERION CIVIC ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 22, 2013

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Merion Civic Association was held on Tuesday, January 22, 2013, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Merion Tribute House with President Scott Kalner presiding.

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

Directors absent and excused were Bagley, Blakeney, Ettelson, Fratis, Marmon, and Potok.

Merion residents Walter Herman, Barbara Sylk, Betsy Goldmuntz, David Bylum, Karla Moras, Tom West, Nora Goldfine, Sharon Wolfson, and Gary Blum were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Kalner. The November, 2012 minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Dave Rutzel presented the Treasurer's report for November and December, 2012.

President Kalner introduced the speaker for the evening, Bob Wegbreit, Councilperson from Narberth, reporting on the status of the Rockland and Narberth Avenues bridges. The Rockland Avenue bridge is slated for demolition by Amtrak in April 2013 with an approximate cost of rebuilding projected to be between \$300,000 – \$1,000,000. It is not known yet if Narberth will share in the expense, as the advantage of reopening the bridge is more of an advantage to Merion residents. Narberth could save money, however, on school bus transportation costs by using the bridge.

The Narberth Avenue bridge has once again re-opened after the completion of emergency repairs. The bridge is scheduled to be demolished and replaced some time in 2014. Mr. Wegbreit discussed the traffic problems that were caused by the recent closing, specifically the large increase in the amount of traffic going through the tunnel on Wynnewood Avenue onto Wynnewood Road, which perhaps contributed to the accident involving a young woman pedestrian being struck by a car as she negotiated that difficult intersection. That accident has opened discussion about whether a light or a stop sign needs to be installed at that spot to avoid a fatality. Narberth does not favor a light because most of the traffic turns right towards the Wynnewood Shopping Center. Discussion will continue over the next several months.

President's Report – President Kalner announced that his report would consist of updates of the work of several Committees of the Comprehensive Plan by Merion Civic directors, including himself, who are members of those committees. President Kalner is part of the Land Use Committee. The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a guideline, a policy document, which, once passed by the Commissioners will eventually become law and then move into the implementation phase. The Comprehensive Plan has been updated every 10 years, but an update is now overdue. The Land Use Committee is to serve as the overall plan for future development in the Township and will inventory and identify existing residential, commercial and institutional land use and project future development. Currently, 85% of the land use is residential, 3.5% is commercial and about 12-14% is institutional, which is a high percentage. Institutional entities do not pay taxes. The purpose of the Committee is to promote growth, not to manage it. Management of the growth will come through regulation, which is not easy to establish, and the Land Use Committee work has stalled by becoming too focused on the

details instead of the wider picture. Requests to hire consultants to assist with planning land use were denied by the Township.

Discussion followed as to what role the Merion Civic Association has in representing the community in the face of well-organized and funded lobbies representing private schools and other groups. Dr. Goldmuntz commented on the lack of power that residents have, particularly when the proceedings of the Land Use Committee discourage and even prevent open discussion because of little notice being given about agenda items to be reviewed and voted upon. Board member Bruce Eisenberg offered that Committee members should push back and demand a postponement of such votes until participants have had ample time to study the information in question.

Les Greenberg reported on the Housing Committee which is going to map out neighborhoods and zones by actually going to the neighborhoods to catalog what is there and what needs to be preserved. Issues include affordable housing, housing for special needs residents, retirees, and the disabled.

Michael Seiden represents the Merion community on the Community Facilities & Infrastructure Committee which includes an inventory of public and private education facilities, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police status, libraries, sewer systems, waste treatment and solid waste management.

Dolores Browne represents the Merion community on the Energy and Water Resources Committee. The work of this committee is to find ways to promote implementation of the best management practices for water conservation and reduction of storm water runoff. The Philadelphia Horticultural Association is a partner in the work of maintaining green urban centers. Dolores believes that land managers in the Township should be uniformly trained for consistent application of best practices. The need to move towards organic management to insure a sustainable future was applauded by Walter Herman, who believes that fields and open spaces in the Township should go organic to eliminate poisons from the environment.

Commissioner — Commissioner Brian Gordon began his report with mention of “green” projects in the Township as being economically practical, which offers a strong and positive reason to promote LEED building. The Merion community has a special point of view in the Township because of the particular quality of life elements of architecture, the open space of the park, the inventory of trees and plant material, and the Civic Association has a role to play in promoting and supporting activity which ensures the continuation of valued quality of life issues not only in Merion but the rest of the Township as well, as the battle between residents and institutions plays out. Institutions would like carte blanche in planning and implementation, and the burden of preventing or changing parts of their plans falls to the residents who are not fully informed and do not have the funds to hire legal representation. Residents expect to be supported by their Township officials, but do not feel informed, included or supported by Township officials.

Federation of Civic Associations – Kevin Murphy reported on the Federation meeting which took place on January 14, and which included Frances Quinn and Karla Moras. The meeting focused on the presentation of Narberth’s form based zoning, which is a type of zoning that translates a community’s vision of itself now and in the future into standards that can be implemented and enforced.

Community Watch – Kevin Murphy reported on the Community Watch meeting that took place on January 3. The police report stated that two burglary rings were caught and the number of burglaries in the Township dropped significantly. The Lower Merion police department is

recruiting applicants for the January test. Merion community concerns about the county dispatch center in Eagleville were relayed via Lieutenant Polo, who attends county-wide meetings. The bylaws of the Watch group are being revised and a new members campaign is scheduled for the spring.

Nominating Committee – Kevin Murphy reported that the Committee has chosen Les Greenberg to be nominated to fill the vacant seat of the second VP of the Civic Association. The Committee unanimously approved Les, and Kevin asked for a motion to nominate Les Greenberg as second VP. The motion was made and seconded and approved unanimously.

Narberth Fire Company/Union Fire Company – Kevin Murphy reported that the Narberth Fire Company responded to 284 total alarms last year, which is the busiest it has been in 30 years. There were 28 alarms in the December and 27 in November, most calls coming from Lower Merion. Donations are slightly up. The Union Fire Company responded to 394 calls last year, and 39 calls in December. Kevin has been nominated and re-elected to a three year term on the Board. Kevin encouraged all to support the fire companies when dues appeal letters are received.

Community Action, Zoning & PR – Les Greenberg reported that an agreement was reached on the hours of operation of the L.A. Fitness gym going into the Wynnewood Shopping Center, which is a victory for the residents nearby, who opposed a 24/7 operation model. The Wynnewood Civic Association is active in monitoring the proposal for a restaurant to be opened on the site of the post office annex in Wynnewood.

The first project of the City Avenue development plan is on Righter's Ferry Road where a 259 unit building has been proposed. There were zoning and set-back issues as well as concerns about increases in traffic in an area that is already plagued by heavy traffic which would become more so.

There were no other Committee reports. President Kalner announced that Don Cannon will attend the February meeting of the Civic to further discuss the Amtrak Idris Road drainage project.

Old Business – None

New Business – The March meeting of the Merion Civic Association Board has been rescheduled to March 19 because of a calendar conflict with the first day of Passover. A discussion about the Committees of the Merion Civic Association will be tabled to a future meeting.

There being no more new business, a motion was made and seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the Merion Tribute House on Tuesday, February 26, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Guy, Secretary